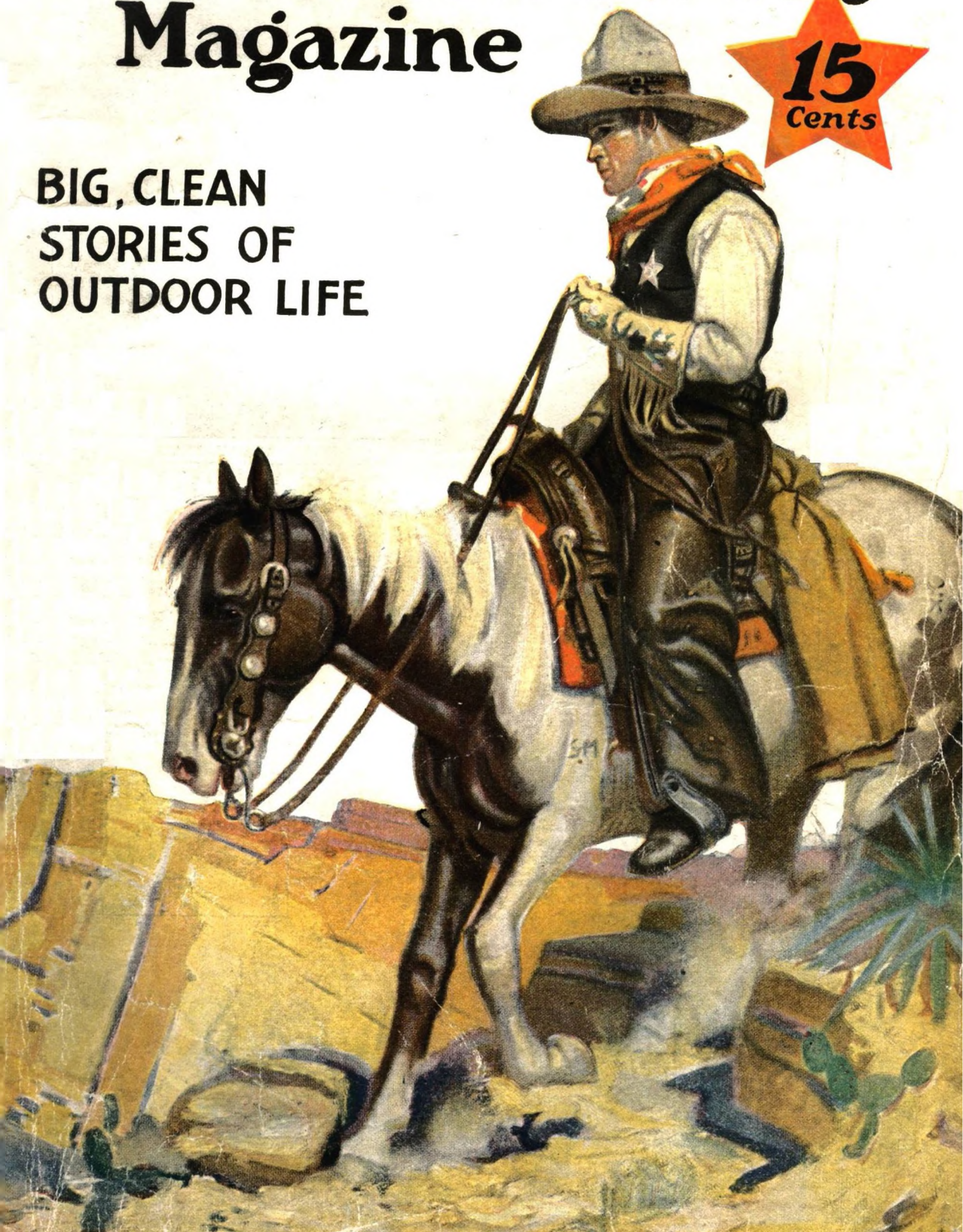
EVERY WEEK

OCT. 7, 1922

Western Story Magazine

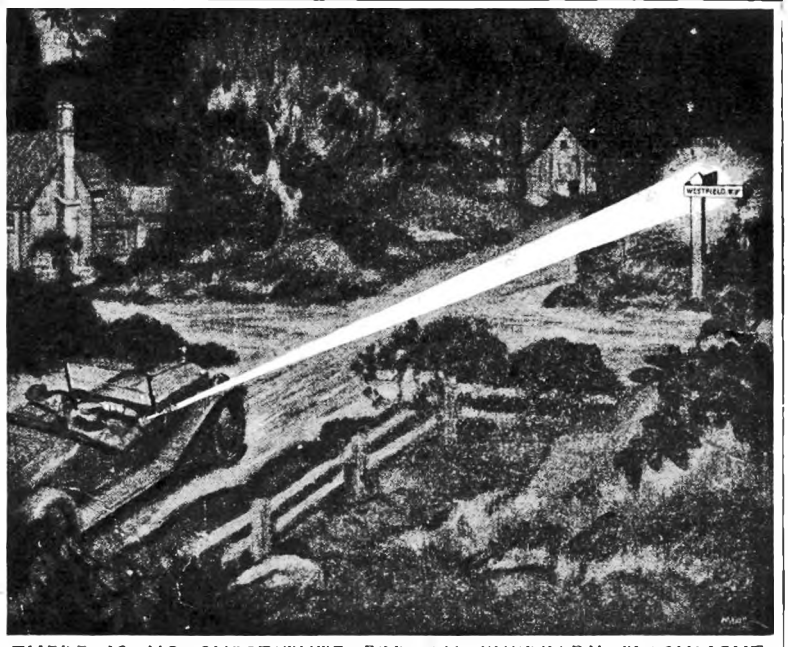
15 Cents

BIG, CLEAN STORIES OF OUTDOOR LIFE



Eveready Spotlight with the 300-ft. Range

There's an Eveready Flashlight complete for every purpose from $1.35 to $4



THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR AN EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT

A friend no motorist will leave behind!

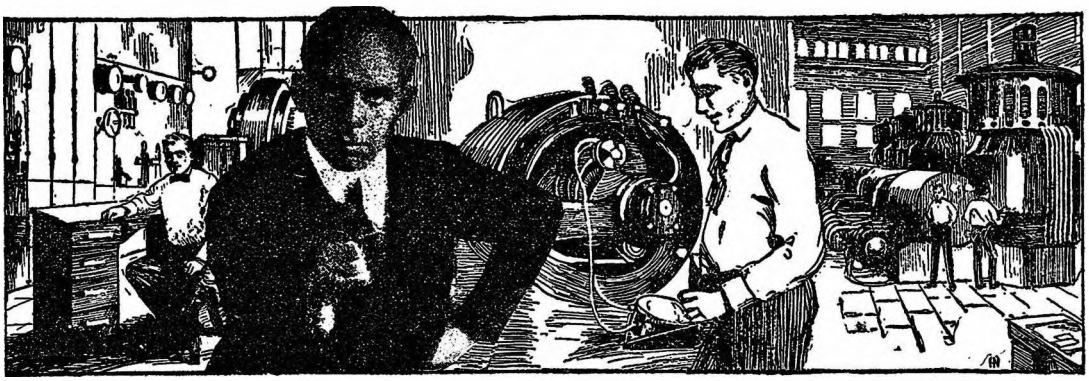
The Eveready Spotlight shoots a 300-ft. electric beam to light up road signs and meet emergencies while motoring at night; *independent of the car and all other equipment!* . . . . The perfect portable light for vacationists: for motor boating, canoeing, rowing; flashing signals; going over to the dance; strolling down the road; a dozen uses a night.

MONEY-BACK OFFER

Try out this wonderful Eveready Spotlight. Buy one of any dealer for $3.75. Use it over night, flashing its 300-ft. beam near and far. If you want to return it next day, the dealer will refund your money without argument. (Frankly, you will keep it. No one wants to part with an Eveready Spotlight after trying it out.)

For sale everywhere at electrical, hardware, sporting goods, drug, and auto accessory shops; garages; general stores.

Eveready Flashlight Batteries give brighter light; last longer; fit and improve all makes of flashlights



Electricity Needs You

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME

Stop right here. This is YOUR opportunity! Electricity is calling you, and the Electrical Business is in for a tremendous increase. But it needs more trained men—at big pay. By my **Home Study Course** in **Practical** Electricity I can train you for these positions.

FREE!

BIG ELECTRICAL OUTFIT

A fine outfit of Electrical Tools, Instruments, Materials, etc., absolutely FREE to every student. I will also send you FREE and fully prepaid —Proof Lessons to show you how easily you can learn Electricity and enter this splendid profession by my new, revised and original system of Training by Mail.

RADIO COURSE FREE

Special newly-written wireless course worth $45.00 given away **free.** Full particulars when you mail coupon below.

Earn Money While Learning

I give you something you can use ***now.*** Early in my ***Home Study Course*** I show you how to begin making money in Electricity, and help you get started. No need to wait until the whole course is completed. Hundreds of students have made several times the cost of their course in spare time work while learning.

Earn $70 to $200 a Week

You've always had a liking for Electricity and a hankering to do electrical jobs. Now is the time to develop that talent; there's big money in it. Even if you don't know anything at all about Electricity you can quickly grasp it by my up-to-date, practical method of teaching. You will find it intensely interesting and highly profitable. I've trained and started hundreds of men in the Electrical Business, men who have made big successes. YOU CAN ALSO

Be a Big Paid ELECTRICAL EXPERT

What are you doing to prepare yourself for a real success? At the rate you are going where will you be in ten years from now? Have you the specialized training that will put you on the road to success? Have you ambition enough to **prepare** for success, and get it?

You have the ambition and I will give you the training, so **get busy.** I am offering you **success** and all that goes with it. Will you take it? I'll make you an ELECTRICAL EXPERT. I will train you as you should be trained. I will give you the benefit of my advice and 20 years of engineering experience and help you in every way to the biggest, possible success.

Valuable Book Free My book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," has started many a man on the way to fortune. I will send a copy, free and prepaid, to every person answering this advertisement.

Act Now! Good intentions never get you anywhere. It is action, alone, that counts. NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer

CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS

2150 LAWRENCE AVENUE

Dept. 77. Chicago, U. S. A.

CHIEF ENGINEER COOKE

Chicago Engineering Works

Dept. 77, 2150 Lawrence Av.

CHICAGO, ILL.

Dear Sir: You may send me entirely free and fully prepaid, a copy of your book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," and particulars about your **Home Study Course in Electricity and the Free Radio Course.**

Name.....

Address.....

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

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. XXIX Contents for October 7, 1922 No. 3

NINE STORIES IN THIS ISSUE

ONE COMPLETE NOVEL

TWO SERIALS

FIVE SHORT STORIES

ONE SPECIAL ARTICLE

MISCELLANEOUS

DEPARTMENTS

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary. Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part. Entered as Second-class Matter, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Canadian subscription, $7.60. Foreign, $8.60.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $6.00 **SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS**

It's a Crime to Slave for Low Pay—

When It's So Easy To Earn Big Money

If You are Making Small Pay Then You Ought to Investigate This Simple Plan That Has Shown Thousands a Way to Magnificent Earnings.

It is little short of an actual crime for a man to struggle along trying to make ends meet when he can easily step into a position with better pay and unlimited opportunities for making money.
The sentence for a crime of this kind is "a life-time of drudgery." Trying to make ends meet is a much harder task than making from three to ten times as much money as you are now making. For you can just as easily take advantage of the experience of countless others who, in one swift stroke, have jumped from small pay in blind alley jobs to incomes of anywhere from $5,000 to $10,000 a year.
One has but to learn the actual facts to prove that it has been done, is being done, and will continue to be done by those who have initiative enough to investigate a plan that will relieve them of a "Life sentence" of drudgery and disappointment.

These Men Investigated and—

As an office worker in Detroit Mr. B. H. Voss slaved away for $125 a month. But he saw his one big opportunity—grasped it—and increased his pay to $500 a month.
As a farm-hand George W. Kearns, of Oklahoma City, grasped the same opportunity. One of Mr. Kearns' letters gives an idea of how his earnings have increased—"last week I cleared $306 and this week $218." And Mr. Kearns earned $60 a month previously.
Today, Mr. J. L. DeBonis, of Chicago, is now enjoying magnificent earnings. Before investigating this money-making opportunity, he was earning $16 a week as a clerk.
When Charles Berry, of Winterset, Iowa, decided that it was a crime to slave for low pay, he was earning $18 a week. And then the very first month he earned $1000.
Today, these men and thousands of others like them, know the thrill of independence. They are making big money. As to their work, each day is like a fascinating adventure. For they have entered a new field—a field that they had never dreamed of as theirs—one that is not only the most interesting, but the best paying branch of all business—selling.

A Foolish Notion About Salesmen

For some reason the average man imagines that in order to make good in selling he must be a "Born" salesman. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no such thing as a "born" salesman. Thousands of clerks, machinists, bookkeepers, factory hands, firemen, and farm-hands, today, are making big money in the selling field through the simple plan you are invited to investigate.

Secrets That Make Master Salesmen

No matter what your former earnings may be you can quickly learn the secrets of selling that have put thousands into the big pay class. For the past fifteen years the National Salesmen's Training Association has successfully trained thousands for the selling field—and through its Free Employment Service helped thousands to secure good selling positions.
There are certain principles, certain rules, certain secrets to selling just as there are certain principles in mathematics or medicine. Once you know these principles you can quickly make good in the selling field.

And through the National Demonstration Method you gain actual experience in overcoming sales problems of all descriptions while studying in your spare time at home. Then, through the N. S. T. A. System of Electives, you get specific instructions in how to sell the line or lines you want to handle. In other words, the proved selling plans of Master Salesmen in all lines are laid before you. Step by step you are taken through every phase of selling. Then, there is the Free Employment Service at your disposal when you are qualified and ready.

Book On "Modern Salesmanship" Free

Without cost or obligation we will gladly mail you a copy of a very interesting book, "Modern Salesmanship." In addition to many interesting facts about Salesmanship, it will also give you full information as to how you can become a highly paid salesman. No matter what you may think how, this book will prove to you that it's a crime to slave for low pay when magnificent earnings are within easy reach. There is no obligation, so just fill in the coupon and mail it today.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 4-R, Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 4-R, Chicago, Ill.

I simply want to see the facts. Send me FREE your Book "Modern Salesmanship," and Proof that I can become a Master Salesman. Also tell how you can help me to a position and send list of lines with openings for Salesmen.

Name.....

Address.....

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

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

SIX-ROOM HOUSE FREE!

Stop Paying Rent Now!

Just imagine now for a moment that one of these beautiful six-room Sunshine Homes was yours, located right in your own town or on your own farm, a neat picket fence around it, flowers growing in well-arranged beds, rose bushes climbing the lattice at the porch ends, sending their fragrance into your nice, cool bedrooms. Picture this in your mind and then you will have a picture of what I want to do for you. This offer is so liberal it is hard to believe, but it is true—every word is true. You can get one of these homes FREE if you will rush your name and address on coupon below and do as I say.

I Will Even Buy a Lot for You!

Perhaps you do not own a lot—don't allow this to prevent your sending in your name and address. I'll take care of everything. I'll arrange to buy a lot for you in your own town and you can arrange to have the house built on the lot. Buy the lot in your neighborhood, or in a suitable neighborhood, allowing you to select the site—you will be proud of this home. I will be proud of it, for it will be a monument of advertising for my business. That is where I get my reward and that is why I make this most marvelous of offers—for the advertising it will give my business.

Free Yourself from the Landlord's Clutches

Surely you have longed for the day to come when you could cease paying rent to a landlord and call your home your own. It does not matter to me whether you already own a home, send your name in anyway. You could rent it to some good family and have a certain income—an independent income, or perhaps after it is built, you would like it so well you would move into it and rent out your old home.

Costs Nothing to Investigate You risk nothing. You are under no obligations when you send me your name and address. All you need is to rush me the coupon below now. Do it at once before you lay this magazine aside.

When I Say Free I Mean Free

This is perhaps the most liberal offer ever appearing in this magazine. I mean every word I say. Be prompt. Rush your name and address quick.

Act Quick!

C. E. MOORE, President,
Home Builders Club, Dept. 602, Batavia, Illinois.

Please send me, absolutely free, full particulars and plans and colored picture of the 6-Room House you will give away. I risk nothing.

Name.....

Town.....

Street.....

State.....

Big Money for Auto Experts

HARD times don't worry the Auto Expert. He is in constant demand. Did you ever know of an experienced auto engineer hunting a job? No, and you never will. The job hunts him.

Just consider for a moment that there are 9,000,000 automobiles in this country today. These millions of cars are in constant need for experts — repairmen and auto engineers.

A smattering knowledge won't get you very far in this line, but if you are willing to get down to brass tacks and really master this well paying line of work, then there will be no limit to what you can earn.

It is only one step from Auto Expert to Garage Owner, but think of the big money that is earned by the up-to-date garage. Here is your chance to become independent — to be your own boss with our help. Now don't say "Well, I'll think about it," but make up your mind right now to be a real success.

The coupon will give you full information on how to do it. Fill out and send it in right now while you are thinking about it.

American School
Dept. A-74, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

American School
Dept. A-74, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

.....Architect.	.....Lawyer.
.....Building Contractor	.....Machine Shop Practice
.....Automobile Engineer	.....Photoplay Writer
.....Automobile Repairman	.....Mechanical Engineer
.....Civil Engineer.	.....Shop Superintendent
.....Structural Engineer	.....Employment Manager
.....Business Manager	.....Steam Engineer
.....Cert. Public Accountant	.....Foremanship
.....Accountant and Auditor	.....Sanitary Engineer
.....Bookkeeper	.....Survey or (and Mapping)
.....Draftsman and Designer	.....Telephone Engineer
.....Electrical Engineer.	.....Telegraph Engineer
.....Electric Light and Power	.....High School Graduate
.....General Education	.....Fire Insurance Expert
.....Vocational Guidance	.....Wireless Radio
.....Business Law	.....Undecided

Name .....

Address .....

Easy to Play
Easy to Pay

BUESCHER

True-Tone
Saxophone

Saxophone Book Free

Tells when to use Saxophone—singly, in sextettes or in regular band; how to transpose cello parts in orchestra and many other things you would like to know.

Easiest of all wind instruments to play and one of the most beautiful. You can learn the scale in an hour's practice and play popular music in a few weeks. You can take your place in a band within 90 days, if you so desire. Unrivalled for home entertainment, church, lodge or school. In big demand for orchestra dance music. The portrait above is of Donald Clark, Soloist with the famous Paul Whiteman's Orchestra.

Free Trial You may order any Buescher Instrument without paying one cent in advance, and try it six days in your own home, without obligation. If perfectly satisfied, pay for it on easy payments to suit your convenience. Mention the instrument interested in and a complete catalog will be mailed free.

(34)

BUESCHER BAND INSTRUMENT CO.
Makers of Everything in Band and Orchestra Instruments
4236 BUESCHER BLOCK ELKHART, INDIANA

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME

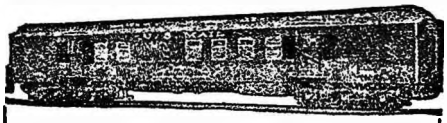
You can earn $15 to $50 a week writing show cards in your own home.—No canvassing.—A pleasant profitable profession easily and quickly learnt by our new simple graphic block system. Artistic ability not necessary.—We teach you how, and supply you with work—Distance no object. Full particulars and booklet free.

WILSON METHODS LIMITED—DEPT. H
64 East Richmond, Toronto, Canada.

SPEED TYPEWRITING
Learn at Home

Write 80 to 100 words a minute. Big money for speed typists, trained by the Tulloss "New Way." Learn in spare time at home. 10 easy lessons. Costs little. Many Tulloss pupils make double former pay. Send for big catalog. Tells you all. Shows how to train for best positions. Write today.

THE TULLOSS SCHOOL 1057-T College Hill Springfield, Ohio



Wanted: Railway Mail Clerks, $135 to $195 Month

U. S. Government wants hundreds. Men—boys over 17. Write IMMEDIATELY for free list of Government positions now open.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. H286, **ROCHESTER, N. Y.**

Does The Socket Chafe Your Stump?

If so, you are NOT wearing

Buchstein's Vulcanized Fiber Limb which is soothing to your stump, cool, neat, light, walls not much thicker than a silver dollar, strong.

Guaranteed 5 Years.

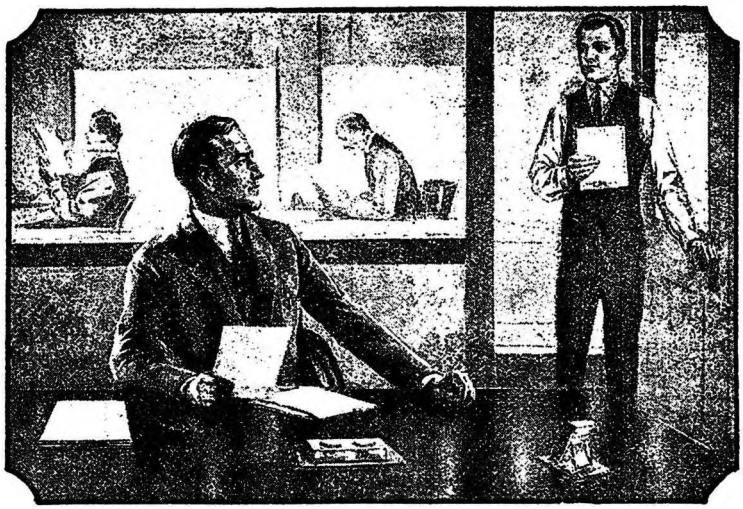
Sold on easy payments to good people. Send for Catalog today.

K. Buchstein Co., 113 6th St., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

FREE DIAMOND RING OFFER

Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian im. diamonds—the greatest discovery the world has ever known. We will send absolutely free this 14k gold f. ring, set with a 1-2k Hawaiian im. diamond—in beautiful ring box postage paid. Pay postmaster $1.48 C. O. D. charges to cover postage, boxing, advertising, handling, etc. If you can tell it from a real diamond return and money refunded. Only 10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer quick. Send size of finger.

KRAUTH & REED, Dept. 412
MASONIC TEMPLE CHICAGO



Couldn't Help Making More Money!

Good news for Tom Macklin—he has just been picked for a five-thousand-dollar job!

Fairly surprised him, the promptness with which he won promotion, and the actual fun that he got in going after it.

Tom, you see, was just an average chap who had been slaving for years in the general offices of the Marbury Company. Meanwhile, other fellows his own age had been stepping into the big-pay positions.

Then one day, less than twelve months ago, Tom Macklin woke up. He did the thing that he should have done five years before—he enrolled with LaSalle Extension University.

And suddenly he made a very happy discovery—he found home-study training under the LaSalle Problem Method downright interesting.

Fascinating, so he called it, to take those problems just as they were put up to him by highly successful business men and to work them out for himself.

For the first time in his life he began to see real progress. Tasks he would have side-stepped a month or so before he performed quickly and satisfactorily. His chief was quick to see the improvement, both in his work and in his attitude toward the job. The result was inevitable. When Johnson left to go with another concern, Macklin was named to succeed him—at a salary to start of $5,000 a year.

Your Shortest Route to a Big-Pay Position

Typical, Macklin's experience, of that of thousands of ambitious men who have found their path to success in the LaSalle Problem Method.

Letter after letter in the files of LaSalle Extension University tells the same thrilling story. If the men now in low-pay jobs could see those actual letters, literally thousands of them, telling of rapid advancement to important positions, they would never rest until they had mastered the specialized training that they absolutely need to win success.

Send for "Ten Years' Promotion in One"

What are *you* going to do with *your* spare time during the next few months? Will you use some portion of it to help you on your way to bigger things, or will you continue to drift—drift—drift—and be forced to content yourself with your present earnings?

One thing, mighty important, you should do at once—you should get the *facts*. The coupon will bring them to you without obligation, together with particulars of our *convenient-payment plan*; also your copy of that inspiring book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One." "Get this book," said a prominent Chicago executive, "even if you have to pay five dollars for it." We will send it *free*.

Mark—Sign—Mail the coupon—NOW.

LaSalle Extension University

The Largest Business Training Institution in the World

Dept. 1065-R **Chicago, Illinois**

Gentlemen: Send me without obligation to me information regarding course indicated below, also copy of your interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One."

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Railway Accounting and Station Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL. B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management Efficiency
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
- ☐ Modern Foremanship and Production Methods
- ☐ Personnel and Employment Management
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching

Name.....

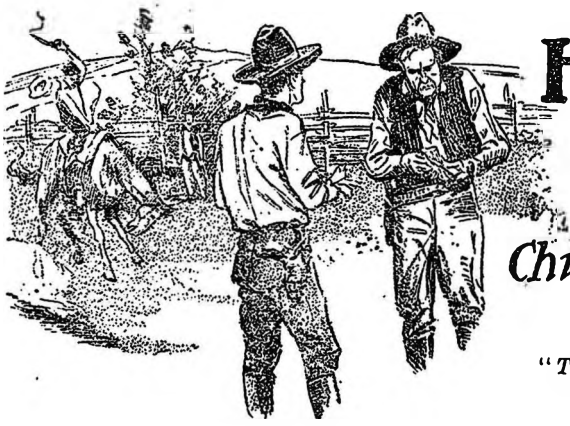
Present Position .....

Address .....

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. XXIX OCTOBER 7, 1922 No. 3



Happy Valley

By

Christopher B. Booth

Author of
"Tex Decides to Tarry,"
"The Feud at Boyd's Basin," etc.

CHAPTER I.

FROM A FORMER DAY.

TWO men jogged briskly along the trail toward Rusty Creek, and it was at once apparent that they were father and son. There was a striking and unmistakable similarity of body as well as of face; both were broad of shoulder, slim of waist, and rode with that lithe, erect, but careless, grace which belongs only to those who have lived long in the saddle. They were a pair to attract more than passing attention; in silence they rode, for Jim Demming, the father, was a silent man. His eyes lacked that sparkling gleam which belonged to the son.

Rusty Creek had at least two things to recommend it as a place of abode; it was just a hop, skip, and jump from the border, a convenient exit for nervous, quick-moving gentlemen possessing an aversion for sheriffs, and a convenient entrance for Mexican liquor. However, young Bill Demming had neither taste for Mexican liquor nor fear of sheriffs; he was here because his father had brought him, nearly twenty years before. The reason for their coming—if any—silent—almost monosyllabic, Jim Demming had never offered to explain, and Bill had never asked.

Bill Demming had his youth, his six-gun, a good horse, and a fair job; he was content with a cow-puncher's pay, and with life as he found it. It was said of him that he fought harder and fairer than any other youngster who had ever ridden the Rusty Creek range; that he had a slow temper and a quick draw;

and that he savvied cows and men. For a boy of twenty-three, this was an enviable reputation, especially around Rusty Creek where the West retains its old flavor, where a man's horse and his gun are counted his two best friends, and where the hand of civilization has rested but lightly.

Dusk was edging on as the two Demmings rode into the cow town; there was only the typical single street, a none-too-straight ribbon of hoof-churned dust snaking its way through the scattered double line of shabby frame buildings. The vacant places between them were high-piled litters of rusting tin cans. The grimy windows of "Texas Tom's," the wet goods emporium wherein was dispensed the contraband liquor smuggled across the border, flared with yellowish light from the coal-oil lamps.

"Looks like a quiet evenin'," observed Bill, noting the less than a dozen horses at the hitch rack.

"Yeh," nodded the father with customary brevity. Suddenly he tensed in the saddle, leaning forward slightly as he studied the brand on the flank of a hard-ridden pinto. His lips were compressed, his eyes narrow.

"What is it, dad?" demanded Bill.

"Old Double Eight brand!" murmured Jim Demming half absently. "It's been most twenty years, kid, since I've seen that brand. I wonder——"

"Where does it run?" asked Bill. "I don't recollect ever seein' it before."

Jim Demming did not answer immediately; his mind was busy with memories, and to judge from his face, they were not entirely pleasant memories. His son was suddenly curious; he felt that he was on the verge of becoming acquainted with the vague and unknown chapters of his father's past.

"Old Double Eight!" said Jim Demming again. "This hoss came clean from Happy Valley; it's been twenty years since—since we left there kid." Before Bill could put another question, Texas Tom appeared through the swinging doors and lounged carelessly across the uneven, loosely clattering floor of the porch.

"Howdy, Jim, howdy, Bill," greeted Texas Tom and paused to roll himself a cigarette. "Jim," he added, "a stranger blowed in here 'bout an hour ago, an'—well, I thought mebbe you ought to know that he's makin' a few inquiries about you. Nothin' legal, likely as not, but——" A shrug of the shoulders finished the sentence; it was not the first time that Texas Tom had given friendly warning to a customer with an uncertain legal status.

Jim Demming looked up slowly.

"Askin' about me, Tom? What does he look like?"

"A sort of hard-lookin' feller, Jim, wearin' two guns. He didn't pass around no visitin' cyards, so I can't give you his name, but he's inside there now, feedin' from the bottle plumb generous. Of course, Jim, you been here twenty years, an' it ain't likely to be——"

"We'll see," murmured Jim Demming as he moved toward the swinging doors; his hand went to his gun holster and unbuttoned the flap. "Thanks, Tom."

Bill Demming was beside his father in a bound. He put an inquiring hand on his father's arm. The parent turned slowly.

"Kid," he said tersely, "I ain't got no way of knowin' what it means or what's comin'; but, no matter what happens, you stay out of it. If there's any settlin' to be done, I'll 'tend to it. Understand?"

"Are you lookin' for trouble?"

"I ain't lookin' for it, kid, but I'm sort of ready," answered Jim Demming. "Just you keep your hand off the butt of that gun."

The father passed on into the saloon, and Bill followed. Jim Demming

walked directly to the bar while the son paused just within the entrance to cast a curious, surveying gaze over the long room. In one corner a desultory game of draw poker was in progress, with four players and two spectators. Josh Meeks sat with his feet propped up on a table, snoring noisily; Josh was on his semiannual "tear." At the bar stood four men, all of them well known to Rusty Creek except the trail-soiled, black-visaged man at the far end.

With a nod to Jeff Peters, the bartender, who set out a bottle and slid over a glass, Jim Demming took his drink and let his eyes drift down the bar until his gaze met that of the stranger. Twenty years had made some changes in the appearance of each, but there was recognition, instant and mutual. The stranger moved toward the center of the room, and Demming faced away from the bar, elbows resting on the edge, the heel of his punching boot hooked over the rail, waiting.

"I'm lookin' fer a certain party whose name is Jim Demming—leastwise, that's his real name," announced the stranger.

"Reckon I'm that certain party," retorted Jim Demming lazily; "that's my name, an' I've never gone under no alias. I know you, too, Seth Dunlap. No further formalities being necessary, suppose you get down to cases an' state the business in hand."

Seth Dunlap whipped out his gun and leveled it menacingly at Jim Demming's chest.

"I'm a dep'ty sheriff from Happy Valley, an' I've come to git you. Tetch ceilin', Jim Demming, an' tetch it dang quick."

As Bill Demming edged a step closer, his father moved elbows from the bar, folding his arms across his chest instead of elevating them over his head. His lips smiled, but not his eyes.

"This is a heap more comfortable," he answered calmly. "I reckon, mebbe, you got a warrant?"

"Warrant, huh?" snarled Seth Dunlap. "This here forty-five is the only warrant I need, in my county or out of it. I'm givin' you warnin'. Get them hands up."

"What's the charge?" demanded Jim Demming, making no move to comply.

"You know dang well what the charge is," snapped the deputy from Happy Valley. "I'm arrestin' you fer the murder of Sam Hickson, on the eighteenth day of April——"

"In the year of Nineteen Two," finished Jim Demming. "That's been a powerful long time ago, Seth Dunlap, a powerful long time. It occurs to me as bein' sort o' strange, not to say peculiar, that the officials of Happy Valley is gettin' so ambitious all of a sudden.

"There ain't no stat-toot of limitations on a murder charge," retorted the deputy with proud display of this legal knowledge. "There ain't no use tryin' to argue the case here; any arguments has got to be spoke—after you've been took back—'fore a jury of twelve men. I'm warnin' you for the last time, get up them hands!"

Had Seth Dunlap been more alert, he would have seen Bill Demming, his hands resting lightly on the butt of his own gun, come another step closer. Jim Demming continued to smile with his lips.

"There's another queer thing about this arrest," he went on. "I see a hoss outside wearin' Double Eight's brand. The one you're riding; more like as not. How long, may I inquire, Mister Dunlap, have you been fillin' the high an' important office of dep'ty sheriff?"

"None of your business!"

Jim Demming nodded sagely.

"Like I guessed," he said, "this is a sort of special dep'ty's job you got, appointed for the particular task of takin' me back to Happy Valley. See here, Seth Dunlap, I got this game sized up about like it is, an' it don't take such

a smart man to figger it out. I don't pretend to know what might be called the underlyin' motive, but I reckon it's a safe guess that the way it'll work out is that you an' me start for Happy Valley, an' only one of us arrives. Ain't I guessed it, Seth Dunlap? Th' dep'ty sheriff rides home with a yarn about his pris'ner tryin' to make an escape—an', there bein' no witnesses, who's goin' to deny the story? Yeh, a plumb clever scheme, Dunlap. An' the only trouble with it is—I ain't goin' back with you."

"Git up them hands; reach fer that cobweb on the ceilin'!" roared Dunlap. "You're goin' back with me—dead or alive!"

Jim Demming, without removing his arms from across his chest, reached into the breast pocket of his flannel shirt for tobacco sack and cigarette papers. The saloon was plunged into a tense, breathless silence; from the swinging doors Texas Tom watched without interference. His policy was always one of nonintervention. While the deputy sheriff watched, his forefinger taut on the trigger, Jim Demming, arms still across his chest, rolled a cigarette dexterously with one hand; so steady were his fingers that not a grain of tobacco was spilled. Lazily he half turned toward the bar, seemingly ignoring Seth Dunlap and the death-threatening forty-five.

"Got a match handy, Jeff?" he asked casually. "Seems like I ain't got one on me." He took a match which the uneasy bartender offered him at a cautious arms-length before that attendant ducked to an even safer distance. He was not misled by Jim Demming's languid movements; neither, for that matter, was Bill Demming, standing eight feet away. The boy's hand, contrary to his father's orders, was closed in on his gun half drawn from the holster; this the deputy from Happy Valley did not notice.

Jim Demming deliberately lighted the cigarette and turned around again; while his body moved slowly, his arm traveled with the speed of lightning. The tense silence was broken by the thunderous roar of triple shots, mingling as one; there had, in the bewildering fraction of a second, leaped into life three pistols—Jim Demming's, his son's, and the deputy's. With the last echo, Seth Dunlap swayed and went staggering back, dropping his gun as he reeled to clutch at the welling crimson circle on the chest of his trail-grimed shirt. There was, too, another bullet hole in the crown of his hat, too high for damage. He fell back in a chair, writhing.

His face hard set and pale, Jim Demming leaned back against the bar; slowly, very slowly, he poked his forty-five back into its holster.

"It was Bill got him!" whispered Jeff, the bartender. "Bill never misses what he shoots at."

Jim Demming shook his head.

"I plumb hate—to reflect—on my kid's marksmanship," he said, his breath coming in jerks, "but it was my bullet that downed Seth Dunlap." His muscles twitched. "Yes, boys, it was me that potted him. Bill, I told you—to keep your hand off that gun; this was—my fight."

Bill Demming leaped to his father's side, passing a hand about the older man's shoulders.

"Dad!" he cried. "He got you—but I got him."

The father, swinging around to the bar, swayed a little.

"A drink," he ordered, his voice beginning to thicken. "'Pears, Jeff, like this is the last drink I'll be havin' with you, so—so fill 'er brimmin' full, Jeff, brimmin' full. Yes, Bill, he got me—bad, but—it wasn't your bullet that downed him. It was mine, kid; mine. Understand that. Boys, you bear me out, don't you?" His voice was almost pleading. "You, Texas Tom, you say that it was Bill that shot through the

crown of his hat, mine that dropped him? You, Jeff, ain't that—that the way it looked to you?"

Texas Tom and his bartender nodded; so did every other head in the room—except Bill's. Jim Demming had friends.

"Thanks, boys," and Jim Demming nodded, draining his glass. "That's plumb white of you an'—an' it may save some trouble." Bill understood; his father was accepting the blame for the shooting of the deputy from Happy Valley.

"Dad," pleaded the son, "what's it all mean? Who was it sent him here after you? Tell me who it was——"

Jim Demming shook his head; his eyes were beginning to glaze.

"No, kid, you would—be makin' tracks for—Happy Valley, an' you—let well enough alone. You hear me, Bill, you—stay away—from Happy Valley." A tiny stream of crimson trickled through his lips, a shudder shook his big frame, and he dropped back into his son's arms.

"Game!" whispered Texas Tom reverently as he helped Bill let the dead man down to the floor. "They never made 'em any gamer than Jim Demming."

Bill had never known how much he loved his seldom-smiling, seldom-speaking father until now, and within him there arose the passion of revenge; his pulses ran hot, and his eyes blazed.

"I'm goin' to Happy Valley!" he cried. "I'm goin' to Happy Valley, an' the low-down coyote that's responsible for this, the sneakin' coward that sends a man with a deputy's badge to do his killin' for him, has got to pay—he's got to pay to me!"

Seth Dunlap, the deputy from Happy Valley, tortured by excruciating pain, loosened a flow of cries.

"Ain't nobody goin' to git a doc?" he shouted. "I'm dyin', you petrified fools! Don't you see I'm dyin'?"

Bill Demming took a step toward him.

"Yes, you hired gunman, pretendin' to be the officer of law an' justice, you're dyin', an' lead is too good for your kind. Who sent you to Rusty Creek? Tell me the name of the man who sent you, or——"

Texas Tom caught his arm.

"Easy, Bill; easy," he counseled; "I don't blame you for feelin' that way, but you ain't the kind, Bill, that fights with a dyin' man."

"I wasn't goin' to plug him, Tom," answered Bill Demming. "I was just tryin' to make him tell me——"

Seth Dunlap stared upward into the youngster's blazing eyes, and a look of dazed incredulity came into his face.

"Two of 'em!" he gasped. "There's two of 'em! I didn't know—Jim Demming had a youngster. What a joke—what a joke on the boss!" His voice rose to a hoarse laugh; suddenly the laugh was lost in a horrible gurgle. And so he died.

CHAPTER II.

HAPPY VALLEY—AND A GIRL.

BOTH man and horse were tired; a hundred and ten miles in three days, with the heat of a late summer pounding down, is grueling travel. It is usually necessity or safety that sends one over the trail at that speed, but with young Bill Demming it was impatience and eagerness to take his vengeance upon the unknown. His face was grim with the determination to solve the riddle of his father's death, and to unearth the sinister motive which had sent the special deputy sheriff such a distance for a fugitive who had been permitted for twenty years to live in peace. It was a subterfuge to give murder the cloak of legality; so his father had declared, and Bill was sure that it was true.

What the circumstances were, which

had forced his father into exile, Bill did not know; but, knowing his father, he had a blind faith that might had been on his side. The horse climbed wearily along the high backbone of the last hill; the answer lay below, only a few miles farther on, and Bill's shoulders straightened. His eyes, which had been dulled by the monotony of the trail, became alight with interest as he lifted himself high in the stirrups as if to peer over the rise.

"We've eaten up a powerful lot of distance, old hoss, to say nothin' of dust," he said, "but we're nearin' the end of our journey. Happy Valley is what they call it, Scooter."

Scooter plodded gamely on upward and, as they reached the summit, Bill reined in sharply. Below him lay the valley, nestling within the wide curve and sweep of Cascade Hills. As grim as was his purpose, the beauty of it, lying so peacefully beneath the late summer haze, held him for a moment spellbound. Perhaps there was a little of poetry in Bill Demming's soul.

"That's it, old hoss," he said slowly; "that's Happy Valley down there." It seemed to stir some vague and faint memory; it might have touched him even more had he known that his mother —the mother who had died when he was only a few months old, and whom he had never known—had given Happy Valley its name.

Here and there he could see indistinct spots which his practiced, rangewise eyes told him were grazing cattle, and his mouth tightened as he wondered in which direction lay the outfit known as Double Eight. There, he felt sure, was where his quest would lead him, for Seth Dunlap, the man who had killed his father, had ridden into Rusty Creek on a horse wearing that brand.

"Job along, Scooter," said Bill, and the animal moved on, beginning the circling descent to the valley. They had gone but a hundred yards or so when the man pulled up again suddenly as the trail turned. Below, where a shelf-like rock reached out over the side of the cliff which jutted steeply downward, sat a girl. Her sombrero was in the lap of her khaki riding skirt, her hair was bared to the sun, which transmuted the brown strands into an aura of spun gold.

Slender, yet having strength, she was unlike any girl he had ever seen, except one on the cover of a magazine which a tenderfoot tourist had left behind him at Circle Dot. Around Rusty Creek even pretty girls on magazine covers were scarce. But this girl, sitting dreamily on the rock shelf, with her face half turned toward the valley—Bill Demming tingled to behold her. She did not turn, and was unaware of his almost open-mouthed admiration.

While Bill still watched her, a giant black horse came up the trail from the other direction. The rider was tall, thick set, and inclined to pouchiness. He pulled up, removed his hat, and slid out of the saddle. It was too far away for Bill to catch more than the murmur of words, but the girl sprang suddenly to her feet; certainly, if the watching man were any judge, there was no sign of welcome in her attitude.

For some minutes the two talked, the girl and the rider of the black horse. She made a move toward the trail, but the man blocked the way and took a step toward her. She raised her riding quirt in a threatening semicircle, but, before it fell, the man had torn it from her fingers, flinging it far over the edge of the cliff. Then he seized both of her wrists, drawing her toward him as she struggled frantically and with such a frenzy of strength that she would have hurtled over the edge of the rock shelf did the man not drag her back to safety.

Bill Demming had watched but a moment before he touched his spurs to Scooter's ribs with a jab which sent the

jaded animal leaping forward in instant response.

"We're needed down there, old hoss," Bill said grimly. "The low-down hound!" With a few springs of Scooter's legs, he was within earshot.

"You listen to me, Betty Allen," said the owner of the black horse, "you ought to know by this time that I get what I want in Happy Valley; what I want, I take. I said a year ago that you were going to marry me, and that goes. Right here is where I put my seal of ownership on you. Never been kissed before, eh, Betty?"

"You beast! Let me go! When I tell my father——"

"You got too much sense to do that, Betty. He would—well, he ain't so quick with a gun as he used to be." Betty Allen wrenched one wrist free and struck at his face. The man only laughed, tore down her arm, and kissed her—once, twice, three times. As he relaxed his embrace about her shuddering body, she staggered back, wiping her lips furiously with the back of her hand.

"Oh!" she panted out. "You beast—you unspeakable beast! If I had my gun—if I had my gun, I would kill you."

Bill Demming's approach had been unnoticed; he dropped down to the trail, his face grim and hard.

"Just what I got a mighty strong notion of doin', ma'am," he said.

Betty Allen turned quickly; she uttered no word, but her eyes thanked him. The man, too, wheeled, but as his hand moved toward his holster he found himself looking into the deadly bore of another gun held by a hand quicker than his own.

"Ditch the hardware, an' ditch it pronto!" snapped Bill. "Them's my orders, but I'm hopin' you draw. My trigger finger is plumb itchin'!" Their eyes clashed, and the other man kept his hand clear of his forty-five as a snarl burst through his anger-twisted lips.

"You better be mindin' your own business," he warned.

"It's always my business when I see a feller gettin' gay with a lady," retorted Bill. "If you work that belt buckle a little faster an' your mouth a little slower, you're liable to find it a heap more healthy. The Disarmament Conference is now in session. Ditch that gun, I said; I ain't goin' to tell you no third time."

The owner of the black horse hesitated, but there was a steely glint in Bill Demming's eyes which discouraged dalliance. Slowly, reluctantly, the man unfastened his belt and let it drop to the ground. Bill, backing him off a couple of paces, picked up the weapon and tossed it carelessly over the edge of the cliff.

"A gun," he said, "is a man's weapon, an' you ain't no man; therefore you ain't got no business with one.

"You meddlesome fool, you don't know who——"

"Don't know whose tail I'm twistin', mebbe," cut in Bill Demming. "Like as not you're goin' to tell me that you're the big I AM of this country, or somethin' like that. Save your breath, mister; I don't know who you are, an' I don't give a dang. I've seen enough to know what you are, an' that's what counts right now."

He unbuckled his own gun and handed it to Betty Allen, who accepted mechanically, wondering what this strange young man was about to do; she was still rather dazed by the unexpectedness of his appearance and the breath-taking way in which he made himself master of the situation. Bill unlooped the rawhide quirt from the pommel of his saddle.

"A black snake," he said grimly, "is what I ought to have in a case of this kind, but this is the only instrument of punishment I got in stock. Stand

up there, you, an' take what's comin' to you!"

The other man stepped back hastily.

"Touch me with that quirt," he warned, "and——"

"You are going to flog him?" almost whispered Betty Allen.

"Horsewhippin', ma'am, may teach him some manners, but I ain't real sure but that I oughn't to have shot him," answered Bill. He raised the quirt. Swish! The other leaped back, but not quickly enough to escape the welt-raising sting of the rawhide lash across his shoulders.

"I'll kill you for that!" His voice was hoarse with pain and rage. Bill took another step forward, the quirt raised, but the girl sprang forward and caught his arm.

"No more!" she cried. "Please! You don't understand. He will——"

"Two more," insisted Bill; "it was —three, wasn't it, ma'am?" She realized that the stranger intended a lash for each kiss, and her face flamed with color.

"Please, no; he means what he says. He will kill you; he——"

Firmly, Bill Demming pushed her aside.

"I got to finish this job, ma'am, in my own way. Mebbe you had better turn your head." He advanced again, and twice more the quirt whistled as it fell and found its mark.

"If you didn't have that whip——"

Instantly, Bill tossed it down.

"All right," he invited, "I ain't got it now. What was it that you was goin' to do?"

With a bellow of rage the flogged man lunged forward. He was the more powerfully built of the two, and on the face of it the advantage was his.

"I'm goin' to pound you to jelly!" he shouted. "I'm goin' to bust you wide open and leave you here for the buzzards."

Bill Demming made no answering boast; nimbly, he sidestepped the wild rush, delivering a neat blow to his antagonist's left ear. The man staggered and stumbled to his knees, and Bill, although he might have finished it then and there, would not strike a man when he was down. The man got to his feet, rage now tempered with caution, for he had discovered that this youth knew how to use his fists, and that no hammer-and-tongs methods would do. He began to fight with more calculation.

Betty Allen watched, thrilled by the realization that her unknown defender, he of the slim waist, the steely blue eyes, was more than holding his own, though he did not match the other's weight by nearly thirty pounds. This handicap was more than counterbalanced by the quickness of his feet and the scientific manner in which he placed his blows. He had youth and clean living as an ally; he was twenty-three, the other past thirty-five. The two men circled, struck, clinched, and broke away, only to clash again. There were no sounds except the milling of their feet on the gravel floor of the trail, the sound of their heavy breathing, the smack and plup of fists against flesh, and the muttering curses of Bill Demming's tiring adversary. There was a cut on Bill's cheek where the other's ring had ripped the skin.

The heavier man began to waver, and his blows seemed to lack force; yet an exultant light suddenly burned in his now swollen eyes, and a smile twisted up the corners of his battered mouth. It was Betty Allen who divined his purpose.

"The cliff!" she screamed. "He's driving you to the edge!"

Her warning was just in time; Bill Demming leaped aside not a second too soon, for the other hurled himself forward, every ounce of his remaining strength packed in the murderous swing of his left fist. The wabbling of his knees and the rolling of his head had

been partly a ruse. But his arm, due to Betty's warning, sawed only empty air; unbalanced by the empty swing, he plunged to his knees and, with a horrible scream of terror, went sliding toward the doom he had planned for Bill Demming.

It all happened so quickly that the eyes of the solitary spectator could hardly follow it, but she saw the stranger's arm fly out as the other went sliding past him, fingers finding a grip on the man's shirt collar; they both went coasting downward amid a rush of loosened stone and gravel. Bill's free hand clawed desperately and froze rigidly to the sharp edge of a rock, so sharp that it tore his fingers as both of their bodies toppled over the rim and swung suspended above the sixty-foot drop where death yawned for them below. There they dangled, Bill Demming's elbow crooked across the rock, his own weight and that of the other man tearing and straining at his muscles. It seemed almost superhuman the way in which he managed to retain his hold.

"Quit that squirmin', or I'll have to drop you!" he panted out. "You, miss, the rope—off my saddle—quick. Can't—hold out—long." He had the sensation that his arm was being slowly torn loose from its socket by the terrific strain.

Betty Allen, her lips white and set, her eyes wide with horror, her limbs threatening to collapse beneath her, reached for the lariat; in reality she moved with amazing swiftness, and it was only because she lived an age in a single moment that her hands seemed so slow, her fingers so clumsy.

"Leave—one end—to the pommel," instructed Bill gaspingly. "My hoss—can pull—us back. Pass down—the rope." Betty instantly understood the plan, and, with a prayer on her lips that it would not be too late, she swung the lariat over the side of the rock; the lowermost man frantically twisted it about his arms, and Bill loosened his hold about the fellow's shirt. Then again to the girl: "Get the hoss movin'; I—I'm slippin'—fast." But it was the rock to which he clung, and not his fingers, which surrendered to the strain; the rock, pulled from its bed of gravel by the weight of the two men, had begun to pry slowly away. The rope tightened, and Bill, too, grasped it with his now free hand; the horse plunged forward, and the next instant both men were pulled clear of the hazard and lay safe on the ground. It came not a moment too soon, for there was a roar of cascading rock, and the entire shelflike ledge of the cliff seemed to be caving in.

"Nice, pleasant sound—that," gasped Bill Demming, struggling up, massaging his aching muscles, and wiggling his numbed fingers to satisfy himself that no bone had been snapped. It was a somewhat wan smile that he gave Betty Allen as her white face stared down into his. "It ain't the first time, ma'am, that Scooter has helped me out of a tight fix. Good li'le old hoss, Scooter." She nodded dumbly, trembling with the reaction.

"Thank Heaven!" she breathed. "I thought you were gone. Your arm——"

"Just a little crampin' feelin', ma'am," he said reassuringly, but he winced with the pain of the strained tendons as he slowly began to pick up the rope which had hauled them to safety. As he coiled it up, the other man staggered to his feet, still ashen of face from the terror of his experience. There was no gratitude in his eyes, only the fires of a deep-burning, unforgiving hatred. His lips, bruised by Bill's fists, twitched into a snarl as he went to his black horse.

"If you ain't out of this country by sunset," he warned, "I'm goin' to kill you."

"For shame!" cried Betty Allen. "He

has just risked his life to save you. Don't you know the meaning of the word gratitude?"

"By sunset! There ain't room in Happy Valley for both of us."

Bill Demming's lips tightened, and his eyes glinted. He hung the rope on his saddle and reached toward the girl for his gun belt. Betty gave it to him, and Bill swung it about his waist, adjusting the buckle. His fingers stroked the butt of his forty-five, and he looked down upon the valley.

"Looks like a real spacious place," he drawled, "but, if that's the way you feel about it, like as not I'll have to make room, for I'm sure aimin' to stay for a spell."

CHAPTER III.

BILL GETS A JOLT.

AS they rode down the trail together, toward Happy Valley, Bill Demming stole furtively worshipful glances at the girl beside him; until now, the glorious feminine creature on the magazine cover had been his standard of maidenly charms.

Betty Allen! Even the name of her was music to his ears; he had heard it from the lips of the man from whose advances he had rescued her. For a few minutes they rode in silence, and her eyes were thoughtful; presently, she turned.

"I haven't thanked you yet," she said.

"It ain't necessary, ma'am," Bill answered depreciatingly; "any man would have done the same under the circumstances."

"I'm not so sure about that. I know that not one man in a thousand would have risked his life——"

"Pshaw, now!" Bill interrupted hastily.

"I was just thinking," Betty Allen went on, "that—that it might have been better—for you—if you'd let him go over the cliff. He meant what he said about your being out of Happy Valley by sunset."

"And I meant what I said about stayin'," Bill answered quietly. "His threats don't worry me none."

"Which is proof what a stranger you are to Happy Valley. They're used to having their own way—that breed." Her voice was contemptuous. "I can't advise you to leave Happy Valley; I know how a man feels. You think it would be cowardly; perhaps I would be disappointed in you if you were to leave. But I can advise you to be careful; it won't be one man that you're up against, but a gang. Keep your eyes open and your holster flap unbuttoned."

"I aim to, ma'am; it's kind of a habit that I got into where I come from—Rusty Creek way."

She glanced at the Circle Dot brand on Scooter's flank.

"You must have come quite a distance; I don't remember having seen it before."

"Yes'm, Rusty Creek is quite a ramble from here—a hundred an' ten miles as a hoss gallops. Three days now my pal an' I have been on the trail."

"Your pal? Then you are not alone; perhaps—perhaps that will make it a little safer for you. If you stay in Happy Valley, you will need him."

"I'm sittin' astride him," and Bill smiled. "Scooter is a pal that I'm proud to have. He ain't so much on looks, I reckon, but he's got speed in his legs an' a brave heart thumpin' under his ugly hide. Wouldn't swap him for any thoroughbred I ever saw."

Betty Allen made a swift mental calculation; a hundred and ten miles in three days was fast traveling for this sort of weather—almost forty miles a day. Certainly, that was hard riding. A man who did it must have a pressing reason to put distance behind him. She looked at him searchingly. The reason in this case was not cattle rustling or banditry, she decided. He was impul-

sive and handy with his forty-five; perhaps that explained it.

"You are a puncher, of course." That was an easy guess, for everything about him proclaimed it.

"Yes'm; ridin' range is my line."

"You've come too late for a job, I'm afraid. You will find jobs scarce. Most of the outfits are laying off men. My father owns Circle Bar; you can see our cows right below us here. But I'm afraid we are full-handed. Still, we might——"

"That's all right," said Bill, thinking that she was apologizing for not offering him a place in her father's bunk house in return for what he had done on the trail. "I didn't come to Happy Valley to punch cows, anyhow; that is, not particularly." He thought of the lone hundred dollars in his pocket; it wouldn't be long before he would have to punch cows somewhere.

He slowed Scooter to a walk as he stared down upon the stretch of grazing land which she had designated with her hand as Circle Bar, and he frowned in unconscious disapproval, his expert eye sizing up the straggling herd. They weren't well rounded as cows should be at this time of the year. Scrawny; that was the word. His eyes drifted toward a stream which flowed plentifully from out of the hills, shimmering clear in the sunlight.

"Good water," he murmured absently as if at a loss to understand it.

"Very good water," agreed Betty Allen, and he thought her voice took on a slightly bitter edge; "perhaps you haven't noticed that the 'good water' is fenced off—from Circle-Bar stock."

"Fenced off? Ain't this open range, ma'am?"

"So it is, except for those sections down there." Her hand, resting on her saddle, clenched. "It was our best grazing, too; they've driven Circle Bar cattle to the short grass. That's why our herd looks as if the drought had caught 'em."

Bill Demming saw the wire strands where the fencing had been put in.

"Squatters," he grunted. "There's no keepin' 'em out, I reckon, but I didn't know that this country was ready for 'em yet. Of course it's public land, an' they got the legal right; but it's sort of hard for a bred-in-the-bone cowman to welcome 'em as the salt of the earth."

Betty Allen shook her head.

"It isn't the legitimate homesteaders that we mind!" she burst out. "When Happy Valley is ready for farms, no one will give way more quickly than dad and I. This land belongs, not to the Federal government, but to the State, and the ranchers have the right to use it only until it is claimed for the plow; if they were genuine homesteaders, and not the hirelings of——" She broke off. "I won't burden a stranger with Circle Bar's troubles."

Bill Demming did not consider it good form to tell her that anything which concerned her was of interest to him, but he was disappointed that she did not continue. He had a feeling that, indeed, Circle Bar was in deep distress; the cows told him so much, even if the girl had given him no hint of it.

"You're grazin' quite a herd, at that," he observed.

"A thousand head," she replied sadly; "just about half the number we grazed last year—and next year it will be even less."

Bill Demming nodded soberly; he could understand. With that sort of grazing, with an inadequate water supply, each year would find those cows getting thinner and becoming less hardy. They would breed down to runts, worth not a great deal more than the cost of freighting them to the stockyards. Instead of something like sixty dollars a head on the hoof, both their weight and their value per hundred would decrease

until they would bring little better than thirty-five dollars.

Unless something were done about it, the ranch was doomed, and the Circle Bar brand would disappear from the Happy Valley range. He made a mental note that he would hear the straight of it; that he would find out what sinister force was behind those fraudulent homesteaders, before he had been much longer in the Valley.

"It's almost dinner time," Betty said suddenly, with a glance at the sun. "Won't you come to the ranch and share our chuck? It's five miles farther on to town, and—your horse is tired. If you're determined to stay in Happy Valley, perhaps—perhaps we could find a place for you at Circle Bar."

"I'd be mighty pleased to sit at your table, ma'am," Bill said with quick earnestness. Had he given frank voice to his thoughts, he might have added that he would gladly work for his keep just to be near her.

"There—there is just one condition that I must make," she added hurriedly, a flush creeping into her cheeks. "You mustn't mention to my father anything about what happened back there on the trail. Dad would try to kill him for that."

"My lips are sealed," promised Bill. "I wouldn't have made mention of it, anyhow, ma'am."

"No, I don't think you would. Dad mustn't hear of it because—well, the rheumatism has slowed up dad's arm a good deal, and Paul Demming is the fastest man on the draw in Happy Valley."

Bill Demming jerked erect in his saddle and stared at her in bewilderment.

"What name did you say?" he gasped out.

Betty Allen looked at him curiously.

"Demming," she answered; "Paul Demming. It seems to startle you."

"It does," Bill answered honestly; "it sure certain does, ma'am. I—well, you see——" Caution stood guard at his tongue. "You see, there was a feller back in Rusty Creek named Demming."

"I hope he wasn't a friend of yours," said Betty Allen. "The Demmings are a bad lot, the whole breed of them. We—we hate even the name, dad and I."

Bill passed a hand over his brow, trying to understand just what it meant. His father had come from Happy Valley; he was a Demming. He was glad that he had neglected to tell this girl his name; she might put him in the unsavory category with the Happy Valley clan.

"Tell me, Miss Allen," he said, "is there a ranch hereabouts called Double Eight?"

Betty darted him a swift glance.

"Yes," she answered almost shortly, "that is the Demming outfit."

Although this was vital information, it was not very enlightening. The man who had killed his father had ridden a horse wearing the Double Eight brand; the Double Eight brand belonged to the Demmings, the Happy Valley Demmings. A dozen questions trembled eagerly on his tongue, but he suppressed them in fear that he give himself away. Betty Allen must not know yet that he was a Demming lest she hate him before he had taught her to love him, for Bill Demming had already resolved within his heart that this he would do.

"That Demming back in Rusty Creek," he said cautiously; "he might be some kin. I ain't so sure about that, ma'am but seems like I did hear some mention of him hailin' from Happy Valley way. His name was Jim Demming, ma'am."

Betty Allen shrugged her shoulders as if any discussion of the Demming family tree were distasteful.

"I couldn't say," she answered. "Paul Demming, the man back there on the trail, had an uncle, Cæsar Demming, who died three or four months ago. So far as I know there are no more."

She hesitated for a moment thoughtfully. "Since I think about it," she added, "Cæsar Demming did have a brother; he shot a man and had to flee the country; that was before I was born. Why is it that you are so interested in that outfit, Mr.—— Why, I don't even know your name."

Bill's hand clenched on the top of his saddle, and his mouth tightened.

"My name?" he repeated, wondering the best way out of a bad situation. "Why, ma'am, if—if you don't mind, suppose—suppose you just call me Bill."

Betty Allen looked at the journey-tired horse; a hundred and ten miles it had come in three days, ridden by a man who preferred not to tell his name. She stared frankly into the rider's youthful face; it was not a face that one associated with evil, and she remembered, too, that he had saved the life of a man who had tried to kill him. It gave her a confident feeling that, whatever his reason for hiding his name, justice was on his side—moral, if not legal, justice.

"All right, Bill." She nodded and smiled.

But Bill Demming, busy with his thoughts, did not smile. Of one thing he was very certain. Paul Demming, the man he had flogged and beaten on the trail, whose life he had saved later, was his cousin. But it gave rise to twin questions which he could not answer.

Was it Paul Demming, owner of the Double Eight outfit who had sent Seth Dunlap to kill his father? The other was: If so, why?

CHAPTER IV.

BILL RIDES INTO A JOB.

"FLINT" Allen, grizzled veteran of the range, was sitting on the steps of the ranch-house porch as his daughter and the stranger rode toward the corral. He was a tall, massive-framed man, the owner of the dwindling Circle Bar herds, with frosted eyebrows drooping densely over a pair of eyes that were as blue as Betty's were brown; a sweeping gray mustache abundantly draped his upper lip, but did not quite conceal the habitual compression of mouth and the dogged out-thrust of jaw. His thumbs hooked over his gun belt, his shoulders hunched forward with that slope which belongs to the man who has spent many years in the saddle, he got to his feet and ambled toward them.

Before he spoke, he subjected Bill to that intent scrutiny with which he always viewed those who appeared, from time to time, in his daughter's company. It could not be said that his gaze, while critical, was disapproving.

"Got company, I see, gal," he remarked. "You didn't get back a mite too soon. I been smellin' cookin' grub, an' I was hopin' you wouldn't make your old dad dine solitary." He grinned toward Bill. "Food an' poker," he said with a chuckle, "is two things best enjoyed with the chairs well occupied. Come from quite a distance, stranger, to judge from the brand that your hoss is packin'."

"This, dad," put in Betty, "is just plain Bill. He's traveling incog for the present, but I'll vouch for him. He rendered me quite a service on the trail. A—a rattlesnake slipped up behind me, and I'd left my gun at home.'" Only metaphorically was this true.

Flint Allen held out his hand.

"Howdy, Bill! Reckon I'll take my little gal's say-so; I'll trust her judgment when it comes to both hosses an' men. Take off the gear an' turn your hoss into the corral. I'll say that animal has been rode."

"I've told Bill, dad, that he might find room in the Circle Bar bunk house."

Flint Allen seemed to consider the matter for a moment.

"Humph!" he grunted. "Didn't you know, gal, that Circle Bar's pay roll

is full; in fact—hum—a mite top-heavy?"

"Not with Bill's kind, dad," Betty answered firmly, and Bill flushed happily at the warmth of her tone. "Dad, I've seen him in action."

"Action, huh?" The owner of Circle Bar looked again and saw the cut on Bill's cheek, the discolored splotch below one eye, the result of the fight on the trail. "Did you get them marks in a tussle with—that rattlesnake?" His voice was skeptical, amused.

Bill passed the question with a laugh, and Allen did not press the matter.

"I thought, dad—well, Bill, here, strikes me as being a man one could depend upon in an emergency. I can't help but think——"

"That there's goin' to be trouble," and Flint Allen nodded grimly. "There is, gal; plenty of it. It's already here. 'Buck' Yager was winged in the left shoulder while he was ridin' the line fence this mornin'."

An exclamation burst from the girl's lips.

"Buck? That means——"

"It means," finished Flint Allen, "that old Circle Bar's best buster won't be ridin' in the rodeo. Buck ain't shot up so bad, but it's bad enough to keep him out of the ridin' contests. Yes, honey, trouble is already poppin', but I allow that a feller hirin' out for puncher's pay aims to handle a rope instead of a six-gun. It's too much, askin' a plumb stranger to get mixed up in a cattleman's war for his monthly pay an' chuck."

But, instead of being discouraged, Bill's eyes sparkled; the idea of helping to fight the Allens' battles—and that meant hers—had a tremendous appeal for him.

"I'm willin'," he offered quickly.

The owner smiled under cover of his mustache at the youngster's eagerness, and looked him over critically.

"Bill," he demanded, "can you ride 'em high, wide, an' handsome?"

"I've rode some," Bill answered modestly.

Flint Allen took his arm and led him to the corral gate; with a blunt forefinger he pointed to a dejected-looking horse that stood inside the fence.

"Think you can stick on that critter?" he asked dryly.

Bill looked grieved.

"Ride that?" he exclaimed indignantly. "Why, I reckon a tenderfoot could ride that hoss bareback!"

"Appearances, the sayin' goes, is deceivin'," grunted Allen; "it shore applies to Bel."

"Dad!" protested Betty. "You're not going to let him ride Beelzebub!"

"That's a queer name for a hoss," ventured Bill.

"That's confession, youngster, that you ain't familiar with the Black Book. Beelzebub, if you was Biblewise, you'd know is a polite name for Old Nick himself. Bel—we call him that for short—is plumb well named; that sleepy-lookin' cuss has got enough casualties to his credit to make a hospital show a profit. I'm goin' to make you a little proposition—you ride that hoss, an' you got a job."

"Dad!" protested Betty.

"I'll ride him," Bill decided promptly; "I'll ride him right now."

"That's the kind of spirit I like," said Flint Allen, "but talkin ain't ridin'."

"Bel is a sunfisher," warned Betty, "the worst sunfisher that I ever saw."

Bill Demming made no response; he was busy removing his own saddle from Scooter. On the pommel of it, set into the leather, was a silver plate upon which was engraved "Bill Demming, Rusty Creek Rodeo." He made a mental note that he must obliterate this evidence of his identity before some prying eye detected it; the silver-mounted saddle had been first prize in the Rusty Creek finals the year before.

"You ain't needin' no help with Bel to get the cinch tightened," said Flint Allen. "It's after you throw a leg over the saddle that Bel wakes up."

Bill nodded silently and, dragging his saddle by the horn, entered the corral. Beelzebub showed no interest in his approach, offered no resistance as the hackmore was slipped over his drowsily drooping ears.

"If this critter is an outlaw, I'm a train robber," grunted Bill under his breath; there lurked in his mind the suspicion that the owner of Circle Bar was playing a joke on him. As he led the unprotesting Bel to the fence to tie the halter, this conviction grew, to be offset only by Betty Allen's tense face.

The bored animal still remained unconcerned. However, Bill was cautious as he swung the saddle over the animal's back and tightened the cinch. Except to stiffen his legs, Bel made no move. When the bridle was adjusted, Bill turned the animal loose and placed his foot in the stirrup, then swung lightly to the seat.

For a moment Beelzebub stood motionless; the man raked his spurs invitingly against the horse's sides. The result was immediate and startling, so startling that Bill had never in his life fought so hard to keep from pullling leather. Bel was what might be called a strategist; from the placidity of an overworked plow horse, he became an incarnate demon of action. He was the natural-born master of all an outlaw's deviltry. He was a pitcher, a weaver, and a sunfisher all in one. Even the droop-lidded eyes were transformed, turning red and rolling.

Lithe and sinuous as a panther, Bill Demming rode with an ease and a grace that caused Flint Allen to sweep off his hat and wad it into a shapeless mass as he pounded the top plank of the corral fence.

"A buster from Busterville!" he gasped out. "A ridin' fool, that kid is —a ridin' **fool!**"

Betty Allen's face mirrored both relief and pride.

"Stick to him, Bill!" she cried encouragingly. "Bel has never been ridden before."

And Bill Demming was sticking. Ching Lee, the Chinese cook, came to the door and started ringing the dinner bell, but he might as well have saved his noise. Even Ching Lee had an appreciation of rough riding, and, after watching from the kitchen porch for a moment, he rushed toward the corral to join the two spectators at the fence.

"Him velly glood lider," remarked the Chinaman; "him alla samee as glooed to saddle."

The battle between man and horse went on, for Bel was not a horse to surrender easily. He tried all his tricks, tried them over again; straight up he reared until it seemed that he would topple over backward, and then down he came, forelegs stiff as iron posts. The horse grunted and Bill grunted, the wind almost knocked out of both of them.

Pausing a moment, trembling and dripping with sweat, Bel suddenly made a lunge for the fence, to crush the leg of the rider who had been equal to every other trick; but Bill, even as Betty Allen screamed him a warning, lifted his boot clear of the fence, and this tragic finale of a daring and magnificent piece of horsemanship was averted.

"The best ridin' I ever seen!" shouted the owner of Circle Bar. "There ain't a puncher within a hundred miles could of done that. I don't know his name, an' I don't give a cuss, he can ride, gal, he can ride, an' I reckon old Circle Bar will bring home the bacon again this year."

Beelzebub surrendered; Bill urged him to fresh frenzy, but the horse was through. He had met his master and knew it; the sleeping devil was tamed.

Bill galloped the vanquished animal for two circles of the corral and reined in before his small but enthusiastic audience.

"Do I get that job?" he demanded.

"You do Bill; you surely do," and Flint Allen nodded. "Let's eat."

Ching Lee began to jabber wildly and, swinging his arms in a frenzy of self-accusation, darted toward the house; he had suddenly remembered that he had left the biscuits in the oven.

CHAPTER V.

PLOTTINGS.

PAUL DEMMING waited until dusk before he rode into the town of Happy Valley, and then his hat was drawn low over his eyes, for he prided himself on his physical prowess and did not want to advertise his battered face as evidence that he had been so thoroughly manhandled. As he threw himself from his black horse, he found it unnecessary to enter Joe Shivers' saloon, which masqueraded as a soft-drink parlor, for one of the two men he wanted to see stood in front.

"Hey, 'Flat Nose,'" he called; "com' 'ere!"

Flat Nose Purdy, unshaven of face and carrying a breath which was proof that Happy Valley was not in a state of legal aridity, moved promptly toward the hitchrack; he knew the voice of the master who kept him in liquor money.

"Evenin', chief," he grunted.

"Flat Nose," demanded Paul Demming, "have you seen anything of a stranger, sort of kid-lookin' feller, but tall—'bout tall as me? He's wearin' a hat creased in the center." Perhaps this was a meager-sounding description, but a sombrero often has the individuality of the locality in which it is worn; around Happy Valley hats were worn dented in three places, so that one creased in the center would at once identify the owner as a stranger.

"Nope, chief; ain't seen him."

"Like as not he had sense enough to take me at my word," observed Demming regretfully. "I've given him a stay-away order from Happy Valley, Flat Nose. If he does mosey in there's fifty in it for you if you plug him."

"I gotcha, chief," and Flat Nose nodded, indulging in his characteristic gesture of rubbing his fingers over his flattened nostrils. The kick of a roped steer had flattened them.

"He's quick for a scrap," imparted Paul Demming, "and handy with his fists. Rub his fur the wrong way, an' ———" The lights within shivers' place suddenly flared into yellowish streams through the windows and fell across his face. Flat Nose stared.

"Good gosh, chief!" he gasped out. "Did a hoss kick you?"

"Mind your own business," snapped the other.

"Under the circumstances," drawled Flat Nose, "I'll have to ask a hundred fer this job; any feller that you can't handle——"

"All right," Demming agreed shortly, "a hundred." He turned abruptly across the street toward the one-room shack where "Judge" Lampkin had quarters. Further proof that a Volsteadian state did not exist in Happy Valley was Lampkin, the lawyer, who spent his time in consuming bootleg whisky and retailing such legal advice and counsel as the community might require. Not being overly busy with the latter, he had plenty of time for the former.

The "judge"—so called because of an ambition never realized—prided himself on two things: his liquor capacity and his professional appearance. He wore a black hat, in contrast with the white sombreros of the cowmen; a black alpaca Prince Albert; and a nonmelt-

ing celluloid collar, around which was knotted a black string tie.

As Paul Demming entered, the lawyer sat in his barren office, heels resting upon the edge of his pine desk-table by the merest fraction of an inch.

"I hope you're sober," greeted Paul. The liquor flush of Lampkin's face deepened, and he leaped angrily to his feet; he was just drunk enough to resent any suggestion that he was not entirely sober. Nearly a head shorter than the six-foot proprietor of Double Eight Ranch, he raised a clenched fist belligerently; in his indignation, his voice boomed with surprising volume from his smallish chest.

"You get too personal!" he roared. "I won't stand for it. Hear me? I won't stand for it! Let me tell you something, Paul Demming—Happy Valley is getting tired of your bulldozing, your conceit, your high-and-mighty manner, your——"

"An' mebbe you're gettin' tired of the money I'm payin' you," interrupted Paul. "How about that, you old soak?"

Instantly, the lawyer subsided and fell weakly back in his chair; he had suddenly been reminded that, without Paul Demming's fees, there would not be money enough to pay the outlandish prices that Joe Shivers demanded for his bootleg whisky. His anger melted.

"I—er—spoke too hasty," he apologized lamely.

"Cut out the apology stuff," sneeringly directed the new-crowned king of Happy Valley. "You need my money, and I need your services; right now I need you—bad. There's a thousand dollars in it for you, Lampkin."

The lawyer gulped eagerly.

"I got to have title to Double Eight, an' I got to have it quick."

"But I thought Seth Dunlap——" began the judge.

"Oh, I sent him, all right, but—he didn't come back. He ain't never comin' back, Lampkin. He's dead."

"Huh?"

"That uncle of mine shot it out with Seth in a saloon at Rusty Creek, an' both of 'em bit dust. Bayliss, the mail driver, told me, an' Bayliss picked up the news at Davis' Gap yesterday."

The lawyer looked puzzled.

"Both of 'em bit dust, you say?"

"It ought to clear my title to Double Eight, but it don't; not by a good sight. You bunglin' idiot, I thought you had all the dope, an' yuh didn't know that Jim Demming had a son!"

Lampkin's lips puckered into a faint whistle.

"Hum! That is news; it does sort of complicate matters. Nobody in these parts knew Jim Demming was married, I'll bet. He must've had reasons of his own for keeping it quiet. However, you and your cousin are legally joint heirs of Cæsar Demming's estate; legally, he comes in for half of the ranch, half of the money in bank——"

"Don't you think I know that?" shouted Paul Demming, pounding angrily on the top of the pine table. "An' the first thing we know, he'll come ridin' in here to claim his half. News travels slow in this country, but it travels; can't tell when somethin' will leak out. We got to stop it. Understand? We got to stop it! Curse Uncle Cæsar, anyhow! Why didn't he make a will?"

The lawyer's eyes flickered.

"He did intend to make one," he said slowly, "an' it's some lucky for you that he didn't."

"What do you mean by that?" Paul Demming shouted angrily.

"Your Uncle Cæsar was getting to be an old man; like as not, seeing that he knew it wasn't long before he was going to meet his Maker, he began to be troubled by something that folks call conscience."

"What are you talkin' about?"

"This morning I was looking through

some more of his papers, and I found a will—that he hadn't signed. He died mighty sudden, you know. In that will, Paul, he left you just a measly two thousand dollars and five hundred head of Double Eight cows."

A look of incredulous amazement filled Paul Demming's face.

"What made him want to do that?" he gasped out.

"That thing called conscience. You ain't got one; and mine, like as not, is whisky-logged. Seems like, Demming, he had a notion of giving back Double Eight to the man he stole it away from twenty years ago; it's all down in the will—the will he didn't sign. Want to see it?"

"Tell me what it says," said the other man uneasily.

"It says," went on the lawyer, "that twenty years ago Cæsar Demming and his brother, Alf, who was your father, schemed to get Double Eight away from another brother, Jim; that they done it by shooting a man named Hickson and putting the blame on Jim Demming. When Jim Demming had to clear out, not daring to come back, they just signed his name to some papers and took everything he owned. That's the long and short of it."

Paul Demming wiped sudden beads of sweat from his forehead.

"That was a narrow squeak for me," he whispered hoarsely, "but nobody knows yet that Uncle Cæsar didn't leave a will, and I want you——"

"To forge one," Lampkin finished bluntly. "Yeh, you mentioned that little idea to me before, and it don't make any bigger hit with me now. Like I told you, in this country it's a lot easier to prove forgery than killing—with a careful man behind the gun. Papers like that have to go on record."

"Aw, don't be so yellow," snarled Paul Demming; "you got a lot of Uncle Cæsar's papers with his fist on 'em. Hold his signature up to the window and trace it at the bottom of a will, It's easy; who's going to know but that he signed it?"

"A will ain't legal unless it's witnessed. There's got to be two witnesses to that signature. You might buy 'em, but it ain't safe. No, siree; nothing doing on forgery! That ain't conscience; it's caution."

"But if that cousin of mine comes along——"

"There are ways," interrupted the lawyer meaningly. "That's up to you."

"Fix up that will; I'll give you five thousand."

"Not if you went fifty-fifty with me on Double Eight—not for the whole outfit. I did a trick one time. That's why I'm out here in this country; no more for Yours Legally."

"I'll make it seven thousand; think it over," Paul Demming said shortly. "What about them notes I told you to buy off of Clem Sparks? Get 'em?"

Lampkin reached into the pocket of his alpaca coat and drew forth an envelope which he lay on the pine table.

"There they are."

"Have any trouble?"

"Sparks was tickled pink to let 'em go at face value. He knew Flint Allen couldn't pay on the fifteenth. The Allen cattle won't much more than pay the bank, let alone taking up those Sparks' notes. You been riding him hard, huh? I haven't figured out what your game is."

"Mind your own business and don't spend too much time wonderin' about mine," retorted Paul Demming. Eagerly he opened the envelope and drew out the four rectangles of paper, each for two thousand dollars, due on the fifteenth of that month.

"Yep," murmured the lawyer, "you've rode Flint Allen mighty hard. Run in your fake homesteaders to take his best grass and water, and rustled some of his cows, too, I've heard. Just plumb determined to break him, huh? I

reckon the only reason he ain't shot you is that you've kept out of range."

"My reasons are my own!"

"I wonder if it ain't the girl," mused the lawyer. "Yeh, I guessed it. You poor fool! Don't you know that you can break the Allens before you bend 'em, and—take my tip: girls are like flies. They're easier caught with sugar. It won't work, that scheme; it won't work."

"If they won't bend," exclaimed Paul Demming, "then I'll break 'em!"

CHAPTER VI.

AN ULTIMATUM IS SERVED.

THE next morning Bill Demming started in as a puncher for the Circle Bar outfit. Scooter had been turned out for a well-earned rest, and Bill was at the corral saddling one of the Allen pintos preparatory to riding fence with another cow hand named "Curley" Withers. The latter proved to be a communicative fellow, and Bill, eager for information, found this according to his notion.

"They tell me, neighbor," said Withers admirably, "that you done rode Bel yesterday. Gosh, but I'd of give a month's pay to seen that. Reckon the old man is dependin' on you to keep the ridin' honors with our outfit. The Happy Valley rodeo is day after tomorrow."

"He didn't say anything to me about that," answered Bill.

"Circle Bar has walked off with first in the ridin' contests for 'most ten years now, neighbor," Withers announced proudly. "Buck Yager won it last year, an' the year 'fore that, but—well, that Demming gang has seen to it that Buck wasn't able to sit saddle this time. They've imported a feller from way up near Gunniston, Double Eight has; they been keepin' him under cover. His real name is "Buster" Meeks, but he's been goin' under 'nother name. Reckon Paul Demming was figgurin' on cleanin' up all the money in Happy Valley with him. They do some powerful steep bettin', y'know. Old Allen cleaned up five thousand on Buck's ridin' last year." He sighed. "Reckon it was that money that pulled him through; otherwise he wouldn't have made the riffle, not with 'most onto two hundred cows rustled."

"That Double Eight's work?" inquired Bill.

"Sure," and Withers nodded. "There ain't anything that rotten outfit wouldn't do. Four years, now, they been tryin' to drive Allen to the wall."

"Why?"

Curley Withers looked blank and rubbed his chin reflectively.

"Danged if I know," he grunted. "Mebbe it was over a calf or somethin'. It's a funny thing about a cattleman's war, neighbor; it starts over 'most nothin', and keeps on gettin' worse an' worse. Old Cæsar Demming and Flint Allen never did make pleasant neighbors, but it's been a heap more bitter since Cæsar died. He was a bad enough crook, but that nephew of hisn is jest a plain cutthroat. Looks like he's plumb tryin' to squash Circle Bar." He lowered his voice confidentially. "I got a hunch it's got somethin' to do with Miss Betty; y'see, Paul Demming wants to marry her mighty bad, but—that's all the good it's goin' to do him."

Bill's lips tightened, and his eyes hardened. At this moment Betty herself came out of the ranch house and waved her hand. In the morning sunlight she was a very fetching picture, the light brown of her hair shining golden where the light caught it.

"Reckon the old man would rather see her dead than married to a Demming," added Withers, and Bill winced. He reached into his pocket for the makings, and his fingers touched the nickeled deputy's star that he had unpinned from Seth Dunlap's shirt as the man who

had killed his father lay dead on the floor of Texas Tom's saloon in Rusty Creek. Just why he had done that, he could not, perhaps, explain. In the exaltation of being near this wonderous feminine creature with whom chance had brought him in contact so dramatically on the trail, Bill had somewhat forgotten the grim purpose which had drawn him to Happy Valley; but, as he touched the deputy's badge, it all came back to him with a rush.

"Tell me, Withers," he said, "did you ever know a fellow hereabouts named Dunlap?"

"Seth Dunlap? Shore, neighbor; I know him, but I don't know no good about him. Friend of yourn?" The question was asked with sudden suspicion.

"Hardly," retorted Bill with a short, mirthless laugh. "I just run into him one time. Was he hooked up with the Double Eight gang?"

"He sure was, pard; the niftiest killer than ever handled a gun fer the Demmings. Ain't seen him lately; don't know what's become of him."

Bill knew, but he did not offer any explanation of Seth Dunlap's disappearance. Previous suspicions now became certainty; Paul Demming, his cousin, was the man who had instigated his father's death; it had been Paul Demming who had sent Dunlap to Rusty Creek. But the big and unanswered question was—Why?

"Guess we better be movin'," suggested Withers. "We got to relieve the two boys that's been ridin' that fence all night."

"Ridin' fence at night?" questioned Bill.

"Sure; it's the fence 'tween our outfit an' Double Eight. Ever' now an' then some of Demming's men cut the wires an' run off with a few of our cows. We know this, but we ain't got proof yet. And we suspect they're even gone to brand blottin' lately; seems like Paul Demming ain't aimin' to leave Allen enough stock to pay his bills this year. It's goin' to be a tight squeak, I reckon; like as not——" His voice jarred to an abrupt stop, and an expression of angry bewilderment came into his face as he stared toward the line leading in from the road.

"Good gosh!" he gasped. "Demming—comin' here!"

Bill wheeled and saw his cousin riding toward the ranch house on the black horse. He was not alone; there rode with him four of his men, including Flat Nose Purdy, disreputable and evil faced, all of them. Curley Withers mechanically eased his holster into a more convenient position.

From within the ranch house, too, Flint Allen must have seen their approach for he came storming out to the yard, his eyes blazing, his white mustache twitching.

"You get off my outfit!" he bellowed. "Get off—quick!" His hand moved toward his forty-five, but, quicker than he, although Paul Demming made no move, his four henchmen flashed guns. Two of them covered the owner of Circle Bar, and the others wheeled their mounts with the drop of the pair of punchers at the corral.

"Don't commit suicide, Allen," drawled Paul Demming with an exultant grin. "I've come on a matter of business."

"I got no business with you, you cattle-stealin', brand-blottin' hound!" raged Allen. "Get off!"

"Aw, yes, you have, Allen, though mebbe you don't know it. I paid this here little visit to see if you was goin' to be ready to meet four li'le notes of yourn that I'm holdin', an' that falls due on the fifteenth—which same is Monday."

"Notes?" A dazed look came into Flint Allen's face. "You got no notes of mine."

"Ain't I?" crowed the proprietor of

Double Eight, tapping his pocket. "Right here I got your papers for eight thousand dollars, which I bought off of Clem Sparks. You ain't denyin' the signature, I reckon."

"Clem Sparks sold you them notes of mine?" There was incredulity in Allen's voice; he found it hard to believe that the man whom he had long considered as his friend should have played this trick on him.

"Seems like Sparks was gettin' a mite nervous about you bein' able to pay 'em," exulted Paul Demming, "so he sold 'em to me. I'm askin' you, square out, do I get my money Monday?" He knew that the answer was "No;" he knew that it would tax Allen to the limit of his resources to meet his debts to the Happy Valley bank. The owner of the Circle Bar outfit stood up bravely under the blow; it was a heavy blow, for, only three weeks before, Clem Sparks had assured him that he would accept half and let two of the notes drag along for a renewal of six months or so. Since then, of course, the Circle Bar cattle had grown scrawnier and less marketable. Sparks, the man he had thought to be his friend, had deserted him in his hour of need.

Allen stood silently for a moment.

"Them notes ain't due until Monday, an' that's five days off," he said grimly. "We'll talk about it Monday; now—git!"

Betty Allen appeared in the doorway of the ranch house and stood behind her father. Paul Demming stared at her so fixedly, with such a leer on his mouth, that Bill's fingers itched to reach for his gun.

"There ain't no use tryin' to bluff me, Allen; you can't pay. You know you can't pay, and I know it. I'm goin' to smash you an' smash you flat, unless —unless some satisfactory arrangement is made. Now if the gal an' me could reach some sort of understandin', if we was able to keep it in the family——"

With a cry of terror, Betty leaped forward and seized her father's arm just in time to keep him from drawing; the gun was half out of its holster as she clung to him pleadingly.

"Dad! Don't! They'll kill you. Don't you see——"

"Let me go, gal; let me go!" shouted Flint Allen. "The hound! I'll drill him for that."

"Swell chance you got!" and Paul Demming sneered. "My boys would pick you off 'fore you got a chance."

A few yards away, at the corral, Bill and Curley Withers began a sotto voce council of war.

"We can't let that coyote get away with such stuff," said Bill. "You take the first one, and I——"

"My gun is plumb eager, too, pard, but it ain't sense," refused Curley. "It ain't myself that I'm thinkin' about. I ain't nothin' but an ol' stove-up cow hand, but it's the old man I'm thinkin' about. Them cutthroats is just prayin' that we'll cut loose on 'em; they're plumb anxious for us to fire the first shot. We might get two, but there'd be two left—an' like as not they'd pot the old man. They come heeled fer a fight."

Bill surrendered to this calmer judgment, but not without a struggle; he knew that Withers was right. A hand fell to his side; in the flying of the bullets, even Betty might be harmed. No, calm submission was the wisest course.

Paul Demming was master of the situation and knew it. He laughed triumphantly, not a pleasant laugh for one to hear, and tightened the reins.

"Think it over, Betty," he called. "You got your choice: losin' a poor ranch or winnin' a rich husband, the richest cattleman in Happy Valley. Yeh, think it over."

Betty lifted her head, even disdaining a reply. Paul Demming wheeled his black horse, and his glance suddenly rested on Bill, the man who had

flogged him on the trail the day before. To his already consuming hatred was added the fuel of jealousy; he saw, in Bill's presence at Circle Bar, an added obstacle to the winning of Betty Allen. Bill had already made himself a heroic figure in the girl's eyes.

"Ha!" he sneered. "Here's the bold, brave kid that makes buttin' in his principal business. Are you mebbe thinkin' of startin' somethin'—now?"

"Call off your gang an' see how quick I do," retorted Bill. But the proprietor of Double Eight had no such intentions.

"There's been a sunset," said Bill, "an' I'm still here."

Paul Demming hesitated; he was wondering if he could bait the other man to draw; but, to his amazement, Bill stepped toward him, his hand reaching into the pocket of his shirt; his fingers came out with Seth Dunlap's nickled deputy's badge.

"Here's something," said Bill, "that will interest you, like as not. He wasn't able to bring it back himself." He tossed the badge into the air, and, as it spun glitteringly in the sunlight, Paul Demming's hand reached out mechanically to catch it. Instantly, he recognized it as the star of authority that Seth Dunlap had worn when he had departed for Rusty Creek. From the badge he stared down, almost open mouthed, at Bill.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded hoarsely. "Who are you?"

Bill smiled grimly at his cousin.

"See if you can figger it out," he taunted.

CHAPTER VII.

HANDICAPPED BY A NAME.

AT Circle Bar the greater part of two days had passed without any dramatic climax of the tense situation; except for riding fence, Bill had nothing else to do except spend his time in worshipful admiration of Betty Allen. Her attitude worried him, and he feared that perhaps he had shown his feelings too plainly and had offended her. Something of her first comraderie was lacking; she seemed more distant, more aloof; but poor Bill, knowing nothing of feminine shyness, was miserably certain that he had been nothing but a conceited young fool to imagine that he had ever had a chance with her, anyhow.

Even when her smiles flashed the warmest, when she seemed nearest to him, he trembled inwardly in contemplation of what would happen when she knew that he was a hated Demming. He was happy to be in her presence, miserable because she seemed so far away. It was, too, with a feeling of panic that he learned that she had spent two years in a Denver boarding school, and that the slump in the Allen fortunes had brought her suddenly home. Another discount against his chances, he told himself; her ideals would be higher than a puncher schooled only in the University of Hard Knocks.

Feeling that he was taking an unfair advantage, he had several times been tempted to make a clean breast of everything, to confess his identity. Bill despised deception. But the fear of having seen her last smile, of their last ride together, of banishment from her presence, utterly and finally, silenced his tongue.

It was Friday, the day before the Happy Valley rodeo, and Bill Demming saddled his own horse inside the corral, Scooter having enjoyed his rest and fit for hard riding again. As he started away, Betty hailed him from the ranch house, and he waited.

"Want company?" she asked with that silvery laugh of hers. Bill's heart began to thump vigorously beneath his ribs, and a flush crept up beneath the weather-beaten tan of his face.

"Rather," he said and nodded, wondering if his voice were too eager or

not eager enough. A moment or so later they were riding, almost knee to knee, toward the rear line fence which separated the Circle Bar outfit from the Double Eight. The heat of late summer was lifted by the cooling breath of fall, just enough to spice the air that one drew into the lungs. The brightness of the girl's eyes dulled a little as one of her father's calves tottered in front of them, lacking the strength that should belong to a three-months-old. Undernourishment—the same blight that threatened all of the Allen herd. Her hand clenched and struck down upon the horn of her saddle.

"Look!" she cried bitterly. "Their scheming meanness makes even the dumb animals suffer. How I hate even the name of Demming! Heaven, how I hate them!" Bill flinched; if she had struck him with her quirt, it would have been more kind; but she could not know that. "It's unfair that such wicked people should prosper; unfair!"

"Yes'm," said Bill. "I agree with you that it's unfair, but this here old world of ourn seems to have a rule that sort of evens things up. Those schemers are comin' to grief, Miss Betty; take my word for it, they're goin' to get theirs aplenty." There was a grimness in his tone that made his words a threat and not a philosophy of retribution. She gave him a quick glance, perhaps of gratitude. Then they rode on for a little way in silence.

"You're going to ride for Circle Bar in the rodeo to-morrow, dad tells me," she said presently.

"Your dad has done me the compliment of askin' me to."

"You're going to win," she told him with confidence. "You—you've got to win. And I know you will—after the way you handled Beelzebub on the day that you came. Isn't it really wonderful that I brought you to Circle Bar?"

"It surely is, Miss Betty—for me." And she flushed, not with displeasure. It was the first verbal compliment that he had paid her, although his eyes had spoken many. She liked him the better for it; too many of her admirers had sickened her with their blarney.

Again she wondered about the man whom she knew only as "Bill"—who he was, and what had brought him to Happy Valley; what the circumstances were that forced him to remain nameless. He wore his splendid youth so jauntily and yet so casually; and, in spite of his youthfulness, his face had a sun-browned and wind-bitten maturity beyond his evident years. His eyes were quiet and steady with that square, unwavering look which gives promise of both efficiency and trustworthiness. She judged that he was not more than twenty-three or four, a guess which was quite accurate. She felt very sure, too, that his soul was clean, clean as the air of the vast open spaces which he breathed. Unconsciously, she was comparing him with the man whom she little dreamed was his cousin. With an inward shudder she had a mental picture of Paul Demming's overfull, coarse mouth, of his narrow eyes with that wicked fleck of green in them, the almost brutal thrust of his chin. As she had done so many times before, she rubbed the back of her riding gauntlet across her lips as if the contamination of Paul Demming's kiss still lingered.

Her thoughts came back to their conversation.

"Oh, yes, the rodeo," she murmured. "I know that you will win. Circle Bar is depending on you. You see, Bill, it's a tradition in Happy Valley that a man from the Allen outfit must win the finals. We were depending on Buck Yager again this year, and—you know what happened to Buck."

"Yes'm. Curley Withers told me. Do you reckon that some of the Double Eight bunch winged him to keep him out of the riding?"

"I wouldn't put it past them," she retorted; "I wouldn't put anything past a Demming. I understand that they've imported a fancy buster; it ought to be worth a great deal of money to them if they carried off the big prize. There's been many thousands of dollars wagered already; it's the big event of the whole year in the Happy Valley country. So, you see, Bill, how much depends on you; I—we are depending on you to win." Impulsively, she pulled from her hair a bit of ribbon and, knotting it into a neat bow, leaned forward and fixed it to the pommel of his saddle.

"In the olden days," she laughed, flushing, "a knight wore a lady's colors when he went into the lists. You may wear this—if you wish."

If he wished! Bill reached out and touched her hand, and words rushed to his tongue, words which were never spoken, for he could not tell her what was in his heart unless he, too, told her his name; that he was still afraid to do —yet. He drew back his hand as soon as it had hardly touched her fingers.

"Sort—sort of feels like cool weather for ridin'," he said and gulped. "The buckers will be goin' good likely as not. I'll do my best to win, ma'am, for Circle Bar, and—these colors." His voice was hoarse, and he touched the bit of ribbon reverently.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE RODEO.

THE little town of Happy Valley rioted with life, and the holiday spirit was everywhere. Ranchmen, punchers, broncho busters had ridden in from a wide circle; some had come seventy miles, for the Happy Valley rodeo, while not a nationally famous affair, was important enough to stir more than strictly local excitement. A motion-picture concern, in keeping with the spirit of progress, had sent a camera man all the way from El Paso to make a news reel of the contest.

Happy Valley's one crazily wandering street had, over night, multiplied itself into four, and the discouraged collection of frame shacks had been augmented by many tents. The place was alive with chap-clad, browned men, cowmen all.

The arena was built without thought of comfort, merely a roostlike set of planks graduating upward behind the fence inclosure, and the enthusiasts scorned any seats whatever, choosing to get as close to the arena as the fence would allow. The air vibrated with boisterous good humor, oaths in which there was no offense.

Betty Allen, determined to see it all, sat at a high vantage point in the crude amphitheater, watching. She saw Bill getting ready for the first trials, and there was a flutter of blue ribbon about the pommel of his saddle. She waved her hand, and he lifted his hat in return.

Down by the fence, Flint Allen, his hat low-drawn, his pockets crammed full of bills, was ready to back his judgment with his money—that the championship would again go to a Circle Bar man. Farther down, Paul Demming and his men were frantically offering inducements. There were few bets to be had; the elimination of Buck Yager had, apparently, made the usual plungers cautious; they were waiting to see the performance of the mysterious rider that Double Eight was reported to have as a surprise. They were waiting for the semifinals.

Presently, Paul Demming swaggered over to Allen.

"Feel like puttin' up any money to say that Circle Bar is goin' to take another silver-mounted saddle home?" he asked with a sneer.

"That depends," retorted Flint Allen; "since your gang crippled my best rider——"

"Don't beef," retorted the other. "Are you bettin', or ain't you? You got two or three would-be bronk busters left on your pay roll. I might even give you some odds."

"Say it."

"Two to one, Allen, that Double Eight packs off the finals," came the offer.

"How much?"

"Ever' dang dollar you can cover."

"Produce eight thousand dollars!"

Paul Demming hesitated between suspicion and triumph. Flint Allen wasn't a fool; still, with Buck Yager out of it —— Hastily he checked over the list of Circle Bar punchers and felt somewhat relieved; there wasn't a one of them that could hold a candle to the man he had imported for the contests. Barring a lucky fluke, the money was as good as his; he wondered where the owner of Circle Bar had raised so much cash, then settled on the right guess. The old man was taking a long chance; he hadn't paid his debt at the bank. He was risking every dollar he could raise, on the hope of winning enough to take up those Clem Sparks notes. Indeed, he thought with inward mirth, desperation does queer things to a man's judgment.

"It's a bet, Allen," he said, "if—if you got enough cash." The last was a sneer for the benefit of bystanders. The old rancher dug into his pocket and counted out a prodigious heap of currency and gold pieces, four thousand dollars. Paul Demming covered it with eight and turned it over to Cyrus Weatherby as stakeholder; Weatherby was tied up with the Demming outfit in a business way, but he was on the square.

From her elevated seat, Betty saw her father counting out his money; it was too far for her to know the denominations of the bills, but from the pile of them she knew that it was more than he could afford to lose; she knew that he was taking the big chance that Bill would ride as he had ridden devil-sleeping Beelzebub in the Circle Bar corral. If he rode like that, he was unbeatable, and a thrill of pride swept through her. It was all up to Bill.

Bill himself, finding that there was some slight hitch to delay the launching of the preliminaries, sauntered over to the fence where Flint Allen now stood alone.

"Well, youngster," said the ranchman grimly, "it's up to you. Every dollar I could raise is on you to win." His hand touched Bill's arm earnestly. "It ain't me, Bill, that I'm thinkin' about; it's—her. She's a heap in love with ol' Circle Bar, an' I reckon it would about break her heart to lose it. You got to win, boy; you got to win!"

Bill was momentarily overwhelmed that so much should depend on him; often an unexplainable jinx sits saddle with the best of busters. There's skill to it, but an element of chance, too.

"You've risked—how much?" he gasped.

"Ever' cent I could put my hands on," answered Flint Allen; "even the pay-roll money, youngster; so, you got to win—for her. I can sort of see how the wind is blowin', Bill, 'tween you an' my li'le gal. I don't know your name, Bill; you likely as not got good reason to keep it back. When my gal puts her O. K. on a feller, that's good enough for her dad."

A man with leathery lungs and a giant megaphone roared forth instructions to the contestants, and Bill put out his hand, which Flint Allen gripped warmly. In that steely handclasp Bill made a pledge which meant more than words. As he turned he looked up at Betty.

"For her!" he told himself. "I got to win for her!"

The preliminaries began and proceeded without particular excitement; the worst of the outlaws were being saved for the finals. There were, in all, more than a hundred contestants, and

it took from one to four minutes for a buster either to ride or be thrown. There were plenty of spills, and one fellow got up with a broken collarbone, but smiling gamely. It was the fortune of the rodeo; others saved themselves by "choking the biscuit," that colloquialism standing for clinging to the horn of the saddle with the hands.

Presently, the megaphone thundered forth the name of "Buster Meeks, ridin' for Double Eight aboard Blazes." As an outlaw horse, Blazes did not turn out to be such a conflagration as his name might have been taken to indicate, yet it was a test of good riding, and the imported rider, upon whom Double Eight depended to carry off the honors, rode well. He was a squat, bow-legged fellow, but he knew how to sit a saddle. Bill admitted that Buster Meeks would be a hard man to beat in the finals, the most formidable adversary so far.

Bill's turn came after the next, and he stood by his saddle, ready; pulling Betty Allen's blue ribbon a little more firmly about the pommel, he took a last cautious look at the cinches and at the stirrup leathers, to see that they were as they should be.

"Bill Blank, Circle Bar, will ride Cap'n Applejack!" roared the leather-lunged announcer. Cap'n Applejack, with all four legs braced wide, his ears flat, his sides heaving, had strenuous objections to a saddle. It took a nose loop and two wranglers to hold him quiet long enough for Bill to get the gear on him. Hardly was the rider's foot in the stirrup than he was in the seat.

"Let 'im go!" he shouted. The wranglers slipped off the ropes and the blind from over his eyes. The result was instantaneous and thrilling; like a skyrocket Cap'n Applejack soared aloft and landed, stiff legged, a good twenty feet from the spot where he had stood.

Bill Demming's body was ready for every twist and every turn; he was riding for more than the silver-mounted saddle in the window of Hawkins' general store; he was riding for Circle Bar and the girl he had learned to love. Cap'n Applejack was not a sunfisher, but he knew all the other tricks forward and backward. But Bill rode nobly, and a gasp of admiration, a ripple of applause which grew into a roar, rose from the seats and the side of the fence. This, they knew, was riding!

Curley Withers was so happy over this exhibition that tears started down his eyes and rolled unchecked along his cheeks as he leaped up and down to the accompanyment of jingling spurs; he pounded another Circle Bar puncher on the back.

"Lookit!" he shouted. "Lookit! Who said ol' Circle Bar wasn't goin' to tote home the bacon? Yeah; lookit, you low-down Double Eight pirates and cattle rustlers! See 'im ride; see 'im ride! There's the champeen, fellers; there he is this plumb holy minute, ridin' the wild un, easy as a kid sittin' in its crib. Whoop-ee!"

Although silent, Flint Allen was no whit less appreciative.

"They can't beat him!" he said under his breath. "They can't beat a youngster who can ride like that."

Nor were Curley's eyes the only ones that were damp; Betty, from her high perch, gazed in fascinated intenseness through a mist of pride. She had known in her heart that Bill would win.

Paul Demming glared out across the arena with almost unbelieving eyes as he saw this exhibition of superb horsemanship, and he knew that his imported buster could not match it. Meeks had not the beautiful saddle grace of this broad-shouldered and slim-waisted youngster of twenty-three who seemed a part of the horse, absorbing every shock, flexing his muscles to match every pitch and lunge. Paul Demming, staring narrow-eyed at Bill, hated the rider as he had never hated any one in

his life of bitter hatreds; his emotion became a consuming fire of rage intermixed with fear, for it seemed to him that the stranger who wore the hat creased in the center was a jinx especially chosen by an adverse Fate to dog his footsteps.

He clenched his hands and looked around for Flat Nose Purdy. Just as he caught the eye of Flat Nose and summoned him with a jerk of the head, a yell went up beside him.

"Stick 'im, Bill; stick 'im. Ride 'em like you rode 'em down our way. I know you, Bill; I know you, you ridin' devil."

Paul Demming wheeled and quickly put a hand on the shoulder of this enthusiast. He noted that this man, too, wore a hat creased in the middle.

"You know him?" he demanded.

"Know him?" queried the man of the creased hat. "Say, ever'body that ever went to the Rusty Creek rodeo knows him."

Rusty Creek! Paul Demming remembered the deputy's star and the curt "Figure it out." A sudden, dawning suspicion came to him.

"What's his name; that's what I want to know—what's his name?" he demanded impatiently.

"His name's Bill Demming, stranger, an' he's the ridin'est kid that ever flung a leg over a saddle. He——"

But Paul Demming did not hear the rest of it. He was staring in fresh, white-faced terror at the man out there in the arena. His cousin—the cousin whose appearance in Happy Valley he had fearfully anticipated! Already this same cousin had horsewhipped him, was about to rob him of the girl he wanted, was about to rob him of the rough-riding honors and free Flint Allen from his clutches.

He had to stop him and stop him quick. Again he signaled impatiently to Flat Nose Purdy. When Purdy came up, Paul Demming pointed over the fence to Bill. Cap'n Applejack was suddenly tamed; once more brute had met its master.

"That's him, Flat Nose; that's the man. Get him—an' get him 'fore he's rode the finals. Understand?"

Flat Nose understood.

CHAPTER IX.

CROOKED WORK.

THE riding of the preliminaries extended until well into the afternoon, and when it came to the semifinals the crowd outside the arena began to thicken. Beside Buster Meaks and Bill, known on the program as "Bill Blank," the two generally picked favorites, there remained perhaps fifteen who had not either been thrown or who had not "pulled leather," and were, therefore, qualified for the semifinals, that gradual weeding-out process which led up to the dramatic and hard-won award of Happy Valley rough-riding contest.

Between rides, Bill slipped outside the fence in the direction of the rough amphitheater to eat. He met Betty and her father, likewise bound for the lunch stand where barbecued meat comprised the bill of fare. Old Allen threw an arm about the youngster's shoulders and frankly hugged him.

"Boy," he said warmly, "you're doin' noble. I knowed that I was bettin' on a sure thing. The title is yourn same as if it was all over; that imported buster of Demming's ain't got a chance."

"It was wonderful, Bill, simply wonderful!" cried Betty. "I've been listening to them talk, and every one is agreed that you are the winner. The Double Eight bunch is as sick an outfit as you ever saw."

Bill shook his head warningly.

"No rodeo is over," he said, "until the last hoss is rode; I've seen some mighty good busters come to grief. I won't claim that saddle, I reckon, until

I've won it. That Meeks hombre ain't such a slouch when it comes to tamin' the wild ones, and there's now—lemme see, I think it's whittled down to about ten."

Half an hour later he was back at the arena awaiting his turn. When the finals came, there were still four contenders: Meeks, Bill, "Cyclone" Dawes from Lazy Six, and "Slats" Corrigan of Box-X. Corrigan came to grief when the devil in horseflesh that he was aboard crashed into the side fence, and Dawes, likewise, was eliminated when, the breath jolted plumb out of him by a series of stiff-legged leaps from his mount, he grew weary and committed that disqualifying error of saving himself by grabbing his saddle horn. The spectators burst into howls of applause and tensed themselves for the whirlwind finish. Within another ten minutes the rough-riding crown of Happy Valley would be placed upon the brow of the new saddle king.

Buster Meeks had first chance at it, and he drew a horse called "Sunfish." The name, as is surmised, was due to the outlaw's mastery of that gyrating system of fancy bucking known as sunfishing. The rider imported by Double Eight "rode" during three minutes and twenty seconds by the judges' stop watches, and it was, in all fairness, a good bit of riding.

A chorus of "ahs" went up from the tiers of plank seats, for there remained only that superb rider known on the program as Bill Blank. Even if Bill rode, it remained for the judges a decision of opinion as to which of the pair rode with the greater ease, the greater grace and skill. In the minds of Betty Allen and her father, as was the case with most of the others who had witnessed the contest, there could be no doubt of the outcome.

The horse wranglers half coaxed, half dragged into the fenced circle a lanky bay brute, and Bill approached, dragging forward his saddle. Paul Demming was pressed close to the planks of the fence, his face strained, his narrowed eyes intent before him. This last horse which Bill was to ride, according to the megaphone man, was "Blixen," and Bill, a wrangler on each side of the animal, swung on the saddle and tightened the cinches. He knew that his last ride in the contest promised to be full of thrills for the horse, as revealed by the angry gleam and snap of its teeth, was vicious and dangerous.

Light as a feather, Bill vaulted into the saddle.

"Let 'er buck!" he cried, at the same time slapping his hat against Blixen's flank. The wranglers leaped to one side as the horse reared straight up, front feet beating in wild and outraged anger at the empty air—a whirling spring that turned him half around—and down he came. The foremost wrangler screamed and dodged, but it was too late. The hoofs of the man killer caught him in the back, and the scream was stilled. Down he went into a lifeless heap, his back broken. When Blixen, plunging on his wild course, had leaped away from his victim, others came and picked the man up, and no one noticed the broken section of knife blade that lay half buried in the hoof-churned dust.

Bill was astride a man-hating, man-killing demon driven insane by the weight on his back that he could not leap from under, that no amount of turning, twisting, and stiff-legged pounding could shake out of the saddle. Straight up he reared again, until he sommersaulted backward, but the rider was free of the stirrups before the fall, and had leaped into his seat again as the crazed horse scrambled to his feet. Then Blixen tried the fence, that trick which the worse of the bad horses seem to know instinctively, scraping off the rider, crushing their legs to jelly; but

Bill, with the agility of a circus performer, swung his leg clear, and again Blixen was foiled.

On went the battle between man and beast; the horse seemed tireless. Three minutes lengthened into five, and Flat Nose Purdy slunk abjectly alongside Paul Demming, who turned on him with a snarl.

"Curse you, Flat Nose, I told you to do for him before he rode in the finals; he's got it good as won. Lord, man, look at that cousin of mine ride! No judge on earth——"

"I done my best," whined Flat Nose. "I seen Greaser Pete. I slipped him a fifty, an' he said he'd pull the trick, said he'd slash the off-stirrup while he was helpin' hold the hoss. He had a broken knife blade, sharp as a razor; I seen it."

"Greaser Pete?" grunted Paul Demming. "That's him——"

"Yeh, that got his back broke with the devil's hoofs," finished Flat Nose. "I thought he got caught 'cause he was monkeyin' with the stirrup leather instead of makin' his scoot. Chief, I don't want that kid to win any more'n you do; I got two hundred bucks on Meeks to win."

"You're some fixer, you are!" snarled the other. Suddenly Flat Nose's hand shot out and gripped Demming's arm.

"Look!" he whispered hoarsely. "He done it; he done it, after all!"

In the arena Blixen continued his wild, twisting lunges, and Bill, who had ridden with such admirable poise up to this moment, his body bending and flexing as if anticipating every move of the animal, was suddenly seen to be in distress. Instead of rising gracefully in the stirrups to break the shock of the down-thudding hoofs, he jolted against the seat of the saddle with the jar of a collision. The horse, quick to sense the difference, burst into fresh fury. As he wheeled in front of the seats, Betty Allen leaped to her feet and screamed.

"He's lost a stirrup!" Her eyes had seen what was wrong.

On the face of Paul Demming, his body hugged over the fence rail, there hovered a crafty smile.

"Watch him pull leather!" he shouted.

But Bill did not pull leather; he preferred, if necessary, to be thrown. The off stirrup gone, he tried to stick it out by hugging his leg close to the animal's body, and, although his muscles froze in with the grip of a vise, no human being could long stand such a strain. Even before it was happened, he knew, with a lump in his throat, that he faced defeat; but still he fought on gamely, and in no rodeo that Happy Valley had ever witnessed was there to be remembered riding against such odds.

Blixen doubled his rangy body for one supreme effort; a skyrocketing leap, a rolling jump, and Bill was jarred loose. Over the outlaw's head he went, head foremost; but, luckily, the ground had been harrowed to an ankle deep softness of dust, and the blow was broken. From the grand stand came a dirge of disappointed groans; Bill had been their favorite because of the superiority of his riding, and to think of seeing such a performance end with disaster! Ten minutes and six seconds that battle between man and brute had lasted.

But Blixen was not satisfied to throw the man who had so nearly mastered him; he seemed determined to annihilate him. The horse wheeled as Bill, dazed by the fall, struggled half blindly to his feet; teeth bared, the outlaw came back, straight at the staggering man. Up went the forelegs, and Bill, trying to dodge, stumbled and fell prostrate. Paul Demming, at the fence, sucked in his breath exultantly.

"Perfect!" he whispered hoarsely. "He's done for!"

But he did not take into account Flint Allen, himself pressed against the

fence ten yards away. Although the old cattleman's hand was trembling with the poignancy of his defeat, the muscles steadied as, with a flash of his old-time speed when he was known as the man with the fastest draw in the Happy Valley country, he whipped out his forty-five and fired.

The bullet got Blixen behind the left ear as he reared high, ready for the downward plunge which would crush out the life of the man on the ground. The whole drama occupied less than the count of ten, and, before many of the spectators had loosened the grip of horror which clamped their muscles, it was over. The horse screamed, teetered for a moment, and fell over sidewise.

Bill was saved, but he had lost the ride. He stumbled to his knees before the nearest man could reach him, a sob in his throat, ashamed to look toward the grand stand where sat the girl whom he had failed in the hour of her need.

Mechanically, Bill turned to the dead horse and began to fumble with the cinches; it provided an excuse to keep his eyes from what he imagined must be Betty Allen's stare of bitter, accusing disappointment. Her father's one chance of averting financial disaster was lost; for himself, Bill did not mind. The honor of winning the Happy Valley championship had hardly been a factor to him; it had been to save Circle Bar that he had rode with the best that was in him.

Flint Allen vaulted the fence and rushed across the intervening space.

"I thought you was gone, boy!" he cried huskily. "Thank Heaven that my aim was steady an' my ol' six-gun handy."

Bill did not lift his lowered head.

"Reckon you must've felt a heap more like shootin' me," he said bitterly. "You lost your bets."

"You ain't to blame, Bill," said Flint Allen kindly. "I seen it all from the fence, an' you sure done your noble best. We—we won't talk about them bets, lad; it's the fortunes of war. How come you to lose that stirrup, anyhow?"

Pulling free the saddle, Bill's mouth and eyes suddenly hardened, and he bent low.

"That's how I come to lose it!" he whispered tensely. "Look!" He pointed to the place where the leather had parted. "It was a knife-slice that started the leather to tearin'. Somebody done that a-purpose!"

A crowd had begun to collect, pressing in curiously, and Paul Demming, his face sullen with chagrin that his trouble-promising cousin should have escaped what had seemed certain death beneath the hoofs of the wild horse, hung at the outskirts. Flint Allen knelt in the dust that he might better examine the torn leather. Bill was right, it had been cut. On the underneath side there showed a slice, not deep, but enough to start it tearing under the strain of the horse's plunging. The man who had done that had worked hastily, and, no doubt, had not cut as deeply as he had wanted, for, had the horse been conquered within the usual time that an outlaw is ridden, there would have been no disastrous consequences. Slowly the old cattleman stood to his feet and, facing the crowd, pointed to the evidence.

"Circle Bar has been double-crossed, men," he said bitterly. "Take a look at that an' draw your own conclusions. Somebody seen to it that this youngster wasn't given a chance to win. Double Eight wins the rodeo, but they win crooked!"

Paul Demming, Flat Nose Purdy crowding in behind him, edged forward belligerently.

"Mebbe you're tryin' to welch the bet," he sneered. "An' how do we know that you an' this kid didn't cut the stirrup yourself—tryin' to crawl out?" Two more of the Double Eight

men flanked their boss; Paul Demming was well protected against violence. He always played safe.

Flint Allen shook his head slowly.

"No, you low-down crook," he said, "I ain't welchin' my bet. My wager was made on the judges' decision, an' I abide by it, win or lose. However, Paul Demming, I take the satisfaction of puttin' the public brand of crook on you right here an' now. I say you're a cattle-stealin', brand-blottin' crook, a man who ain't got the nerve to stand up, man to man, an' do his own fighin', but hires his murderin' thugs. Draw, you coward, draw!"

But half a dozen men stepped between; strong arms, lest the rodeo's finale be a shooting affray, led the two men away in opposite directions. Bill was not wearing his gun, it being an unnecessary impediment to his riding; for a moment he stood thoughtful, and then, without a word, dragging his saddle after him, he made for the arena exit to his own horse.

"He ain't goin' to get away with it," he vowed under his breath. "Seems like I heard some advice one time about fightin' fire with fire—an' that's what I'm goin' to do."

Repairing the damage to the broken stirrup, Bill got the gear on Scooter, buckled his gun belt about his waist, and rode swiftly out of the rodeo grounds. His face was grim, his eyes steely hard. He had made up his mind that the father of the girl he loved should not lose the money won by his cousin through the lowest kind of trickery. His face grim, his eyes hard, Bill vowed that he would make one supreme effort to save Circle Bar, no matter what the cost to himself.

Again he lived over that tragic moment in Texas Tom's Rusty Creek saloon when his father had been shot to death by the hired gunman wearing a deputy sheriff's badge; again he went through that harrowing experience when, only a few minutes before, he had lain prone on the ground with the wild horse plunging toward him. Both the work of Paul Demming, he knew with an absolute certainty.

He would meet his cousin, man to man, and settle scores once and for all. The sooner the better.

CHAPTER X.

BILL ACTS ON HIS WORD.

THE collection of Allen's four thousand dollars from the stakeholder, just after the judges rendered the only decision possible, declaring Buster Meeks the winner, did not restore Paul Demming's good humor. He was in a vile temper. The troublesome cousin from Dusty Creek was yet to be disposed of, and there filled the soul of the Double Eight rancher a poignant terror, for a deep-seated foreboding told him that the youngster was his Nemesis.

Guarded by Flat Nose a few feet to the rear, he strode angrily to Joe Shivers' bar and gulped down too stiff drinks of villainous whisky.

"Where's Judge Lampkin?" he growled to the bartender.

"Lampkin," the other said, with a laugh, "is a victim of prosperity. He won two hundred on the rodeo. Couple of the boys packed him over to his office to nap it off."

With an oath, Demming left the bar and strode across the street to Lampkin's shack of an office. The door was open, and the lawyer was sprawled low-down in his chair beside the pine table, snoring loudly. Paul kicked the man viciously on the shins and, picking him up by the coat collar, shook him until a choking sound came from his throat. But it accomplished the desired result of partially sobering him. He blinked up, his voice thick with muttered protests.

"You listen to me!" hissed Demming. "He's here!"

"Huh?" Whatcha mean? Who's here?"

"Jim Demming's kid," snarled the other. "That was him rode for Circle Bar. He's here, an' he knows. He—curse him, he give me Seth Dunlap's badge! He knows!"

The lawyer blinked again.

"So that was him?" he gasped, and nodded. "What a fool I was not to see it; I thought he looked familiar—just like Jim Demming did twenty-odd years ago. Of course! Well, whatcha goin' to do about it?"

"I ain't goin' to stand for any more monkey business from you, you drunken runt. I want a will, an' I want it quick."

"Don't they sell forty-five shells at Parker's store any more?"

"I want that will," insisted Paul Demming; "I ain't runnin' any chances. I'm goin' to play the game—both ways. I'm goin' to play safe."

"Forgery ain't safe, Demming. I wouldn't forge that will, not for my own brother. I've told you before, and I tell you again, I won't do it."

The other man's hands clenched, and he took a threatening step forward.

"You just think you won't, you yellow rat! I say you will. Get busy!"

The lawyer shook his head stubbornly.

"Go on and have your hired gunmen pot him," he said and sneered. "I won't do it."

Demming's fist shot out and caught Lampkin on the jaw, and the lawyer's chair toppled over with a crash.

"Get busy!"

From the floor, Lampkin, his eyes glittering with rage, continued his refusal and Demming kicked him cruelly in the ribs. The pain was intense, but the lawyer made no outcry. Crouching behind the pine table, he pulled himself to his feet, holding unsteadily to the edge.

"You've kicked me—like a dog," he panted out, "and, so help me Heaven, like a dog, I'll let you feel my fangs. They're sharp, Demming—as you will soon find out."

The other laughed contemptuously.

"A barking dog never bites," he retorted, "you—you yapping terrier. Draw up that will—before I kill you." As a persuasive measure, he reached across the table and dragged Lampkin toward him, picking him up, suspended in the air; then he gave him a shove which sent him clear across the shack, crashing into the wall. The lawyer's head struck one of the joints with a dull whack, and he slipped down and lay still.

When Paul Demming returned to the street again, Flat Nose Purdy approached him with information.

"I was layin fer that—that Bill Blank," he said, "but I been told that he got on that hoss of his an' made tracks fer Circle Bar. Guess we got his goat aw'right, chief." Of this, Demming had his doubts, but he did not say as much.

"Get him—later," he ordered; "we'll be ridin' to Double Eight. Come on."

Reluctantly, Flat Nose agreed; he had in mind a wild session at Shivers' place to celebrate his winnings. Half an hour later the two men were riding through the gathering dusk toward the ranch. It was no discredit to Flat Nose's alertness as a bodyguard that, as the pair rode into the corral, Purdy failed to see the horse tethered in the ravine fifty yards away, and Bill lying flat at the far side of the corral fence. It was quite dark by this time.

Flat Nose, a pint of Shivers' bootleg whisky inside his flannel shirt, went directly to the bunk house to put the trimmings on the jag which had been well started in town. The proprietor of Double Eight made his way to the big, nine-room ranch house, the show place of the Happy Valley range, where he had lived alone with two Mexican serv-

ants since the death of his uncle, Cæsar Demming. The first thing that he did was to go into the front room which he used as an office and, unstrapping the money belt from about his waist beneath his shirt, take out the thick bundle of bills and gold pieces, placing them in the small iron safe which stood in the corner. His nerves strained to the breaking point, the possession of the money made him nervous, and he cursed himself for not leaving the money in town; it was a hard crew he had working for him, and if they knew he had the money——

This apprehensive trend of his thoughts caused him to slam the safe door hastily as he heard the thump of a boot on the porch. He listened a moment, his fingers gripped on the butt of his gun, facing toward the door, and then decided that he must be mistaken; with a grunt of relief, he opened the drawer of his desk and reached inside for the bottle that he kept there. He was feeling badly and in need of another bracer.

Crash!

He wheeled as the lower sash of the window was flung up, and he stared into the unwavering bore of a deadly six-gun. A boot lifted over the sill, followed by the slim-waisted body and the grim face of Bill Demming. With calm deliberateness the young cousin from Rusty Creek eased his way inside while the other half mechanically lifted his hands, his eyes rolling, his coarse mouth twitching.

"Kind of surprised to see me, ain't you?" said Bill. "Sort of reckoned you would be. Oh, you're safe enough; I'm one Demming that don't shoot a man when he's got his hands up." Since there was no surprise in the cousin's face, he knew that Paul had already been apprised of his identity. "When I kill a man, he'll have a gun in his hand, with chances equal."

"What do you want?"

"Several things. First off, I'm aimin' that you should sit down an' write out a confession that it was you who sent Seth Dunlap to kill my dad."

"You—you're crazy."

"Most crazy with anger," agreed Bill grimly. "I want that confession—also the reason you sent Dunlap to Rusty Creek."

"I don't know—what you're talkin' about."

"This is a rotten time to bluff, an' you're a rotten bluffer. Sit down there an' start writin'." His voice was as menacing as the gun, and Paul Demming collapsed into a chair. He was, after all, just a bullying brute, the kind that whines and snivels when it comes to the showdown."

"If I don't——"

"I'm leavin' that to your imagination."

Paul Demming thought swiftly, and suddenly he took heart; the sending of Dunlap to Rusty Creek protected him with legal technicalities. Seth had, before his departure, been duly appointed a deputy; Jim Demming had been a fugitive from justice.

"What if I did send Dunlap to get him?" he countered shrewdly. "A confession that I told an officer of the law where to find a wanted man——"

"You needn't bother about the confession, after all," cut in Bill. "I've found out what I wanted to know, what I suspected but didn't know for sure—that you were the man that sent Dunlap. I ain't goin' to kill you now unless you sort of force it on me, but the next time we meet—draw. Now open that safe; I saw you closin' it just as I was slippin' up to the porch. Get a move on you; I'm in a hurry."

"So that's it, huh? You're a thief; my bold, brave cousin from Rusty Creek is a plain thief!"

"It ain't thievery to steal from a thief, not in this case," retorted Bill. "Get that safe open an' count out four

thousand dollars—what you won from Flint Allen by your crooked work at the rodeo. That's what I come for."

Paul Demming hesitated, but both his cousin's eyes and his gun were unwavering. With shaking hands, he knelt at the safe and opened the door. He cursed as he reached inside, careful to keep his hands in sight, and flung the money on the table.

One hand holding the gun at his hip, Bill counted out four thousand dollars and not a penny over; picking it up, he put it into his pocket.

"Now we'll take a look at them Allen notes," he said grimly.

"You—you're goin' to——"

"No, I ain't goin' to take 'em," cut in Bill. "Flint Allen wouldn't accept 'em if I did. He pays his debts, for he's a man. You're just goin' to trot out them notes and do a bit of writin' on the back of 'em. Take your pen in hand—ah—cousin, an' write: 'Payment of these notes is hereby extended for a period of six months.' Then sign it."

Paul Demming obeyed. He was morally certain that the owner of Circle Bar would be in no better shape to pay them six months hence than he was now. Bill seemed to read his thoughts.

"They'll be paid," he declared. "'Fore the six months are up, Circle Bar will be fuming water down from the Cascade Hills an' the short grass will be planted in alfalfa."

One thing Paul Demming could not understand, and that was why his cousin did not demand his half of Double Eight. Was it possible that he did not know the status of the estate as left by their Uncle Cæsar?

Bill backed toward the window.

"I didn't come a-shootin' this time," he said, "but, like I told you, the next time you see me, draw. I'm goin' to shoot you on sight, an' nothin' can save you except you pullin' a trigger first."

CHAPTER XI.

A COWARD'S END.

PAUL DEMMING waited for perhaps the space of two minutes before he gathered the nerve to move, and then he leaped to his feet and went crashing out of the door toward the bunk house. Flat Nose Purdy was just draining his pint. Three of the other Double Eight punchers lay snoring in their bunks.

"Just been stuck-up!" yelled the rancher. "That kid from Rusty Creek"—it was to be noticed that he did not let his men in on the knowledge that Bill was his cousin—"stuck me up with a gun and took my rodeo money. He's makin' tracks for Circle Bar. Get the boys up, Flat Nose; we'll take the inside trail, and mebbe we can head him off. We've got to ride like fury—and we'll shoot him on sight."

Paul Demming had his chance to give murder the cloak of legality; technically, Bill was an outlaw, a thief. To shoot him down in the recovery of stolen property, was within the law. Flat Nose roused himself to meet the occasion, and a few minutes later he had the other punchers up and on their way to the corral. A quarter of an hour later they were pounding at breakneck speed through the moon-obscured darkness on the inside trail, the short cut to Circle Bar. In reasoning that Bill woull ride without fear of pursuit, he used good judgment. The distance between the wide-flung acres of the two ranches was about four miles, whittled down to three by the shorter route.

Feeling that he had, in a measure, redeemed himself, Bill Demming jogged Scooter along at a comfortable pace. Earlier in the day, riding toward Double Eight after his sudden leave-taking of the rodeo grounds, he had, with the suddenness of an inspiration, grasped the solution of the Circle Bar's troubles. In the failing daylight, even, he had

seen how water could be fumed down in inexpensive sluices to give the Allen ranch the water it so badly needed. The idea of growing alfalfa on that section where there was only short grass, was not original with him; a Rusty Creek rancher had so solved a like situation. The alfalfa was long-rooted and hardy.

At any rate, Flint Allen would have back his four thousand dollars, money that he sorely needed to pay his debt at the bank; in addition, he had six months' grace in which to liquidate the notes. As he rode on, his thoughts drifting to Betty, pleasantly, yet fearfully, he did not see the dark dots which moved indistinctly against the curtain of night many yards ahead of him. On he jogged until the trail led him into a steep-walled draw.

Trapped! He knew it the moment that a gun barked behind him and a bullet whined just over his head, to spatter into the soft wall of the cut. So close as to seem almost an echo, another shot rang out, from the opposite end of the draw. Two of his cousin's men stood guard at either end, cutting off all chance of retreat.

Bill hugged Scooter close to the wall and, crouching low in the saddle, fired. It was nothing more than a lucky shot, for, in the darkness, he could see no target; yet the bark of the forty-five was punctuated by the scream of a horse and the husky curse of a man. He did not know what had happened until he heard the scream of agony.

"Get him off; the horse has broke my leg!" One of Paul Demming's men had been pinned beneath the weight of the fallen animal. That made it man to man at the forward end of the draw, and Bill, swung low over Scooter's neck, dug in the spurs.

"You got to get me out of another scrape, old pal!" urged the man. "It ain't me, Scooter. We got to get this money safe to Circle Bar. Take me through, old hoss; take me through!" Scooter responded with his noble best; forward he plunged. As they neared the opening, the remaining rider on guard there loomed up, magnified double size by the darkness. Bill fired, but the darkness is very deceiving; he missed. The other man answered and was more lucky, for Bill felt a stab in his back, that searing drill of hot lead as it eats into the flesh. He reeled in the saddle from the sickening blow of it, and a warm ooze gushed down along his shoulder blade.

"He got me, Scooter!" gasped Bill. "He got me—bad! You keep to your feet, boy, an' I'll stick to the saddle. Grow wings, old hoss; grow wings—an' fly!"

As Bill had told Betty Allen at that first meeting on the trail, Scooter wasn't much to look at, but he had speed in his legs and a brave heart thumping beneath his ugly hide; he was proving it now. Behind came the sounds of furious pursuit, at first loud with pounding hoofs and hoarse cursings, but the sounds dwindled fainter and fainter as Scooter widened the distance.

Presently the blurred outlines, all the fainter because of the swimming dizziness which danced before Bill's eyes, appeared foggily before him. The man was now clinging to the saddle-pommel with both hands to keep from reeling to the ground, but the horse seemed to need no guidance as he dashed up to the corral. Bill slipped weakly from the saddle and steadied himself against the corral fence to gather himself strength and fight off the drowsy numbness which crept over his senses. The bunk house was in darkness, for the punchers had remained in town to enjoy the hilarious festivities which always followed the rodeo; but within the front room of the ranch house gleamed a light, and Bill knew that the Allens had returned.

Stumblingly, he crossed the yard to the

front porch, a scorching ache in his shoulder. He wondered if Paul Demming and his men would follow him to Circle Bar, and he decided that probably they would. At the sound of his boots on the planks of the porch, Flint Allen flung open the door inquiringly. In the shadows, he did not see the drawn whiteness of the younger man's face.

"It's Bill, Betty!" he called. "He's come back. Y'know, Bill, we had a notion that you'd plumb left us."

Betty came quickly to the door and held out her hand.

"Don't you feel bad, Bill," she said gently; "you did your best, and we are proud of you."

"You bet we are," said the owner of Circle Bar heartily. "You done your best. You couldn't know that a low-down——"

"Dad!" cried Betty. "Bill is—— Oh, Good Lord, he's hurt!"

Bill felt himself slipping and pulled himself together with an effort as he dragged his feet within the door.

"I got it back!" he panted out. "I made him give back—the money he crooked you out of." He fumbled in his pocket for the wad of bills and the pieces of gold; some of them slipped from his fingers and fell to the floor. "There it is, Mr. Allen, the four thousand. I—lost the ride, but—I couldn't —let you lose. The notes—he extended them—six months—got it figgered out —save Circle Bar. Seen it as I rode. Fume water down—plant alfalfa. Guess they're comin' after me. They'll come—shootin'. Don't want to cause you—no more trouble. Guess—guess I'll be ridin'—on."

He staggered against the wall. Where his shirt touched the wall paper, there was left a splotch of red which had soaked through the flannel shirt. Betty and her father stared from Bill to the money, and it was Betty who, her eyes dimmed with tears, broke the silence.

"Dad! Bill took the money away from Paul Demming. He's risked his life twice for us. Oh, Bill!" She rushed toward him and tried to lead him to a chair, but his dulled senses leaped into full consciousness again as he heard, nearing the corral, the thud of hoofs.

"They're comin'—to get me," he gasped out. He reached for his gun. "This is—my fight. I'm going to get —Paul Demming—for killin' my dad." But before he could shake off Betty's firmly grasped fingers as he struggled weakly to reach the door, the black haze of semiconsciousness swam before his eyes again, and he toppled over, under Betty's guidance, into a chair.

Flint Allen, forty-five in his hand, stood at the door waiting. As he listened, he realized that it was but one set of hoofs approaching. This was strange, for the Double Eight gang hunted in pack.

"I got you covered!" he challenged. "Throw up them hands!"

A cloud scurried from across the face of the moon, revealing a diminutive horseman wearing a black hat; and obediently the man's hands went up as he slid out of the saddle..

"Don't shoot! I come on business. It's Judge Lampkin."

"I've no business with Demming's crooked lawyer."

"It isn't you I want to see, Allen, but that kid who rode in the rodeo for Circle Bar this afternoon. My hands are up, and I'm coming in."

Judge Lampkin was quite sober now, and, arms stretched high over his head, he came up to the porch.

"What do you want?" demanded Allen belligerently.

"That youngster here?"

"What's your business with him?"

"I'll tell him that, Allen. I'm about to do him a mighty big favor. Paul Demming and I have quit; we're through. He—curse him—he kicked me—kicked me when I was down. No

man can do that to me and get away with it. The hair-brained fool forgot that I could hit back—with my tongue. Yes, he forgot that."

The lawyer pushed his way inside just as Bill, gulping a drink of water which Betty Allen held to his lips, began to have another flash of consciousness.

"You can't talk business with that man, Lampkin," said the owner of Circle Bar. "He's hurt—bad."

Lampkin gave no heed as he stepped closer to Bill.

"Hum!" he grunted. "Don't know how I overlooked it. Just like his dad—twenty years ago. The only white one of the whole Demming clan." The words, in their full significance, did not reach the rancher and his daughter.

"My name's Lampkin, young fellow, and I've come to give you some important information. Can you understand what I'm talking about?"

Bill looked up slowly, fighting for consciousness.

"I've come to tell you, youngster, why it was that your father was killed at Rusty Creek; why it is that Paul Demming is so dead set on getting rid of you." Bill's brain leaped into sudden life. "By law, you're half owner of Double Eight!"

Flint Allen stared, bewildered.

"Lampkin, you're drunk!" he charged. "What in thunder are you talkin about—this kid half owner of Double Eight?"

The lawyer gave a grunt that was half a chuckle.

"Don't know who he is, huh? Then take a good look at that face. Don't it remind you of a certain man who lived in Happy Valley twenty years ago?"

Flint Allen's jaw sagged; it was easy to see it after some one else had pointed it out.

"Great Heaven!" he almost shouted. "He's——"

"In the rodeo," said Lampkin, "he was known as Bill Blank, but his right name is Bill Demming—and he owns half of Double Eight! That's what I come to tell him."

Bill Demming showed none of the elation that would have been natural in a youth of twenty-three who has suddenly been informed that he owns half of a thousand-acre ranch and six thousand head of cattle; he saw only the look of horror that came into the face of Betty as her hand fell away from his. She gave him a look that was grief-stricken and accusing.

"A Demming!" she whispered tragically. "You—you are—a Demming!"

And the lamp seemed to flicker and go out as there closed over Bill an engulfing blackness.

While the sitting room of the Circle Bar ranch house was still filled with the tenseness which had followed Judge Lampkin's announcement, there came the rapid *thud-thud* of approaching hoofs. Flint Allen stood erect and listened.

"That's Double Eight's gang," he said; "they're after him." He pointed to the unconscious Bill. "He——" His voice grew husky. "He may be a Demming, Lampkin, but he's all man!"

Lampkin's eyes glowed.

"Where's your hands?"

"In town—ever' consarned one of 'em. It's me against 'em all, for, so help me Heaven, they'll never take this boy out of this house except over my dead body. Demming or no Demming, that goes!"

"You and me against them, Allen," added Lampkin. "I don't start fighting once in twenty years, but when I do, I fight. They're coming to get this kid because Cæsar Demming died without leaving a will, because this kid is a joint heir with Paul. Understand? And if the liquor has left my nerves so that I can hold a gun steady"—— He leaned down and took Bill's gun from

its holster—"well, he'll be the sole heir. No man can kick me——" Leaving Allen to puzzle over his strange behavior, the little lawyer slipped suddenly out of the door and away into the darkness.

"Huh!" grunted the owner of Circle Bar. "When he fights, he runs. Some fightin', that! You, Betty, get hold of the boy's feet an' help me get him onto the couch in the next room. They'll be here in a minute."

Betty, tears in her eyes, obeyed.

"Oh, dad," she sobbed out, "why—why did he have to be a Demming?" It is not easy to forget to hate a name when one has been taught to hate it so bitterly for ten years. As her father left her, she took a pair of scissors and bravely began cutting at the flannel shirt to bandage the wound.

Outside, Paul Demming and his guards, now reduced to three since the fourth had been left behind, rode up and placed themselves at widely separated positions in front of the house. Paul, as was to be expected from his kind, remained well in the rear where he would be a less favorable target for a marksman within.

Flat Nose rode nearest; the liquor he had drunk made him more daring, less cautious than usual. The Double Eight gang generally played safe.

"Hey, there!" he shouted. "Allen, we got the house surrounded. Start any trouble, an' we're goin' to mass-cree the whole dang outfit of you. We want that thievin' kid an' we're goin' to get him. He held up the boss, and we're goin' to take him, dead or alive. Goin' to let us in, or are we goin' to shoot our way in?"

It was a tense moment for Flint Allen. He was determined, as he had said, that Bill should be taken from the house only over his dead body; he owed that much to the lad who twice had risked his life for Circle Bar. If he refused, Flat Nose Purdy meant what he said—they would shoot their way in. He was one man against four, counting Paul Demming. If he opposed them, they would shoot him down; Bill was helpless to protect Betty, and the lawyer had run away. What would happen with Betty alone and at the mercy of Paul Demming?

Slowly he opened the door.

"Men," he said, "the boy is here, bad shot. You ain't goin' to take a man who——"

"Oh, we ain't goin' to take him, eh?" snarled Flat Nose.

"Watcha waitin' for?" growled Paul Demming, from the rear. "Don't listen to any arguments. Go on and get him, Flat Nose. You've got your orders. We're after a thief, and——"

The sentence was never finished. Out there in the darkness, prone on his stomach, Judge Lampkin wriggled through the knee-high grass of the ranch yard, Bill's gun in his hand. He hadn't run away; he was merely indulging in tragedy. Perhaps it wasn't a heroic way to fight, but Lampkin was fighting the kind of man who kicks another when he is down, and within his liquor-soaked soul there burned the hatred born of his humiliation.

Lampkin crawled forward, almost an inch at a time; he knew his handicap with a gun, and he wasn't running the chances of a wide range in that uncertain darkness. When within less than twenty feet of Demming's black horse, he leaped up suddenly, a vengeful little figure, his black lawyer's hat gone, and his black alpaca coat flapping about his legs. Steadying his arm by pillowing the right elbow in the palm of his left hand, he lifted the forty-five and fired.

With his angry orders to Flat Nose ending in a gurgle, Paul Demming pitched forward in the saddle and rolled down into the grass. As he fell, his gun was jolted clear of its holster, but

as he reached for the butt of it his fingers stiffened with the spasm of death.

As the report of his weapon rang out, the black horse dashed riderless toward the road, and Flat Nose, turning in his saddle, saw that he was leaderless. He had no grief over the end of the man whom he always addressed as "chief"; secretly, he had hated him and despised his cowardice, bound to him only by the generous pay. He had no quarrel with Judge Lampkin but he saw the outline of the gun in the lawyer's hand and jumped to the wrong conclusion that the man was about to fire again. Flat Nose's gun raised and fired. The lawyer's arm went up in one of those gestures which he used while haranguing a jury, raised on his tiptoes, and slowly slipped to his knees.

"Just as well," he muttered chokingly; "just as well, I'd of drank myself to death, anyhow, and—and I'm dying, thank Heaven, like a man!"

CHAPTER XII.

BILL WINS.

IT was just after sunup the next morning, and Bill Demming stirred, opened his eyes slowly, and blinked at the rays of light which flowed in through the window. His big brown hands touched the soothing smoothness of a freshly laundered bedsheet, and he frowned in puzzled fashion. For a moment he couldn't begin to figure it out. About his chest were tight-drawn bandages, and when he turned slowly there was a dull pain under his shoulder blade. Then memory came back to him. The ache of the wound was forgotten by the ache in his heart, for, even more poignant than the searing slash of the bullet, was the memory of Betty Allen's eyes when she had heard he was a Demming.

As he stared miserably up at the ceiling, there crossed his line of vision the head of golden hair that he had learned to love so well and yet so silently.

"Bill!" The voice was sweet and silvery soft.

"Yes'm."

"You—you are feeling better now?"

"I don't know," he answered; in fact he felt that it would have been kinder to him if the bullet had found his heart. "Where am I?"

"Still at Circle Bar. Where else would you be, Bill?"

"I reckon—I reckon it's some tough, ma'am, to sort of force an Allen to keep a Demming under their roof, but I'll clear out right away. I had no right to come, nohow; no right whatsoever. I hadn't no right to keep my name from you an' your dad, to sleep in an Allen bunk house an' eat Allen grub."

"Just why did you do that, Bill?"

Bill's face flamed, and his lips tightened.

"I—I had my reasons, Miss Betty; we won't talk about that now. Tell me—Paul Demming—didn't come?"

"Yes, he came, Bill, but he won't come any more—ever. Judge Lampkin killed him. You own all of Double Eight now; every hoof on it. You even own the notes of dad's; they were bought with Double Eight money, you know."

Bill shook his head.

"I don't want it. I don't want a hoof of Double Eight stock. I won't take nothin' from that cousin——"

"But you don't understand, Bill. Judge Lampkin gasped out the whole story to us just before he died. One of your cousin's men shot him, but he lived for almost an hour. Double Eight is rightfully yours, anyhow. It's quite a long story, but the short of it is that Cæsar Demming and a brother, Alf, got the ranch away from your father twenty years ago. Your father was a good cattleman, and thrifty; he made his stock pay. Your two uncles framed

a murder on him, and he had to leave the country; then they forged your father's name to some papers, and he didn't dare to come back and disprove their ownership. Cæsar Demming has been the king of the Happy Valley country for years; he elected the sheriff and the other officers, so your father didn't dare to come back.

"Before Cæsar Demming died, he wrote a will in which he tried to make everything right by willing Double Eight back to your father, but he died before he signed it. As it was, your father was half owner with your cousin; that is why Paul Demming sent the man to Rusty Creek to kill him. That's all of it, Bill; morally, the ranch is yours. You've got to take it, Bill; you've got to take it and make the name of Demming stand for honest dealing, and the Double Eight brand stand for honest cows, because——"

In utter bewilderment, Bill stared up at her. There was lacking that animosity which he had been sure he would find in her eyes. He didn't dare be sure, but she didn't look quite as if she—well, hated him.

"Because—because what, Betty?" he demanded, his voice eager, not daring to ask the question which trembled on his lips, for fear that the answer would be "No."

"Because, Bill," she answered with a smile as she let her hand rest in his, "if you mean just half of what you said when the fever had you—well, I'm liable to have something to say about how Double Eight is run."

"CHIEF" CLINTON PASSES AWAY

WITH the death recently of "Chief" Clinton, in Abilene, Texas, there passed away an old-timer whose name will go down in history with those of "Buffalo Bill" and other well-known characters of the early days. "Chief" Clinton, as he was affectionately called, had a notable career. Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1848, he came to this country in his seventh year, his parents settling in Wisconsin. When only fourteen years of age, Chief entered the military academy at Little Rock, Arkansas, and one year later he joined a company of cadets who volunteered for service with the Confederate army, with which he fought during the closing battles of the Civil War.

Later, he was a prominent figure in the Indian wars, taking a notable part in such battles as that of the Adobe Walls, on the Canadian River, the Lone Tree Crossing, and the Battle of the Water Hole, in 1874, near Van Horn, Texas, under the command of "Big Foot Wallace." Frederick Remington, the celebrated painter who made the latter battle famous by his work, is said to have secured his description of the encounter from Clinton.

After the Indian wars, Clinton was next heard from at Dodge City, Kansas, then known as the wildest settlement on the frontier, where he became a peace officer. It was here that he met, and became a close friend of, the late Bat Masterson. For the last thirty-seven years Clinton has lived at Abilene, where he has held the office of chief of the fire and police departments. Old-timers from all over the Southwest attended his funeral.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR DELIVERS ADDRESS IN GOLD MINE

DURING a recent visit in Tuolumne County, California, Governor William D. Stephens delivered an address three thousand feet beneath the surface of the earth. The address was given at the bottom of the famous Carson Hill gold mine, near Angel's Camp. Three hundred miners attended.

Ranger Mastick's Mistake

By

Harrison R. Howard

Author of
"The Flume Master,"
"Where Mel Came In," etc.

FROM the very beginning of his career on the Pinehurst patrol, Ranger Jack Mastick, of the forest service had proved himself a misfit. A square peg in a round hole, he was unable to conform to his environment; and the mistake that he made was the natural outgrowth of his pronounced failing.

His superior, District Ranger Remington, was a man of observation, and had long predicted that sooner or later Mastick would make his mistake. Formerly an army man, always a strict disciplinarian, Remington made a fetish of rigid obedience to instructions; and Mastick's failing was an abiding inability to follow orders.

Remington was an efficient executive and a patient man. He went to unusual lengths to correct his assistant's undisciplined habits; he pointed out to Mastick the dire results certain to accrue to one who persisted in replacing orders with the dictates of his own judgment.

"But where's the kick?" Mastick demanded when called to account for flagrant disregard of instructions. "When I got into the timber I saw a better way. The same thing was accomplished—and quicker. What's wrong with that; don't you want a man to use his head?"

Remington's level gaze seemed to pass through the young ranger. "Mastick, some day you'll want to go higher in the service, and no man can earn the right to give orders until he learns how to obey them."

"But my way proved better, Remington."

"Perhaps. But that's not the point; you disobeyed instructions. Luckily, you accomplished what you were sent after; but mark me, Mastick, some day your luck will turn and you'll make a mistake."

Mastick twirled his Stetson in his hands. "Maybe you're right, boss. Perhaps I just don't belong. But I tell you it's hard to see a better way of doing a thing and have to pass it up just to be disciplined."

"That's what you're here for—to be disciplined! When you've been promoted, given a district of your own, that'll be time enough to start using your own judgment. Now let's forget it and start over again, son."

Mastick was honest in his intention to mend his ways; but as time passed he found himself unable, now and again,

to resist the temptation of using his own methods in preference to those prescribed by his superior. His luck persisted; each time he deviated from orders his way proved to be the better, and it seemed that Remington's prediction of a mistake was not to be fulfilled.

"You got away with it this time, Jack," his patient superior would say gravely. "But you'll never get any place in this man's service by such tactics. Some day you'll use your own judgment and make a mistake. Then don't expect me to spare you."

Mastick's mistake seemed still far removed, however, by the time Remington's annual leave of absence came through from headquarters. "Lord only knows what you'll be pulling in my absence, Mastick," he said in leaving. "I hope there'll be a district left when I come back."

"Oh, I'll take care of everything, boss," Mastick assured him blithely.

"I don't doubt that. But get these instructions about the cavalry regiment that's coming up for summer camp and maneuvers. They're to use the big ravine down by the boundary for their camp site, and the east meadow above for drill ground."

Mastick reflected for a moment. "Why not give them the west meadow for drilling, boss? The east is all right in calm weather, but it gets pretty nasty there in a wind. The old pass just beyond is a regular funnel. It'll blow their uniforms off in a gale."

Ranger Remington sighed wearily. "Same old Mastick, aren't you, son? Always ready with a better judgment. Well, just put them on the east meadow as I told you. The road to the west field isn't fit for troops."

Remington paused, running his fingers through his hair. "Lord, Mastick, I hope that if your mistake is in the air, it won't strike until I get back. Whatever you do, watch your step!"

Remington stopped in at headquarters on the way to his home in far-off southern California where he was to spend two weeks. The chief himself was in the office. "How are you making out with young Mastick?" the official wanted to know.

"He's a problem, sir. Orders don't mean much to Mastick. Always wants to use his own judgment."

The studious chief nodded, a faint flicker of amusement in his steel-gray eyes. "It isn't a bad idea to give a young ranger his head, Remington. Remember, it's the young men of today who'll have to carry on our work to-morrow."

"I understand, chief; but discipline won't hurt Mastick."

"True; that's just why I put him on your district."

"What I'm afraid of is he'll make a bad mistake some time, using his own judgment. Cost us a big fire or something, just being headstrong. And when he does, sir, it won't be a tender recommendation I'll be sending you."

His leave of absence expired, Remington returned to his district just in time to relieve Mastick of command in a minor forest fire. The blaze amounted to little, but Remington returned from it a very wrothy man.

"Mastick," he exclaimed to his assistant across the desk, "you've just about strained my patience to the limit. This has got to end. You've got to learn to obey orders."

Mastick mopped his smoke-grimed face, grinning. "Shoot, boss! I'm too tired to get sore, no matter what you say."

"Look here!" the harassed district man exclaimed impatiently; "when I sent you over to the north line to-day, what did I tell you? Didn't I say specifically to go around by the trail leading past Fancher's so as to see how the fire looked there? And what did you do? You saw a better way—as

usual! You took the trail over Signal Hill instead."

"It was quicker, boss, and I knew that from the crest of the hill I could get even a better idea of the fire at Fancher's."

"But hang it, man, you disregarded orders! That's the point. If the chief was here right now, Mastick, I'd ask him to transfer you off my district."

Mastick grinned wearily. "This ain't half as mad as you're going to get when I tell you about the cavalry. Brace yourself, boss—I put them on the west meadow for drilling."

Remington's hair seemed to rise upon its roots as he got to his feet. He was about to launch upon a heated tirade when he abruptly took hold of himself. The balancing years of discipline asserted themselves; and when he spoke it was in a calm, uninflected voice.

"The first thing in the morning, Mastick, you will switch the cavalry to the east meadow—as you were originally instructed. Tell the colonel I'll be over during the day to pay my respects and explain the change."

There was an icy quality in the district man's words that chilled Mastick's objection. "Yes, sir," he replied meekly.

Remington stood staring in silence at his assistant, grimly battling with his anger. Mastick saw him pick up an envelope from the desk, glancing at it by way of diversion. It was an official communication from headquarters; and tearing it open, Remington scanned the message within. Then he exclaimed softly, and dropped back into his chair.

"Well, I will be hanged!" Blinking, he glanced belligerently at Mastick. "It's about you, ranger—and it's come at a bad time. There's a promotion in the air; the chief wants a report on your work."

Mastick started joyously, straightening on his chair. He had waited a long time for this moment, and now that it had come he found himself breathless and confused. "Pro-promotion, boss?"

Remington did not condescent to confirm the query. He laid the document emphatically upon the desk, eyed his assistant evenly, and sighed as though facing an unpleasant task.

"Mastick, you know my opinion of your work, don't you?"

Mastick nodded. "Sure; worse possible, boss! But—but——"

Remington's eyes did not waver before Mastick's fervid gaze. "I've warned you repeatedly that some day you'd want to go higher in the service; but you've taken no heed. I don't see how I can recommend you on past performances."

With a sullen exclamation Mastick got to his feet, twirling the chair off behind him. "If—if that's the way you feel about it, Remington, go as far as you like."

"A man hasn't learned to give orders, Mastick, until he knows how to *obey* them."

Mastick swallowed and nodded. "All right. I'm not asking anything of you. If you want to deal in personalities, why——"

"Personalities?" Remington echoed.

"What else? You simply don't like me. Why, from the very start you've ridden me about one thing or another. Well—here's your chance for personal spite!"

"Personal spite? Mastick, you're a liar as well as a fool! Spite? Why, do you think I'd have taken so much trouble trying to make a real service man out of you, if I had anything against you personally? Personally I don't care a hang whether you stand or fall. What makes me sorry is that after all the work I've done on you, you're no better off than the day you reported for duty on my district."

In the ensuing silence the two men stared evenly at each other. Then abruptly Remington took a grip on him-

self once more, relaxed visibly, and shook his head.

"Sit down. We're being ridiculous as schoolboys. The chief wants me to have my report ready for him when he comes next month on tour of inspection. I'll make a bargain with you, Mastick. We'll forget the past. My report will be based on your work in the next thirty days."

Color returned to Mastick's countenance; he leaned forward, his eyes flashing. "That—that's blamed decent of you, Remington. I'll watch my step."

Remington laughed. "That's the way to talk, Jack. And I'll expect rigid observance of orders." He sobered abruptly. "By the way, ranger, what was it you were to do in the morning?"

"Shift the cavalry to the east meadow."

Remington stacked the papers on his desk, and said severely, "See that it's done, Mastick."

"It's as good as done, boss. Good-night."

In the weeks that intervened between this bargain and Mastick's mistake, the ranger's duties were many and various; and although many times he was sorely tempted to use his own judgment, he successfully restrained the impulse and hewed conscientiously to the line of prescribed duty.

Ranger Remington waxed enthusiastic. He began to feel that the time spent on Mastick's training was at last bearing fruit. By way of test, he sent his assistant on a wild-goose chase with obviously defective instructions; but Mastick did not falter. He closed his ears to the imperious voice of his own judgment, and followed his orders to the last word.

On the day before the chief was due to arrive on the district, Remington said to his assistant: "You've done well, Jack. I've prepared my report and I think the chief will find it favorable. You're headed up in the world; but it may be some time before a final decision is reached on your promotion and the transfer comes through. Meantime, don't slip! Remember that orders are orders; otherwise I'll recall my recommendation."

Mastick smiled in huge good feeling for his superior. "I won't forget, boss. I'm cured!"

"I hope so. Then you'll never make your mistake."

"No chance," Mastick replied decisively.

Yet by that very midnight the circumstances which led to Mastick's mistake began to conspire. Waking, Mastick listened to the raucous voice of a rising gale among the firs. He thought of the cavalry regiment, and smiled to himself. When the colonel took his men to the east field for drill in the morning he would understand why Mastick had disregarded his superior's instructions and assigned them the west meadow.

He'd bet his hat, Mastick thought to himself, that in the morning the colonel would chose the west field in spite of the bad road. In a gale like this his men couldn't stand the exposed east grounds. Mastick fell asleep smiling and was awakened again by the clamors of an electrical storm. Before sleep came once more the wind had achieved hurricane proportions.

Ere dawn had broken over the forest world, the telephone wires were hot with reports of the big fire. Remington and Mastick were at work in the office by the time the sun, an orb of reddish copper, rose above the crowns of the firs through mists of smoke driven by the high wind.

It was a morning of feverish activity. By seven o'clock the fire-fighting crew left the village; by ten the climax of the red battle was fast approaching. Like a thunderous barrage, the crimson flames rolled down the forest aisles upon the workers on the battle line.

The world was transformed from fair forest, all coolness, quiet, and inviting greenery, to the seeming of inferno itself. The onrushing flames cast an evil glare upon the woodland; the unearthly clamors of the burning were terror-laden and deafening; a killing heat flooded down the aisles among the firs, driven on the breast of the hurricane wind.

It was obviously a losing battle; the wind-driven legions of crimson were approaching faster than the fire trail and backfires could clear a line of defense across the path. Breathless, and worried of countenance, Ranger Remington came running up to where his assistant was directing the work of setting backfires.

He drew Mastick out of hearing of the men on the line. "Jack, we've got to have more men; and there's the cavalry encampment over on the boundary. It's five miles. Ride to the camp and get the men."

Mastick glanced at his watch. "They won't be in camp at this time, Remington—they'll be out drilling."

Remington glanced at his own watch and nodded. "That's right. Go to the east meadow, Mastick."

Mastick's lips twitched; he paused a breathless moment. Then he hazarded impulsively, "Remington, I know that orders are orders, but I think you're wrong." He glanced at the onrushing wall of flames. "There's no time to lose, sir, and if they don't happen to be at the east meadow there'll be no time to back-track and get over to the west."

"But they *are* on the east, Mastick. We assigned them——"

"I know; but that was in fair weather. The east meadow is exposed, and in a wind like this I'm sure they'll have gone to the west field for their formations. Why, the east isn't livable to-day; the old pass'll be blowing like a funnel!"

Remington shook his head impatiently. "They're on the east grounds all right, but at that we can't afford to take chances. Do this. From the crossroads where the way separates to the east and west, you ride up the rise just beyond and you'll be in full view of the main camp. Signal the men on duty there, and they'll indicate where the troops are."

Mastick knew that he had already tried his superior's patience dangerously with his suggestions. He said tentatively, "I'm not sure that that'll do any good, sir. The men doing fatigue duty in camp may not know the signals. What then?"

"Then go to the east."

It was with difficulty that Mastick restrained his impulse to protest. The proposition outraged his own judgment; but thoughts of the imminent arrival of the chief suggested cautiously that for his own good he had better not question Remington's orders further.

"Well?" the district man demanded.

Mastick started, and with a hint of resignation in the gesture he touched informally the brim of his Stetson. "Yes, sir!"

"And don't make any mistake!"

"No, sir!" Mastick replied, turned about, and flung off toward his horse.

As the miles passed beneath his animal's feet racketing down the narrow forest aisle, temptation grew upon Mastick. He realized the perilous situation of the fire, threatening to escape from the bounds the fire fighters were toiling to establish before it; time was the essential element. The cavalry must arrive at the scene of the battle without delay.

It was a wanton waste of precious moments, he considered, to halt at the crossroads and signal the camp below when it was so obviously certain that the cavalry would not be drilling on the exposed east field in such a wind. Remington's orders were nothing short of amazing. There could be no question

but that the troops were on the sheltered west meadow. He was sorely tempted not to pause at the crossroads, but to turn at once upon the way to the west.

He smiled to himself, spurring his horse on. No; he'd take the time to signal the camp to confirm his judgment. He could ill afford to disregard orders and risk his chances of promotion. The chief was due at the fire any time now; and should he learn that Mastick had abandoned Remington's judgment for his own, there would be a dismissal rather than a promotion coming through from headquarters.

Minutes later the crossroads swung into view. The way to the left led to the east field; the way to the right, to the west. Mastick resisted the impulse to turn at once to the right; and directing his mount on across the intersection he wheeled up the rise beyond. Five minutes later he drew rein at the edge of the precipitous bluff overlooking the wide ravine in which the camp of the cavalry was situated.

With an exclamation of dismay, incredulity dawning in his eyes, Mastick swung from the saddle. Below, nothing was to be seen but gray void. The floor of the ravine with its orderly lines of tents was lost to view, obscured.

A level blanket of fog, from the sea to which the ravine pointed, lay like a roof upon the declivity. The thick mist was motionless, caught in the shelter between the hills so that the high wind did not disturb it. It was impenetrable; he could not hope to signal the camp hidden below.

With panic in his eyes Mastick gazed upon the bafflement of his hope that the camp's reply to his signal would confirm his judgment that the troops had gone to the west meadow. Now he must turn blindly east, though he knew it was wrong. But those were his orders—Remington had instructed that if he were unable to raise the main camp he was to go to the east field without further delay.

Disturbed by the protests of his own judgment he mounted and spurred back to the crossroads, halting at the divergent ways. He flung himself to the ground and studied carefully the marks of many hoofs upon the road surface. Troops had ridden past in both directions; but he could not determine whether the marks heading east or those heading west were the fresher. In one or the other direction the cavalry had ridden that morning.

He studied breathlessly the flinty floor of the two roads. Though he could not be sure, the marks he observed seemed to ratify his overwhelming belief that the west road was the one last traveled.

The force of the hurricane surging against him, whipping his clothing viciously about him, added to the conviction. In such weather the officers would surely have chosen the sheltered meadow. It was madness for him to turn east.

His breathing erratic, he fancied he heard the clamors of the distant burning as it roared down upon Remington's fire trail. Men must be had—quickly. Were he to follow orders and find the east field deserted it would be too late to ride back to the west. He must chose quickly—either Remington's judgment or his own.

He had known many times before, just such a temptation as now possessed him, and he trembled upon the decision to disregard Remington's orders. Remington had warned him; he understood the consequences only too well. He knew that even though by disobeying instructions he were to save the fire, still the discipline-blinded district man would disqualify him on technical grounds.

Yet, somehow, that seemed no longer to matter. In his mind's eye he could picture the crimson barrage rolling

across the forest floor toward Remington's pitifully small crew. The only thing that mattered now was to defeat the red destruction. The necessary reinforcements must be produced, no matter what Mastick's personal loss.

He wanted his promotion as he had never wanted anything before. It was the reward due him for the years of toil and waiting. Remington, he knew, valued discipline above all else; so far as Mastick's promotion was concerned, the matter of saving the fire was secondary in importance to that of unquestioning obedience to orders.

He must chose, he saw, one alternative or the other. Turn to the east in blind obedience to orders; or to the west in response to the dictates of his judgment. His own judgment! A spirit of defiance developed upon him. He saw that he was at the crossroads figuratively as well as literally. The cavalry were on the west; everything ratified that belief; his judgment sanctioned it. To turn east meant failure and promotion; to turn west meant success and disqualification!

With an impatient gesture he made his decision, renounced his personal interests, and swung to the saddle. The saving of the forest meant more, he realized, than the penalty he must pay for using his own judgment. Wheeling his animal, Mastick spurred rapidly up the west road.

It was a mad flight along the ever-ascending way toward the plateau meadow on the west side of the range. The timbered road twisted and turned continually; in the half hour of hard riding since he had left the crossing, he had encountered not one straightaway a hundred yards long.

A high excitement was in the blood that pulsed through Mastick's veins. Before long, now, he would reach the west-side ranger cabin near the crest of the ridge, and from there he would be able to see the cavalry drilling on the meadow below. There was no question of failure in his mind; he knew his judgment! This was not to be the mistake Remington had so long predicted!

Despite the studied certainty of success, however, the exhilirating spirit of gamble was heavy upon Mastick. He refused to consider the voice within him which insisted that the officers *might* have taken their men to the east. That was impossible! In his mind's eye he could see the khaki-clad troops drilling on the west field. Nevertheless, as he came at last into view of the west-side ranger cabin, his heart was tumultuous with eagerness.

Dismounting before the cabin he ran rapidly to the edge of the slope and peered down upon the sheltered west field. Halting precipitately, his eyes went abruptly wide with incredulity and horror. A cry of dismay escaped his lips. The spreading meadow below lay calm, undisturbed by the thud of hoofs. The field was unoccupied.

His heart wrenching at its roots, disbelieving the evidence of his senses, Mastick leaned desperately forward, rubbing his eyes. He was shocked, unable to grasp the situation, the fact that at last his judgment had proved wrong. The breath trembling audibly from his lips, fever broke over him; perspiration trickled down his face from beneath the band of his Stetson.

It was, he realized dully, the end. He had lost both—his promotion and the fire! Recoiling, he seemed to hear again the thunders of the distant flames. He could picture Remington, laboring heroically with his crew, awaiting the arrival of the cavalry that was not to come. It was too late, now, to return to the crossroads and go east. The fire was lost; hundreds of rich acres stood endangered; Mastick had made his mistake.

He turned blindly about and hurried to the ranger cabin. Inside, he lunged

across the room and with unsteady hand took up the telephone receiver. It seemed an eternity before he had the connection with temporary field headquarters. Then Remington's voice boomed over the wire.

"Remington! This is Mastick."

"Thank God, Jack! She's getting bad here. Have you got the troops?"

The receiver trembled perilously in Mastick's hand. "They—they're not here, Remington."

"Not there!" The district man's shouted words exploded deafeningly in Mastick's ears. "Are you sure, Mastick? Can you see the whole field? Where are you?"

Mastick swallowed with difficulty, his voice faltering. "At the west-side ranger cabin."

"West?" Remington fairly screamed. "Good heavens, man, I told you east. You—you unmitigated fool! You've done it at last!"

Mastick's flesh burned maddeningly. He gulped again, nodding into the transmitter. "I know it. You always predicted I would. Shall—shall I ride east?"

"Ride to the devil!" Remington bellowed. "You're through. It's too late to save this line now by bringing the troops from the east. And the chief's here, too. Lord, what a disgrace! We'll have to start a new line in the rear. I'll send a man from here to the east field."

"I—I can make it to the east, Remington," Mastick shouted hopefully.

"You're through, Mastick! You cost us the line; and I'll send some one from here—some one I can trust to follow orders."

Mastick shuddered. "Shall—shall I report back to the fire?"

A terrific oath trembled over the wire. "Show up here, Mastick, and I—I'll pull you apart with my bare hands! You're finished—don't you understand? So far as my district is concerned you've got no connection with this man's service."

"But——"

"You're done! From now on you can do as you please—use your own judgment. I've got nothing further to say to you! G'-by."

The breath panting from his slack lips, Mastick turned from the instrument. He crossed the cabin with unsteady, ludicrous steps, and emerged upon the veranda. It was the end! By now the chief had learned of his mistake. He was out, a failure, disgraced!

He stumbled from the narrow veranda and went blindly toward his horse. He had made his mistake at last. What a colossal fool he had been, so cocksure of himself and his precious judgment. His own judgment! Mastick laughed bitterly.

But the mirthless expression died abruptly upon his lips and he swung quickly about to face the point above the cabin where the road disappeared over the crest of the rise toward the meadow. A sound that was distant yet increasing reached his ears. He held his breath, listening. Amazement dawning in his eyes, his tongue strayed out to wet his parched lips.

In another instant an exclamation escaped him. The sound was rapidly growing nearer; it was like the roll of distant, muffled drums. There was no mistaking its significance. Horsemen were approaching, ascending the hidden road from the west meadow. In a moment or two, now, they would come into view.

Then with incredulous eyes he saw galloping riders top the rise. He sprang instantly to the center of the road, waving his arms and shouting wildly. Over the crest above bounded horseman after horseman. It was the cavalry! They were dressed in blue denim—fatigue uniform. They carried picks and

shovels, axes and adzes—armed for fire fighting!

Dismayed, ready to discredit the evidence of his eyes, Mastick ran forward to meet them. He saw the officer at the head of the column raise his hand. The riders following, quickly checked their mounts. Mastick met them in a cloud of dust. He was inarticulate with emotion.

"Hello, ranger," the captain hailed. "What's wrong? You look like you'd seen a ghost."

Mastick laughed uncertainly, struggling for breath. "I—I thought I had. I was sent for you by Ranger Remington. There's a bad fire and they need help. I looked for you on the field down there. Where—where were you?"

The captain smiled at the ranger's obvious dismay. "We were repairing the road just beyond the crest back there. That's why you couldn't see us. No drill to-day. Lead the way, ranger; we're ready for business."

Mastick shook his head. "I've got to go back to the telephone, captain. Must tell Remington to hold the line—that you're coming. You can't miss the fire—right off the main trail. You'll see it!"

The captain nodded and raised his arm once more. Mastick scurried to the road side. Past him swept an endless stream of efficient-looking young horsemen. Through the dust Mastick made his way to the cabin. With the telephone receiver to his ear, he signaled impatiently.

At last the connection was made. An unfamiliar voice responded from field headquarters. "Give me Remington." Mastick shouted. "Is he there?"

"He's just gone down to the fire line!"

"Has—has the line been abandoned yet?"

"Not yet—Remington's getting the men together. Who is this?"

"Mastick! Who are you?"

"This is Hodges speaking, ranger."

Mastick's mind whirled. Hodges, the chief himself! Mastick essayed to speak, paused gulping, then shouted. "Good Lord, sir, stop them! Tell Remington to hold on. The cavalry is on the way."

"I'll tell him, ranger. Good-by."

"Wait, chief. Shall—shall I report back on the fire line?"

"I heard Ranger Remington give you your orders, Mastick. I think they were plain enough. Good-by."

Wincing, Mastick assented; then he slowly returned the receiver to the hook.

It was a bleak trail along which he rode back to the village. In his cabin, late in the afternoon, he sat at the table with paper and ink before him, casting about mentally for the difficult sentences he must compose. It was no easy matter, he found, to write away the years he had spent in the service as well as the hopes he had builded for the years to come; and it was fully an hour before the resignation was done and his signature scrawled beneath.

In the morning Mastick packed his belongings and made ready to quit the land of the big timber. He was a sad, chastened young man who blamed only himself. Remington had made a fair bargain with him in agreeing to forget the past if Mastick would hew to the line for the remainder of his days on the district. He harbored no ill feeling toward his late superior.

It seemed impossible, as he viewed yesterday's events in retrospect, that he had sold out his future so easily. Why hadn't he turned east? To be sure that had been the wrong direction, but it had been his orders. Had he done so, though the fire would have been lost, he would now be in good standing, recommended for promotion.

His own judgment! He had paid heavily to prove its correctness. What he should do now he did not know; he

was a trained forester and knew no other work. Disgraced in the Federal service, he had no chance in a State organization. Only private enterprise remained and as yet few commercial timber interests were employing technical foresters.

At ten o'clock, with his resignation in his pocket, he made his way disconsolately to the service office for the last time. Remington and the chief were seated at the desk. The district man nodded perfunctorily; the chief said, glancing up: "Good morning, ranger."

Though his heart was heavy, Mastick contrived a casual demeanor. "Good morning, sir." He turned to the district man. "Remington, I'd like to have a moment of your time if possible. Sorry to interrupt, but I'm taking the morning stage to the outside."

Remington did not rise and come forward to the railing. The chief, glancing again at Mastick, raised his brows, inquiring, "I didn't know you had a leave of absence, Mastick? Going home to visit the folks?"

"I haven't any folks—or any home!" Mastick replied evenly. "And, as you know, I'm not going on leave. I'm through!"

He saw the headquarters man pretend surprise, and he prepared himself for sarcasm. "Quitting, eh? I though you were a sticker, Mastick." The chief swung his chair about, eying the young ranger critically. "That's bad. Sorry to lose both you and Remington off the district at once."

Mastick's eyes flickered. "Remington?"

The chief nodded. "Yes; Remington's leaving. It'll be inconvenient breaking in two men unfamiliar with the patrol; and I had depended on you. I know that you and Ranger Remington haven't hit it off any too well together; but I think, Mastick, that you'd be able to get along all right with the new district man."

Mastick gazed from marveling eyes at the headquarters man, scarcely believing his ears. A sudden hope filled him gratefully. To stay on in the service, vouchsafed an opportunity to live down the past, to start anew under another district man! Some day, perhaps, what he had done would be forgotten; he would again be in line for——

The chief was speaking again. "Ranger Remington, here, has been promoted, Mastick. He's going up to headquarters in charge of some technical work. As you know, I had asked him for a report on you, and he seems to feel you never could bring yourself to follow a district man's orders. That makes a difficult problem, Mastick."

The ranger nodded hesitantly. He was not wholly sure of himself; he could not seem to grasp the trend of the headquarter's man's conversation.

"You've done some good work here, Mastick; and Remington vouches highly for you. What you did yesterday, of course, speaks for itself; you saved hundreds of our best acres, Mastick. And so I've been at some pains to solve your problem. The answer is plain enough—simply to get a district man in here whose judgment is not only good, but *so* good that you can't help following it."

Mastick gulped and nodded. "Yes, sir," he responded inanely, wondering what it was all about.

"That's a difficult problem, Mastick; but I think we've solved it."

"Yes, sir," the ranger repeated.

The following silence bothered Mastick; he saw the chief and Remington leave their chairs beside the table and come forward to the railing where he stood. They exchanged thoughtful glances; then the man from headquarters nodded, and Remington grasped Mastick's hand.

"Congratulations, Jack."

Mastick's hand was limp in the other's firm grip. "About—about what?" he demanded, half belligerent and half defensive, prepared for some practical joke.

"Why, on your new title," Remington responded, grinning. "Sounds good—District Ranger Mastick!"

Mastick stood rigid, incredulous. The chief was now shaking his hand. Somehow he seemed no longer the stern, aloof official he had always appeared. He was smiling cordially. "We've chosen the new district man because his judgment has been tried and proven. Ranger Remington swears by it. You're the man in charge here, Mastick."

Remington was chuckling heartily. "Think you can follow *that* district man's judgment, Mastick?"

Mastick's heart was tumultuous, his breathing confused. An uncontrollable agitation generated in his chest, rising to his throat; he found himself laughing. The others were laughing with him. He demanded breathlessly of the headquarters man; "Lord, sir, am—am I asleep or awake?"

"As to that, Mastick," the official responded, "you'll have to use your own judgment." And Mastick did.

WHAT NAVAJO BLANKETS REALLY ARE

NAVAJO blankets were first made by the Navajo Indians for their own use. Later on settlers and tourists became interested in them with the result that a large outside demand was created, and for a generation the Indians did a thriving business.

During the war, when the price of wool soared so high, the Indians concluded it was far better to sell raw wool than to weave it into the finished product. As a consequence the available supply of handmade blankets failed to meet the demands of the trade.

About this time an Eastern manufacturer, taking advantage of the situation, proceeded to turn out machine-made rugs and blankets and ship them West to be sold by the Indians and their agents as genuine handmade articles. Profits were big, and the business prospered. And so for a time—possibly even now—travelers to the far places displayed their machine-made blankets with much show of pride, claiming that in a remote Indian village in New Mexico or Arizona they had picked up a perfect specimen of the ancient art.

There is no real need to be duped in this matter, however, for there are differences in the two products which make it possible to distinguish between them readily. For instance, the hand-woven rug is much softer and more pliable, because the Indians use a loosely twined, handmade warp, while the warp of the machine-woven article is a hard, tightly twined, machine-made cord. Also, as is the case in Oriental rugs, the pattern on the hand-woven blanket is not so symmetrically done as is that on the machine-made article; it is of necessity quite irregular.

Blankets done in black, white, and gray are generally considered the best buy, because no dyes are employed, the Indians using the wool from the black sheep for the portion of the design done in black, that from the white sheep for the white, and a mixture of the two for the gray. This does not mean these are the only genuine Navajo blankets; the Indians do use some dyes, some commercial, and some of their own making.

At the present time a great deal is being done by C. N. Cotton of Gallup, New Mexico, to get the Navajos to resume their labors. When the price of raw wool began to decline, Mr. Cotton went out among them, finally convincing them that they ought to take up the work once more. Genuine, handmade rugs and blankets are now selling from a dollar and a half to two dollars a pound.

The Heart of Martin Moran

by

Albert William Stone

Author of "Dry Lightning," "Shake," etc.

BIG MARTIN had a chest like a barrel, muscles of the strength and consistency of rawhide, and arms so thick and powerful that the very legs of the rest of his mates were as pipestems beside them. Two hundred and sixty-five pounds he weighed. In his body there was vastly more brawn than there were brains in his head; he could lift half again as much as any other tie hack in the camp. Even Charley Johnson, who could fell an ordinary Douglas fir with two dozen strokes of his double-bitted ax, and "Hunkie Steve" Predovich, him that could pull a loaded sled on a level stretch with any horse, were weaklings in comparison to Big Martin.

But, strength or no strength, Martin was afraid of his shadow. Not in the ordinary dangers of the tie hack's life, mind. With a pike pole he was as brave as any at breaking bad jams in the cañons, when the spring drive was on. Nor could any beat him at running down a slope in front of a sled loaded with ties, it threatening every instant to overtake and destroy him. Once, indeed, it was Big Martin who broke the jam of ties at Jennifer Falls, ninety feet high, thereby solving a problem that had Jim Cramer, the foreman, well nigh insane with worry. It was by the skin of his teeth only that Martin gained the bank before the jam went out with a roar, the banked-up waters of the North Dufresne snapping eight-inch ties in two like matches between the fingers of a strong man.

It was of his fellow humans that Big Martin was afraid. A scowl on the countenance of Hunkie Steve, for instance, would send Big Martin skulking, like a cowardly coyote at the sight of a gray wolf. The mere sound of Johnson's ugly voice would have a like effect. If the foreman spoke snappily, as he sometimes had to do in controlling a gang of huskies like the tie hacks, Martin would fairly shake with apprehension. And him big enough to whip any three men in the camp at one time, if he only knew it!

One Sunday morning two bear cubs, a present from Joe Moss, the trapper, arrived for Jim Cramer. The foreman had gone into his office shanty after breakfast, leaving the cubs outside in the clearing. Big Martin was playing with them, he having a great love in his heart for all wild things. The little beasts were rolling about on

the ground squirming and squealing under the pokes of Martin's thick forefinger.

Out of the cook shanty doorway came Johnson, his heavy shoulders hunched forward, his blond mop of hair tousled all over his head. His little eyes were blue and round, and were set far back under his light eyebrows, just under the forehead which was of no height at all. When he saw Martin playing with the cubs, he stopped and grinned in his ugly fashion.

"Maybe it is better you look out," he jeered down at Martin. "Dem little bear, dey maybe bite."

Martin knew that Johnson was slurring him, but he didn't let on to hear. His silence precipitated one of the quick rages for which Johnson was notorious. Without any warning, he drew back his big booted foot and let drive at the nearest cub. He lifted it with a terrible kick, sending it in a semicircle a good twenty feet away, howling and squirming. When it fell to the ground, it lay still.

"Better you look out," Johnson repeated. "I send dat other bear after his brother pretty quick, I bet you!"

He was drawing back his foot for a second kick. Big Martin came to his feet as if his legs were of tempered steel. But he quailed before the menace of Johnson's scowl and ready fist.

"It ain't doin' you any hurt," he pleaded. "Leave it be."

The second cub would have joined its mate in another instant if the foreman hadn't appeared just then, attracted by the noise. He shouted a warning just in time.

"You touch that cub, Johnson, and you'll have me to deal with," he snapped. His glance went to the one that had been kicked. "If you've killed the other one, you'll pay for it. Understand?"

Johnson replaced his foot on the ground and grinned, suddenly the mildest of men.

"Please, Mister Cramer," he mumbled, "I didn't know it was yours."

"Well, you know it now." Cramer strode over to where the first cub lay, and examined it. He found it only stunned. He stood up. "What's more, Johnson, it doesn't make any difference who they belong to. If you can't keep from showing your brutality to dumb animals, you'd better draw your time and get out of camp. We can get along without such men as you are, I reckon."

The foreman was pretty mad, and Johnson wilted before his righteous wrath.

"I'm sorry, Mister Cramer," he said with deceiving humility. "An' I ain't goin' to do nothin' like dat no more."

The foreman gathered up both cubs and took them into his own quarters, where he bunked with Frank Stacey, the timekeeper. Johnson, temporarily abashed—he valued his job too much to take a chance with the foreman—slunk into the bunk house and didn't appear the rest of the morning.

That night, though, he picked a quarrel with Big Martin at the wash trough. He had determined to take out on Martin the sting which the foreman's rebuke had put into him.

"Get out o' my way!" he snarled, giving Martin a push. "What business you got aroun' here, anyway? I got a notion to teach you a lesson."

Martin's face was covered with soapsuds. He groped in blindness for the towel. In doing so, he stumbled against Johnson, who had placed himself in the way with a dark purpose. Quick as a flash Johnson lashed out with his fist, catching Big Martin under the chin, staggering him.

"Now maybe you do what you been told!" Johnson growled, usurping the other's place at the trough. "If you don', I give you some more!"

For a minute it looked as if the men

would see a battle. Big Martin recovered his balance, dashed the soap out of his eyes, and made a lunge at Johnson. His big hands fairly swelled with the muscular reaction in them But he stopped short all of a sudden.

"Aw, go hang!" he mumbled. Then he waited, with unbecoming meekness, for his turn at the towel. Johnson laughed, plunging his hands into the water.

"Coward!" he taunted. "Maybe, sometime, a jack rabbit git mad an' sneeze in your face. Den what you goin' do—huh?"

Big Martin's cowardice rapidly came to be the common gossip of the camp. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. He was big enough, in all truth, to have licked his weight in bob cats. Most of his mates he could have twisted in two with his bare hands, and everybody knew it full well—except Martin himself. Johnson, aided and abetted by Hunkie Steve Predovich, was the camp bully. Somebody had to be the bully, of course—but, as may be well imagined, Johnson was not a popular one. The tie hack instinctively awards that distinction to the biggest and strongest. And, with the strongest refusing to be clothed with the honor, things were at sixes and sevens.

"It's a new one on me," the foreman confessed one evening, talking to Frank Stacey. "This Moran is by rights entitled to be the king-pin out there amongst those roughnecks. Whoever, I ask you, ever heard of an Irishman that was afraid of anything under the sun?"

The timekeeper looked wise.

"Prenatal influence, maybe it is," he said.

"Pre—what?"

"Prenatal influence. Maybe," the timekeeper elucidated, "his mother got scared of somebody before he was born. I've heard of such things happening."

"Might be something in that," Cramer admitted. "I heard of a fellow myself, once, that couldn't bear the sight of a turtle. Run every time he saw one, like a woman running from a mouse. They said his mother got scared of a tortoise before he was born. Maybe you're right.

"Just the same," continued the foreman, "I've got a hunch that if this big Irishman ever gets wise to himself, there'll be a cleaning out there in that bunk house. I'd like to see him flatten out that Johnson first of all. I sure would."

The foreman, too, was a friend of all wild things.

It was the following Monday that he decided to pair off Big Martin and Charley Johnson to work in the woods.

When two tie hacks work together, they've either got to be good pals or something will happen pretty quick. The foreman wanted something to happen. He trusted that, when it did, it would establish the status of Big Martin as the rightful and natural superior.

Besides, there was no denying that both men were mighty skillful at the making of railroad ties. With his double-bitted ax, Johnson could fell a Douglas fir in less time than it takes to tell it, almost. And to watch Big Martin with his broadax, trimming up the trunk, would bring joy to a foreman's heart. Between them, ties should have grown under their hands.

The second night, however, Big Martin came hulking into camp with one of his eyes closed tight and the left side of his face a bruised and swelling mass. He whimpered something about not wanting to work with Johnson any more.

"Mister Cramer, he's all the time pickin' on me," he told the foreman. "It's a quare disposition he has. I can't get along with him. All the time he's wantin' to fight."

"Well, if that's what he wants, why not accommodate him?" the foreman

demanded, looking the big hack up and down. "You're large enough to pull him apart and strew him all the way to Denver and back. Are you going to let that cotton-topped bully keep on bluffing you like this, or have I got to fire one of you to have peace in camp?"

"But I'm not a fightin' man," Big Martin said, almost crying.

"And why not?" Cramer barked at him. "A man that can't stand up for himself is in poor business making railroad ties," he said. "A hack as big as you, Moran, ought to be able to lick a dozen men without stopping to take breath."

He looked so disgusted that Martin Moran felt it was up to him to square himself.

"When I was a little lad," he said, "my mother warned me to be careful when I played with the other lads. If I happened to hit 'em in fun, she said, me bein' stronger than most, I'd maybe be killin' somebody."

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me you're afraid to hit one of those roughnecks out there for fear you'll kill him?" the foreman shouted. "Go tell that to the big birds. And get yourself out of here before I take a poke at you myself! Kill somebody, indeed——"

Big Martin betook himself out of the office, his round head hanging dispiritedly. The details of the latest quarrel between him and Johnson he kept to himself; but Johnson wasn't so quiet about it. He jeered at his victim when the men sat at the supper table that night.

"Big Martin, he's too lazy to keep up his end," he explained loudly, pointing his finger at Moran. "I tell him about it, but he don't pay no 'tention. So I have to use my fist a little bit—just a little bit." He laughed, did Johnson.

The men knew full well that Big Martin, whatever else might be said about him, wasn't lazy. The taunt didn't get much of a laugh. They were too much disgusted to feel merriment. Already they'd tried everything they knew to make a man out of Martin; for they wanted to like him, did the men. He was a good hand with a pike pole, and he could keep ahead of his load of ties with the best of them. It was only where human conflict threatened that he showed the spinelessness of him.

Billy Brann, the bull cook, made remarks about it while he was washing up the dishes that night.

"Pitiful, it is, to see the big stiff decorated with that blue lamp," he observed, slamming a tin plate down so hard he dented it. "I've seen babies in my time, but he tops 'em all. If I was as big as he is, I'd wade through that bunch of tie hacks so fast they'd think a cloudburst had hit 'em. What in thunder's the matter with him, anyhow?"

"No fightin' heart," the cook said.

"He don't need it, with that frame," Billy Brann stated with conviction. "All he'd need to do would be to stick up his fists and scowl. I'd run, myself."

Billy Brann was five feet four inches tall and weighed, fully dressed, one hundred and twenty-two pounds. The cook laughed throatily.

"I guess you would. But it'd take more than that to bluff out any of them tie hacks."

"If he ever gets cornered, then maybe you'll see some fightin'," Billy said with stubbornness.

"A rat will fight under them circumstances," remarked the cook.

"There's a difference," insisted Billy Brann. "A rat don't profit by what he learns."

"Maybe a tie hack don't, either."

"He does if he comes from Ireland."

The cook couldn't think of a suitable

retort. The assistant therefore clinched his argument with:

"Every Irishman on earth has got a fighting heart. It's idle to say he ain't. All this Big Martin has got to do, if you ask me, is to locate his."

"Johnson will be locatin' his goat in the meantime," supplemented the cook.

Of course, the men didn't mix with Big Martin especially. He took no part in their contests of skill, although it was well known that he would have outshone the others. He wasn't even invited to play poker with them. Johnson was an inveterate poker player, and Martin knew he would have seized on the least excuse to start hostilities.

Sundays, when there was no work, would have been a hard day for Martin save that he could then take long hikes. He was a famous hiker, was Martin. His great strength enabled him to walk and climb long distances without getting tired. Had he been of the hunting instinct, he could have knocked over many a piece of game with his gun. But he never carried one. Bob cats might spring from limb to limb directly over his head. Mountain lions might lurk on broad rocks and peer at him around the corners of precipices, in the way they have. Rattlesnakes might sound their fierce warning close to his feet. Fond of all wild things was Martin; he would harm none of them.

It was about an hour's journey from the camp, one Sunday morning, that Big Martin came to the cave in the side of Bald-headed Mountain—the cave that was to be the scene of his rejuvenation. It had a small mouth, almost indistinguishable for brush across it. Big Martin had his share of curiosity. The entrance was so low that he had to stoop to enter it after parting the brush.

Although the day was young, inside the cave it was gloomy. Martin didn't intend to do any extensive exploring. Encountering the gloom, he was about to turn around and get out when a whimpering gave him pause. It came from somewhere in front of him, and Martin recognized it as the whimpering of an animal. Moreover, there was about it a familiar ring. With intent gaze Martin peered into the half darkness until his eyes would get more used to it.

Then he saw what it was that whimpered. Two little bear cubs were almost at his feet.

The longer he remained in the cave, the better Martin could see. The cave turned out to be little more than a hole in the rock. The back wall of it rose before him; the cubs occupied a sort of nest, with about five feet between them and the wall. The beady little eyes of the animals sparkled up at him.

Now there are few among the young of wild animals more appealing than a bear cub. Big Martin, with a heart in him for anything wild, stooped and began to poke at the little beasts with his thick forefinger. Under his poking, they squirmed, whining and giving off soft little squeals. The hair on their backs was soft, almost, as the fur of a beaver.

Presently, the man straightened up. He knew enough about animals to determine that these were the cubs of a brown bear, which ordinarily is as harmless as may be. The brown bear looks for no trouble.

But the brown bear with cubs—that, now, is a different proposition entirely. With the maternal instinct strong within them, they grow savage, and their hearts become hard with hate. All this Big Martin knew full well, and his slow mind warned him that he had better be getting away from these alluring sucklings.

"The mother might be droppin' in," he said to himself, talking out loud. "If so it be, I might be takin' one of them——"

He stopped with a peculiar sudden-

ness. A sound had come to his ears —a sound like the cracking of a twig. At this distance from civilization the cracking was sure to mean that either a human or an animal approached.

Big Martin wasted no time in idle speculation. Posthaste, he started for the entrance, with a view to getting himself into the open where there'd be room for flight. Only about fifteen feet was between him and the cave entrance, and that he covered in record time. But he was a trifle too late, for, just as he bent his great body to pass through, the form of a bear blocked the passage.

Was she mad? She was. If Martin had any doubts of it, he was soon to have them set right. From where she was feeding, she'd smelled him out. No grass had grown under her padded feet as she loped toward her home, her hind quarters rising and falling grotesquely as she scampered over the rough ground. She was using her four feet for locomotion as her snout poked its way through the brush and into the cave. At sight of the man within, she went instantly to her hind feet, letting out a curdling snarl, and made ready to give battle.

In Martin's broad chest there was a craven urging to get out. The bear's face he couldn't see. He tried the desperate expedient of dodging around her, thinking to squeeze by, maybe, and thus win his way to freedom. But she would not have it so. A swift cuff, accompanied by a roar that raised the hair of his head, sent him spinning back into the cave. He fell over the nest of cubs and all but fell flat, so powerful was the blow.

There he cowered and crouched, his huge shoulders hunched until they were almost even with the top of his shaggy head. The blow had knocked his cap off. His eyes—gray eyes which should have been twin nests of courage —were bulging almost out of their sockets. He might have looked about for some sort of weapon to defend himself with, but the bear gave him no time. She made a circle around her young and advanced swiftly upon the man, snarling in a manner which was nothing short of terrifying.

The danger sharpened his slow wits. He saw her fierce, lightning thrust almost before she started it, and ducked. The blow caught him on the forearm. His big body went crashing backward, bringing up against the rocky wall of the cavern with a thud. The thick muscles of his shoulders acted as a buffer, fortunately for him, or he would have been rendered senseless then and there.

As it was, he staggered and fell partly forward, in spite of all his efforts to keep his feet. With the speed of light the enraged animal swung a murderous paw, and Martin's protecting right arm connected with the side of his head so smartly as almost to knock it from his shoulders.

That the old bear carried a punch, Martin now discovered. Never before in all his thirty years of living had he been hurt so by a blow. It was a desperate plight he was in, to be sure. The fierce snarl of the beast was in his ears, the hairy body almost upon him. In an instant their two torsos would come together, and the outcome would be inevitable.

But Martin, by a miracle of instinct, didn't wait for the collision. Something within his big frame came to life. It wasn't altogether terror, for before his eyes, between him and the bear, floated a red haze. It was the beserk within Martin, only he didn't know it. So he lunged forward, did Martin, meeting the bear halfway, his big arms flung wide like the sails of a Dutch windmill.

Straight under the jaws of the beast he shot his head, butting it snugly against the hairy breast. With the contact his wide-flung arms closed around

the shaggy body, just under those murderous forelegs. The bear's snarl was in his ear, and it was a fearsome thing to hear at such close quarters. She tried to shake him loose, since in the nature of things it would be necessary for her to get her short forelegs around him. But she might as well have tried to shake old Bald-headed Mountain itself. The powerful claws whipped the empty air.

For the first time in his life Big Martin was using every atom of his enormous strength. Never had a bear been hugged so earnestly. Back and forth the two forms weaved—the primitive man, with never a weapon but his own tremendous arms and legs, and the savage beast, snarling and roaring as it found its authority disputed in its own lair. Once she tried to get at the man with her hind claws. They caught in his corduroys and ripped downward, tearing into the flesh and gouging them. Still he held on.

Man and beast panted with the tremendous struggle. From the cubs came squeals and excited growls; without doubt, they sensed the tenseness of the situation. Their mother, aroused to fresh savagery by the squeals of her children, began jerking her head backward in an effort to break Big Martin's death hold. Her snarls well nigh deafened him. Again and again she lunged, her mouth stretched wide.

Once, indeed, she succeeded in reaching his left shoulder with her teeth. With the speed and strength of a steel trap the jaws snapped shut, tearing through the man's thick leather jacket as if it had been so much cheesecloth, and sinking into his shoulder muscles. The yell that was forced from his throat must have resembled his fighting ancestors' battle cry. He began to force the battle, did Martin.

His neck swelled as though it would burst. He shot his head upward, colliding it with the tender underside of the beast's jaw. A sudden pause in the snarling came as her jaws were snapped shut for an instant. Martin, encouraged, thrust again. Black murder was in his heart. He was fighting for his life; but he thought he was fighting to win over this enraged animal mother. A fierce determination to punish the thing that had hurt him so sorely, had taken the place of his desperate fear.

Once, twice, thrice his head jerked upward; and as many times the jaws snapped shut, cutting short the snarling. Each time, besides, there was a gulp from the bear. All over Martin's tremendous body the muscles were standing out like ropes from the effort he was making. The sweat, bubbling out from his forehead, rolled down into his eyes until he was blinded. The crimson trickle was flowing from his torn shoulder, and his ripped legs were hurting cruelly; but never for an instant did he relinquish his deadly hold on the hairy torso between his arms.

Presently, the bear's front legs were pawing more feebly. The incredible strength of the man was telling. Great gasps began to come from the savage throat like the exhaust of a steam pipe. Martin's upthrusts with his head were meeting with less resistance. There came a moment when the bear's bead began to wabble; next, almost without warning, the huge hairy frame went limp in the man's arms. He had won!

With the instinct of the fighter, battling thus with something that would give no quarter, Martin heaved his antagonist violently from him, at the same instant giving a backward spring. His shoulders brought up against the rocky wall of the cave. He stood there panting, watching the bear topple slowly over and lay, partly doubled up on her side. In her fall she just missed the cubs, who squirmed and squealed excitedly. Save for the heaving of her sides, the mother animal might have been dead.

Big Martin's head lolled forward, like the head of a prize fighter who has just received a blow in the pit of his stomach. His arms were partly crooked as they hung at his side, and his fingers were curved like the talons of a vulture. So must a gladiator of ancient Rome have looked, with his antagonist lying in the dust of the arena.

But there was scant time for rest. The bear was only winded, after all. Martin had done her no real hurt. In a minute, perhaps less, she would regain her wind, strength, and maternal ferocity.

An hour before, Martin's instinct would have bade him fly from there. Now, something within him—the something newly awakened—wouldn't let him listen to the craven warning. He began groping, with one hand, around on the floor at his feet, stooping for the purpose. Presently, he found what he was looking for—a good-sized piece of rock, so large that an ordinary man would have been hard put to lift it at all.

But Big Martin was no ordinary man now. Nor was this any ordinary occasion. He straightened up quickly and the rock was balanced in one hand.

He gauged the distance carefully and raised the rock high, stepping forward. His big foot came down on a cub, whose protest shrilled out instantly. No attention did he pay to the cub. Only an instant he balanced the rock; then he brought it down in a terrific swing, straight for the bear's head.

The impact was sickening. The thud of it was heightened by the crunch of the beast's shattered frontal bone. A second time he caught up the rock and brought it down on that skull—a third. After that there was no use. The heaving sides were still. Martin had committed murder; but in his heart there was no sorrow for it.

When he emerged from the cave a minute later, there was a bear cub under each arm and a triumphant expression upon his sweaty face. The sun was shining as brightly, he discovered to his surprise, as though he had not spent an eternity within the cavern. But he had lived through an eternity that had wrought a vast transformation in the heart of Martin Moran, even though he still had a warm place in it for all wild things.

Mid-afternoon it was when Big Martin trudged out of the edge of the clearing into full view of his mates in the tie camp.

The hacks were lying about, taking it easy. Some of them had gone to sleep, others were smoking. A few were talking to one another in the mumbling monotone which conversation seems to take on in any tie camp late of a Sunday afternoon. Hunkie Steve Predovich and Charley Johnson were having a game of cards by themselves in the shade of the cook shanty. The foreman was in his office, looking over his books, and his timekeeper was enjoying a snooze in his own bunk.

At the sight of Big Martin, still lacerated of body and tattered of clothes, minus his cap, and with his tangled hair hanging about his face, one of the men on the ground gave a startled yelp.

"Look at what's comin'!"

Johnson's little eyes glittered when he saw Moran, who walked as if he were all in. The cubs he still clutched under his arms; they looked over the camp with juvenile curiosity and wrinkled eyebrows. Johnson tossed down his cards and lumbered to his feet. His ugly grin spread over his face when he saw the condition Big Martin was in.

"Hah!" he exclaimed. "It looks like Big Martin has mixed up with somebody. You ain't been stealin' the boss' cubs, have you?"

Moran stopped and peered at John-

son through his mat of hair. His eyes glittered in the rays of the sun, which shone directly in his face. His thick legs were spread wide apart, but still he swayed from side to side. It was easy to see he was almost petered.

"That you talkin'?" he inquired.

"It is," replied Johnson. "I'm talkin' to you, Big Martin." There was no reason at all why he should go out of his way to tantalize Moran, save that the unusual spectacle gave him a chance to say something. And Johnson's mind had only a single track for the transmission of thought.

Big Martin stooped carefully and deposited the cubs, one at a time on the ground. He looked about until his blood-shot eyes lighted on Billy Brann, the bull cook.

"Here," he said with strange authoritiveness. "Keep your eye on 'em, will you?"

Billy scrambled to his feet and came forward. He was fond of wild things himself, was Billy Brann. Big Martin set himself, sort of, and turned his attention again to Johnson.

"Now," he said in a conversational tone, "I'll do a little talkin' to you, Johnson, if you don't mind."

"I don't," said Johnson, thrusting his yellow head forward, and shooting out his mean-looking chin.

"You're a dirty, low-down, white-livered skunk," said Martin with cold deliberation. "You're a cheap bully with nothin' to redeem your pretensions but an ugly disposition and a good-sized frame. You're a hater of wild things an' dumb beasts, which brands you as not fit to associate with decent people such as you find in this tie camp when you came and brought bad luck to the rest of us! You're——"

He got no further. With a bellow of rage Johnson came charging across the space that separated them, his tousled head down, his fists swinging. He headed straight for Big Martin, thinking, no doubt, to annihilate that reckless man immediately and have it over with. But Big Martin stepped easily aside, and Johnson continued his precipitate journey for a good fifteen feet beyond before he could stop.

"An' you have a bad temper as well," said Big Martin coolly. "You can't stand to have your faults pointed out, which is a sure sign——"

Johnson arrived again at that instant, however. This time he stopped at about the right distance and swung his right fist as a baseball player swings a bat. It would have made sad havoc had it landed, no doubt; but Big Martin anticipated that contingency by stepping deftly inside the arc and rushing into a clinch, his own powerful arms encircling Johnson in the same kind of hug that had brought disaster, a few hours before, to another antagonist.

As to the fight itself, there's little to relate. As Big Martin doubtless expected, he found Johnson's frame, while big and strong, nothing to be compared with the brown bear's. In something less than it takes to tell it, Johnson was gasping for breath. Also, he was trying his best to yell for mercy. But he got little of that.

Presently Moran tossed him clear, stepping back. Johnson toppled and fell, grotesque in his doubled-up position. Not a blow had been struck. It was clear to the amazed men standing about that Big Martin needed to strike none. Those terrible arms were enough.

They poured a bucket of water on the fallen man. Jim Cramer came out of his doorway just in time to see him fall. He came over and looked down at the wreck. Then he surveyed the frame of the victor.

"You might have killed him," he observed without emotion.

"I might that," Martin admitted.

"Who's been teaching you to fight? You look like you'd had an argument with a grizzly."

Big Martin swelled out his chest. He was inclined to boast a bit.

"I tackled one with my bare hands," he declared, "up the mountain a piece. You'll find its dead carcass if you're of a mind to look."

The foreman narrowed his gaze.

"Well," he said, "I'm needing a man to look after things while I'm away in Denver next week. I guess you'll do. Want the job?"

"I do," said Big Martin.

Johnson began to stir and groan. The foreman grinned suddenly.

"Killed a bear with your bare hands, did you?"

"I did that," Big Martin repeated stoutly.

"All right. Have it your way." Cramer waved his hand as one who washes it of all responsibility of another man's troubles. "So long as you can back up your statements with such work as this"—pointing to Johnson—"you can claim anything you want to, I guess."

"I can that," Big Martin declared, looking about for signs of disbelief and finding none.

It was Billy Brann who put into words the epitomized thought of the camp, after supper that night.

"I guess he's an awful liar," he remarked to the cook, "but nobody dast tell him so to his face, because he sure has learned, somewhere, how to fight."

TORNADO WRECKS SOUTH DAKOTA TOWN

THE village of St. Charles, South Dakota, was virtually wiped off the map by a tornado which recently swept over the southern half of Gregory County. It is estimated that the damage to the village will reach one hundred thousand dollars, and to the county, one million dollars. With the exception of a high school and one residence, all the buildings in St. Charles were wrecked; in some instances, buildings and grain elevators were blown across the street.

SEVERE FLOODS DAMAGE KANSAS CROPS

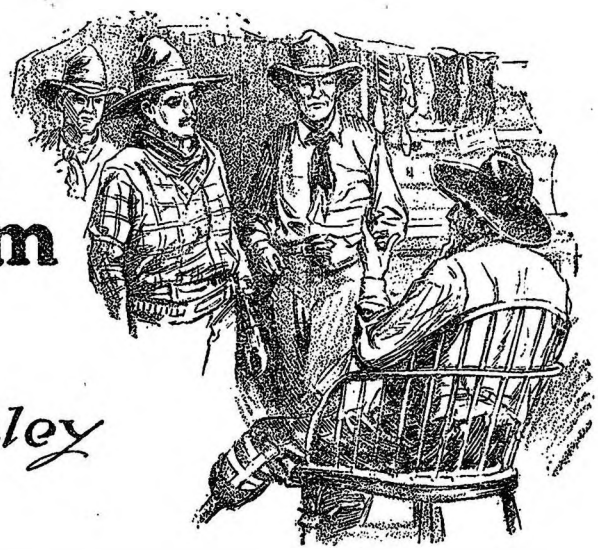
ESTIMATES as to the damage done by the tornado which hit several counties in Kansas during the middle weeks of July place the loss at approximately three quarters of a million dollars. The village of Friend, which is about twenty miles north of Garden City, was almost entirely destroyed. Hail and wind combined made the houses uninhabitable and forced the residents to build "cyclone cellars." Though the heaviest losses were suffered by the oil companies, farmers throughout the State will find that serious damage has been done to their crops.

KING OF WOLVES SLAIN IN MONTANA

A RECENT report from Great Falls, Montana, detailing the killing of a gray buffalo wolf weighing one hundred and ninety pounds, expresses the opinion that the most flagrant killer of cattle which the Montana stockmen have had to contend with in that part of the State has at last been caught. The animal is considered responsible for the killing of approximately three thousand dollars' worth of cattle in the last three years.

Peg Leg Tells 'Em Why

By F. R. Buckley



I AM well aware that the majority of criminals would just as soon inconvenience a sheriff as not. It is quite right that it should be so, and in the past nobody has shown greater willingness to be shot, stabbed, clubbed, or gouged than myself, providing it was clearly understood that the shooter, stabber, clubber, or gouger tried his speciality out on my aged frame at his own risk.

But there are limits; and I am here to say it was mighty inconsiderate of "Pill Box" O'Brien to cut down old man Bryce's fences, just as I was handing Jack Merivale a letter inclosing a registered check for twenty thousand dollars, which his uncle had left him; especially as Pill Box must have known that his reputation would compel me to take out after him personally, and forthwith, not even waiting to see Jack Merivale do his first Comanche leap of joy.

It was still more annoying, when I returned to my store in the afternoon, with my whiskers full of dust and my right arm all stiff from hitting Pill Box with a rock, to find the celebrations consequent upon the legacy, pretty near over, and Jake Henson, my deputy, installed on my own private throne on the top of the stove. Jake, confusing similarity of position with equality of intellect, was endeavoring to hold forth to the assembled and bloated punchers in my well-known philosophical way.

"Here's old Bill now," says Jake who is normally respectful, but who was now too full of canned apricots to fear man or beast. "Now, old Bill Garfield has more than once informed us, one and all, that everything has its uses; that nothing exists without a reason for so doing—not even the rattlesnake, the female mosquito, or 'Pie-face' Lammermoor."

"Hey!" says Pie-face.

"No offense," says Jake, trying to look like Aristotle, or, in other words, squinting at me. "This here is a philosophical discussion. 'Has everything its purpose?' Affirmative, W. Garfield. Negative, Mr. Jake Henson, Esquire. Come on, Bill."

"Get off, Jake."

Having shoved him backward off the stove, I seated myself and prepared to order refreshments out of stock—not that that tribe of hollow trees had left much. But Jake was irrepressible.

"What, for instance," he demanded,

rising and brushing samples of last winter's coal out of his hair, "should you say was the use of the mystic remark, 'O G 1800 2-22-22,' stamped on the fag-end of a roll of adhesive tape? That's what's bin exercisin' the massive intellects of all present, ever since Jack Merivale stopped payin' for the eats."

"Where," I demanded, not yet being ready with an answer, "is the fortunate legatee?"

"He started over to the Acacia National Bank to get his check cashed, or somep'n," said Jake. "Jim Calloway and Archie Thomas went with him."

"What did Thomas go along for?" I asked, striving earnestly to solve puzzles with one hemisphere of the brain, while sparring for time with the other. "Of course Calloway would be with him, being a friend of Merivale's; but as to Archie, well, I thought with him on the one side, and Calloway and Merivale on the other, they were doing a conscientious job of hating each other. Didn't Thomas lend Merivale some money, or did he cut him out with a girl—or what?"

"Both," says Jake. "In fact it was Thomas who busted what would otherwise have been an all-night party. He rode up about half an hour before you got home, Bill, and told Merivale he would be obliged if he'd return the sum of one hundred dollars, this account being considerably overdue. 'I am going,' says Thomas with malice aforethought, 'to get married, and I need to buy furniture.' That was a nasty slap at Calloway, too: he having, as you know, Bill, been all set to cut Merivale out with that little girl at Oak Bluffs, before Archie came along and cut them both out. Yeah; well, after considerable insulting remarks, Merivale brandished his check and started over to Acacia to get the check cashed and pay Archie; and Calloway went along. Returning, however, to the sticking plaster——"

"Yeah, returning to that," I said, feeling that another thirty seconds of meditation would enable me to sustain my reputation for knowing everything. "What, may I ask, were you doing monkeying with the medical section of my stock?"

"Why, Bill," says Jake, with an offensive air of innocence, "you see, when Archie Thomas made that crack about his goin' to be married, Calloway was eating pears outa the can, and, in the momentary emotion of the moment, he jabbed his left hand slightly on the jagged tin. Blood poisoning having carried off many a young man in his prime, I covered the wound with a piece of adhesive tape, about an inch square, Mr. Garfield, that being all there was left on the roll; and, while affixing it, I noticed that it bore the letters and figures aforesaid. Having explained which to your satisfaction, I now wait for you to explain the letters and figures to mine."

"Well," I informed him, kind of yawning, "to the average intellect they convey the simple message that that tape was manufactured by the well-known firm of Otis Gerhart, which was established in the year 1800, and that this particular piece of tape was spooled on the twenty-second day of February, in the present year."

"It says Wauer & White, established 1900, on the box," piped a voice from the rear of the store.

"And, anyhow," says Jake, "I wasn't asking you what the figures meant, but what the use of them was. Supposing your erroneous and mendacious explanation to be correct, what is the use to any man, woman, or child in the United States, of that particular information? Now, Bill, rally round yourself."

As I have said, I was weary after my long argument with Pill Box O'Brien, in addition to being depressed by noticing that he had bitten all the varnish off my new peg leg. Yet, when at this

moment a horse galloped up to the store, bringing a rider whose footsteps on the porch thudded out a message of trouble, I was actually grateful. All present turned toward the door, forgetting both me and that infernal philosophic bit of sticking plaster.

And I will tell the world that what they saw was worth looking at. I have seen in my time many a jasper who has ridden, with Indians behind him, but the face of the usually self-contained Jim Calloway at this moment contained more grief, rage, and perspiration than I remembered to have seen gathered in any one place before.

"Boys—Mr. Garfield!" he gasped and then stood in the doorway, shaking his fists in the air and struggling for breath.

The boys crowded around him.

"What's the matter—who's trod on your toe now? Somebody bin tryin' to collect a debt off'n you?"

"You better quit your kiddin' an' form a posse!" gasps Calloway hoarsely. "This ain't no jokin' matter. Sheriff, Jack Merivale's been murdered—shot in the back—and robbed!"

The kidding died into a most uncomfortable silence!

"Has, huh?" I asked Calloway. "Who done it?"

"Who do you think done it?" snarled Calloway, clenching his fists and with his eyes blazing. "Who do you think done it but that skunk——"

"One moment," I begged. "Did you actually see the killing? If so, why didn't you do something?"

"I didn't see it," says Calloway. "What's the use of holdin' an inquest, Bill? I've ridden five miles in no time at all, just to tell you my pal's lyin' out there on the road to Laredo, with a bullet hole in his back, an' his pockets turned inside out; an' all you do is ask me if I saw it! If I'd seen it, there'd have bin one skunk shot that's goin' to be hanged. Never mind the argument! Get your hawses an' come on. He's most likely at Oak Bluffs now. If you stay here any longer, he'll have persuaded the girl that he come by the money honestly, an' they'll have skipped out to be married. Come on!"

I don't usually like people to come into my sheriff's office and issue orders; but Calloway was in such a condition that I kind of sympathized with him. Nevertheless, I have progressed so far through life without ever hurrying unduly; and one's seventy-third year is no time at which to start rashly stepping on the gas.

"If you'd control your natural feelings to the point of telling us just what happened," I therefore suggested, "we could get started much quicker. You, and Jack and Archie Thomas all started over to Acacia together, didn't you?"

"Yes—and Jack changed his certified check for hundred-dollar bills. Two hundred of them! I tried to argue with him, but he wouldn't listen. He said he didn't trust banks, but what he was really aimin' to do was to show off before Archie Thomas, who'd been dunning him about some little loan he said he'd made. We'd gone over to Acacia to get the money to pay Archie, but as soon as Merivale got the bills in his hands, he seemed to get drunk or somep'n, poor lad; an' he told Archie he'd changed his mind about paying him; and they started to quarrel; and I tried to smooth it over, and they both started to quarrel with me; so I got mad and turned around and rode back to Acacia, and they went on together down the trail. About ten minutes later I got a kind of presentiment and took out after them. I found Jack, all right—lyin' in the middle of the road on his face. There wasn't any sign of Archie Thomas except the marks of his horse's hoofs, cutting away from the trail, cross-country toward Oak Bluffs."

The punchers in the room growled.

"You say he had been robbed?" I

asked Calloway. "Did you search the body?"

"I didn't have any need to," says Calloway; "an' I wasn't goin' to mess around an' spoil them lovely tracks that led so straight toward where Mr. Archie Thomas was. I sat on my horse an' saw that Jack's pockets, that he'd stuffed the bills into, were inside out; an' then I turned around an' went to the Bar T an' told 'em what had happened."

"Then," I said, "one posse is out already? Seems to me I swore in old Willie Carberry for deputy a while back."

"By this time," says Calloway, "they've probably got my gentleman. I wanted to go with 'em. I wanted to see the guy that killed my pal get taken away from his girl an' started on his little journey to the home of manila rope; but so did everybody else at the Bar T; an' so I had to come for you. Never mind! So long as he hangs, I don't care who arrests him."

It was a surprising thing for any local puncher to do; but at this point Mr. Calloway turned around and put his arm across his eyes and leaned against the door post and just plain blubbered. Him and the dead man had been very thick, even when both were running after the same girl—than which greater love hath no man. The occupants of the room kind of crowded around him, urging him huskily not to be a condemned fool, and trying to console him by making the hammers of their revolvers click menacingly.

"Ready, Bill?" asked Jake Henson. My deputy had already run his thumb along his cartridge belt and put on his hat and was now watching me disentangle my peg leg from the stove door and pin on my star.

"Yeah, come on, boys."

The Laredo Trail being on the way to Oak Bluffs, and also on the route which the Bar T posse would take if returning to Three Pines with the prisoner, I decided to take a slant at the body first thing and then remove it. Evening was drawing on, and we have coyotes in Texas.

I mentioned this intention to Calloway who was riding at my side, and he nodded, because, while over his first breakdown, he still wasn't in much of a condition to speak. His lips were pressed hard together, and his eyes were very bright; also he was kind of dead-white in the face.

"If you want to hand your guns over to me," I suggested, "I can carry 'em without inconvenience."

Calloway dropped his hand to the butt of one of them.

"Yeah?" he asked. "Why?"

"It's against the law to shoot anybody on sight," I observed gently.

He gave a short laugh.

"Oh, don't worry about that. I aim to see him hanged! I don't want to shoot him. I want to see him sweat all through his trial and wait a few weeks; and I want to be there when they open the cell door, and the chaplain starts the prayers for the dyin'."

That was a nasty thing to imagine, now wasn't it? But, as it turned out, he was there when the march to the gallows began. Just as he wished, he was there throughout the proceedings.

Well, we got to the point where the fortunate legatee lay huddled in the road, with his horse still grazing near. I left the posse twenty yards away; and, accompanied only by Jake, approached the body, walking on my heel and peg leg. Two yards from the body I told Jake to stand still. From this point on the walking surface was all road dust, and I didn't want the tracks messed up. I myself make such a peculiar spoor that nobody could possibly mistake it for any body else's.

Well, the tracks were perfectly simple. Evidently Archie Thomas and Jack Merivale had ridden up to this point together; Jack had gone no farther;

Archie's tracks cut off at right angles toward Oak Bluff. There were also the hoof marks of Calloway's horse, going right up to where Merivale lay, then turning around and starting back toward the Bar T ranch house.

I had just been over to examine the protruding lining of the pockets in which Merivale had stuffed the money, when the posse behind me set up a sort of growling yell.

"Here they come!"

And, sure enough, there was approaching us from the direction of Oak Bluffs, the Bar T posse of half a dozen men, with Archie Thomas, tied to his white horse, in their midst. I walked carefully back to where I had left my gang, mounted my pony, and prepared to receive them in proper official style. Calloway was on my left hand, Jake Henson on my right.

"We've got him!" sang out old Willie Carberry. "Is that you, Bill? Say, he'd hidden most of the stuff, but he'd saved out one brand-new hundred dollar bill to make his get-away with. We found it on him."

"He'll say that's the bill Merivale gave him in payment of the debt," says Calloway through his teeth.

"I guess he will," I admitted.

Willie Carberry rode up in advance.

"Say, Bill," he said, "this ain't been what you'd call a pleasant job. That little girl over at the Bluffs—he was handing her a strong line of 'Come fly with me' when we got there; and she seems to be really fond of him. Too bad. I tell you, there was a scene when I arrested him for murder. Hysterics an' everything. Still, what are you going to do?"

"What am I going to do?" I asked him.

"Well," says Willie Carberry, "what's anybody going to do?"

"Better put it personally, Willie," I said, "because that gives me a chance to make a snappy answer. Even in the face of murder and a little girl havin' hysterics, I'm a bearcat for repartee. Ask me again, Willie."

"'Well," snaps the owner of the Bar T, "what *are* you goin' to do?"

I turned and looked at Calloway, whose eyes were fixed gloatingly on the prisoner.

"This!"

Saying which I swiped Calloway on the temple nearest me with the barrel of my right-hand gun. I followed this up, as he swayed in his saddle, by a nasty left hook to the side of the neck; and then I put the finishing touch on the retort by following him out of the saddle and landing with my peg leg in the accuser's solar plexus. Even at that, he struggled feebly to draw a gun, before I took his weapons away from him.

I then picked him up and put him across my saddle horn.

"Come on home," I said to the bunch. "You Bar T boys pick up Merivale and take him to your place until Doc Brewer can see the body."

"Have you gone crazy?" asks Jake, finding a very husky version of his own voice at last. "Bill, are you insane!"

"Shut up," I advised him.

"He's off his nut!" says Pie-face Lammermoor.

"Shut up!"

"What are we goin' to do with the prisoner?" asks one of the Bar T men in a shocked voice.

"Bring him along, Jake," I said briefly.

So, in a silence broken only by audible queries as to what peculiar form of lunacy had finally roosted in by brain, we rode back to Three Pines, arriving at the store just as the moon got a good toe hold in the sky. It was a nice night.

For a few minutes after our return I was too busy to talk. I had to light the lamps, cut the ropes off Archie Thomas, snap a handcuff or so on Calloway, and telephone the postmaster at

Oak Bluffs to go and tell the little girl that loved Archie that she needn't have any more hysterics.

This done, Jake Henson stepped forward and said he would be much obliged if I would explain my course of action. I waved him into silence and invited the bunch to step closer.

"Before we were interrupted this afternoon," I said mildly, "Mr. Henson here was asking me if I remember rightly just what the purpose of figures stamped on a piece of adhesive tape might be. I am now in a position to answer that question."

"It's what they call dementia praecox, Jake," says a voice. "Stand away from him!"

I disregarded this insult. I could afford to.

"When the figures so stamped are O G 1800 2-22-22," I said, "and the piece of adhesive tape is found sticking to the inside of the rifled pocket of a murdered man——"

I laid the bit of tape on the counter under the lamp and devoted my attention to watching Jake's eyes pop.

"Why, obviously," I told him, "their use is to help us arrest the murderer."

There was a dead silence, none of those who had questioned my omniscience having the grace to acknowledge their foolishness. However I did get credit, though, from an unexpected source.

There was a terrible hoarse laugh from the floor, and the voice of Jim Calloway addressed me.

"You win!" it said.

NATIONAL RESERVE MENACED BY FOREST FIRE

A FOREST fire, more than a mile in width, which recently swept through the timbered country near Larkspur, Colorado, required the concerted efforts of all the forest rangers in that part of the State in order to prevent its spread into the Pike national forest. Every available man at Castle Rock and Larkspur was drafted into an army of fire fighters, whose services were at the disposal of the forest rangers. The fire was described as the worst of the year in Colorado.

ELK WATCH LOGGERS

A NATIVE elk herd, roaming the Nehalen River district about Clatskanie, Oregon, were seen in the green timber on the head of Big Creek. Four logging camps were cutting toward them last March. Eventually the big beasts became so tame that they were seen in the timber near where the loggers worked. Some of them, it is reported, came within fifty feet of the men.

BRIDGE WRECKED BY BURNING RIVER

DURING the heavy rains of last April, a forty-thousand-dollar concrete bridge near Groesbeck, Texas, was destroyed by burning water. An oil-pipe line near the Navasota River had burst, covering the swollen stream with oil to a depth of one foot. It caught fire in some mysterious way, and the river became a blazing stream. Not only was the bridge destroyed, but the river itself nearly dried up.

The Golden Bowl

Sequel to "The Girl of the Desert Dawn"

By **Harrison Conrard**

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

WHEN "Black Mike" and "Cactus Jimmy" reach the Golden Bowl, the desert gold mine which Mr. Ford, Mike's father, had discovered years ago, they find a party of strangers encamped near the hut of the mine. Mr. Trumbull and his daughter, Stella, are traveling in the desert for the girl's health. A guide by the name of Reese is with them, as well as Carter Dunfield, a mining expert.

Mike and Jimmy extend their hospitality to the party, and Stella and Mike become great friends. When Mike locates a rich ledge, he insists on Stella accepting a third interest. But Dunfield had already learned something of the riches of the Golden Bowl, and he knew Mike's past. He pretends that Mike's discoveries are worthless, but plots with Trumbull against Mike. He wants to marry Stella, and he wants to get possession of the Golden Bowl, and he knows that Mike killed a stage driver in a holdup, just before he came to the Bowl. Realizing that Ford's claim has never been relocated, he decides to go to the county town, file on the claim, notify the sheriff, and return with a posse to take Mike.

Mike's better nature has been asserting itself under the influence of Stella and the desert; he knows that Dunfield is a scoundrel, but he does not know the extent of Dunfield's duplicity. When Dunfield leaves, Mike tells Trumbull his real name and antecedents. Then he prepares to tell Stella. The girl, however, has heard a conversation between Mike and Dunfield and knows something of Mike's history. When Mike tries to make his confession to her, she turns from him and asks him to go away.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

A WAVERING blackness fell down over Stella's martyred eyes; and when it lifted she saw Black Mike, as through a haze, ascending the trail toward the eastern rim. Through her blurred vision he seemed entirely detached from reality, floating away from her up the rough wall, like an object in a desert mirage.

When he had passed out of her sight, she sat down on the ground again and began turning the leaves of her book abstractedly. Her pale face was drawn with vivid pain, her eyes were wide and blank, color had gone from her lips, and her labored breath came in panting gulps.

Black Mike's confession had not been a revelation to her, but it had brought back the numbing paralysis of yesterday. Her stupefaction began to wane with the passing of the blurred figure from her vision. A tingling warmth crawled into her veins. Life was returning.

With the gradual reaction a modicum of comfort began to obtrude itself upon her. Indefinably she realized that Black Mike's self-abasement before her was an act of moral heroism. Whatever he might be, she knew that he had strength and courage.

Tears came with the ebbing of the

turmoil in her brain. Woman must have her tears. They are talismanic of her gentle and sympathetic nature. Tear ducts are the spillways for the overflowing reservoir of feminine emotions.

Sporadic convulsions shivered through Stella's limp body, as her head drooped and her face sank against the open pages of her book.

"What're you bawling about, miss?" Cactus Jimmy's gruff, but friendly, voice brought Stella's tear-red eyes up slowly. "Something's happened what's hurt your feelings some?"

"I'm—I'm just crying," she quavered, a wry smile breaking through her tears, "just because—just because women have a right to cry—and they've got to sometimes, or they'd die!"

"I don't know much about 'em, miss, but I reckon you're right." Cactus Jimmy sucked reflectively at his pipe. "They do seem to be sobbing sort o' critters, leastwise 'most all o' them that I've ever known, which ain't so many, I'm a-saying."

She brushed back the truant wisps of hair that had escaped from under her broad felt hat and said with a wan smile: "I don't know what women would do—if they didn't have a chance to cry once in a while."

"I reckon enough troubles comes their way to make 'em cry frequent like," Cactus Jimmy avowed solemnly. "They've got to do the crying while their men does the cussing."

"You're so cheerful, Mr. Jimmy!" She turned her contemplative eyes up to him. "I'm foolish, I guess, to let go like this, just because—why just because our stay in the Golden Bowl is coming to an end."

"You ain't figuring on leaving us, are you, miss?"

"We are going just as soon as we can get ready to start, Mr. Jimmy. We must go before the intense heat gets the better of daddy. He can't stand it, you know."

"I'm turrible sorry," Cactus Jimmy said regretfully. "I was sure hoping you'd keep on staying for a long time. You'd better hang on a while, miss."

"Why should we remain here, Mr. Jimmy?" she questioned bitterly.

"Why," he began hesitatingly, "there's never no telling what'll come a feller's way in this old desert, you know. Just for instance, me'n' Rees run acrost a feller named Tom Blevins at Camel Spring this last trip we made. He'd come there for water, and we just happened to bump into him, and he acted awful peculiar like, just as though he was peeved because we'd seen him."

"Maybe he's looking for the Golden Bowl," Stella ventured.

"No, it was just because he's got a little golden bowl of his own," Cactus Jimmy chuckled. "He had his whiskers shaved off and tried to make believe he wasn't Tom Blevins, but I've knowed him for a long time, and I told him he couldn't fool me. He's got a funny-looking scar over his left eye, and I knowed him from that—because I put it there years ago. But he sure looked different from what he used to. He was sort o' dressed up, and I reckon that's what made him so shy, for he never was used to going that a way. I finally worked it out of him that he'd struck something real rich around the bend of the ridge, about five miles from the spring, and that's what made him so close mouthed. Tom's an ornery sort of an old cuss, but he's been pecking away at the desert for nigh on thirty years, and I'm sure tickled that he's struck it at last."

"I'm not at all interested in Mr. Blevins, nor in his find, Mr. Jimmy," Stella said poutingly.

"Sure not!" Cactus Jimmy felt that she had rebuked him for his idle gossip. "But the desert's just like that, and maybe there's a gold mine right

around here som'er's that's waiting for you to pick it up, miss; and I'd sure be tickled to see you find a big one."

"Has Mr.—Mr. Luis told you anything about our discovery, Mr. Jimmy?" she asked quickly.

"He hain't told me nothing," Cactus Jimmy replied. " 'Pears like he's awful glum sence we come back from Camel Spring."

"Then I shall let you see for yourself," she announced as she arose and passed her book to him. "Take this book over to the house, Mr. Jimmy, will you, please? Then I want you to come back with a pail of lunch. Run along like a good old man!"

"I'd do most anything for you, Miss Stella—even kill a man if you said so." Cactus Jimmy grinned at her. "But just what's the idea?"

"Don't ask any silly questions, but get the lunch quick, Mr. Jimmy!" she declared. "And bring a good big canteen of water. You know I'm not a desert creature yet. I just can't stand it—to stay in the Bowl to-day."

"Mebby I'd better hunt up Mr. Luis," Cactus Jimmy suggested.

"I said you!" she flashed with a show of impatience. "Now hurry, Mr. Jimmy. I'm going to show you something and ask your opinion on it. Bring plenty of lunch and water, remember."

Cactus Jimmy slouched off toward the hut in his careless way, like the dilatory desert wretch that he was; and, after what seemed a long time to Stella, he returned with a pail of lunch and a canteen of water.

They climbed up out of the Bowl, and Stella led him across the desert stretch to the foot of the ridge which they followed almost to the elbow. Cactus Jimmy complained good-naturedly all the way because Stella's eager feet took him faster than his accustomed pace.

"I don't savvy this turrible rush, miss," he protested. "I'm gitting all het up, and seems to me you're taking me an awful long ways from home. What're you figuring on doing—gitting me out here and sticking me up?" He grinned at her when she turned upon him to chide him for his lagging.

"Keep quiet, you old tenderfoot!" she reproved him. "You just wait and see. Now we'll climb the slope; and don't be such an old slow-poke!"

Cactus Jimmy grumbled along behind her. When she came to the Star of Hope she sat down on a rock close to the location monument and laughed back at the old man who was trudging up the slope with exaggerated effort.

"Here we are, Mr. Jimmy!" she announced as she arose and entered the cut.

"Why—somebody's staked a claim here!" Cactus Jimmy exclaimed.

"And you're going to pass judgment on it, Mr. Jimmy. First of all I want you to stick the pick—oh!" She fell back a pace and stared at the farther end of the excavation; and then her brows gathered in a puzzled scowl. "Somebody has been here since yesterday noon. Mr. Luis must have come back to do some more work."

It was quite evident that somebody had been to the claim since Stella had seen it last. The decomposed schist had been removed to a depth of fully two feet, at one side of the main body, exposing a gradual widening of the ledge. There was evidence, too, that several pieces of large size had been broken off and carried away.

After the first glance Stella did not think it was unusual for Black Mike to return to the claim and continue his work. "Mr. Dunfield says that it's worthless, but Mr. Luis disagrees with him," she said. "Won't you take a look at it, where the fragments have been broken off, and tell me who is right, Mr. Jimmy?"

Cactus Jimmy dropped to a knee and carefully scrutinized the raw spots that

showed on the rock. His eyes widened, as they stared unbelievingly at the golden filigree work, which wriggled and twisted across the face of the quartz, and the yellow dots with which it was splashed.

"It can't be true! It just ain't possible, miss!"

Cactus Jimmy's awed tone caused Stella to suck in a gulping breath. The old desert rat arose and broke off a couple of fragments with a few deft strokes of the pick which Black Mike had left in the cut. He gathered them up, took out his mineral glass from a pocket, and studied them closely, his hands trembling.

"Mr. Dunfield says it's worthless," Stella repeated, with tentative hesitancy and a barely perceptible catch in her voice.

"Worthless? Dunfield says it's worthless—and him a mining engineer?" Cactus Jimmy gave her an incredulous look as he folded his glass and returned it to his pocket. "Why, miss, there's wire gold running through this rock as thick as a piece of number-eight thread! And just look at them little pin heads! Worthless? If this stuff's worthless, then a feller'd be a fool to pick up a twenty-dollar gold piece!"

"Do you really think it's gold?" Stella caught the contagion of Cactus Jimmy's intoxicating excitement.

"Gold? Sure it's gold! Thousands to the ton! And right at the grass roots! And you and him found it?"

"Yes; but, if it's really gold, you are as fortunate as he and I are, Mr. Jimmy, for you have a share in it!" Stella skipped back to the monument and removed the location notice. "At first he insisted that it was all to be mine, but I refused to accept it, and then we finally agreed upon a third interest for each of us—you, Mr. Luis, and myself. Isn't he generous?"

"Black Mike—I mean——" Jimmy was stammering in twitching confusion.

"You need not be distressed because you have called him by that terrible name, Mr. Jimmy." She dropped a hand gently on his arm and turned her serious eyes up to his. "I know who Mr. Luis is now. He has told me; but, somehow I—I guess I don't feel afraid of him."

Cactus Jimmy looked away from her. He could not stand the pain that he saw in her eyes. "There never was a squarer man in the world, Miss Stella," he said huskily, "leastwise to his pals. He'll give a pal the best of it every time, and he'll stick to a feller, no matter what comes. He'd die for a pal."

"I know," she attested soberly. "And this is proof that all that you say of him is true, Mr. Jimmy. Look!"

She flipped the paper open and passed it to Cactus Jimmy's palsied hand.

He scanned it with eager interest; and then his brows gathered in a scowl. "You oughtn't to fool a trusting old chap like me that a way, miss," he growled.

"But I'm not fooling you, Mr. Jimmy!" she protested.

"But you said that you and him discovered it!" he complained.

"Of course! And he located you—that's what you call it, isn't it?"

He nodded sullenly.

"And he located you in for a third interest," she went on, "just the same as himself and myself. After myself you came first in his consideration."

"But his name, nor your'n, nor mine, ain't on this here paper, miss," Cactus Jimmy said in a hurt tone as he passed the document back to Stella. "Take a good look at the name that's writ in there."

She gave one swift glance at the sheet and then staggered back against the wall of the cut. "Oh!" she gasped. "It—it can't be! What—what——"

"Yes, it's sure his name, as you see, miss," Cactus Jimmy said with studied

deliberation. "And I guess I'm beginning now to see things clear. If you and Mike found it, as you says you done. it looks mighty like Dunfield has gone and done a dirty trick, I reckon."

"He wouldn't—he couldn't—do that!" she struggled to say, crumpling the lying document in her hand.

"But I reckon he's done gone and done it, miss," Cactus Jimmy admitted dryly.

"But—but—Mr. Luis—Mr. Mike found it, and he located it and put the paper in that pile of rocks—with his name and yours and mine written on it! I saw it!"

"Then the other feller comes along, and, seeing the location work all done, he politely jumps it: and now he's skipped off to Yuma."

"He said that he was going to Phoenix!"

"Phoenix my eye!" Cactus Jimmy spluttered. "He's gone to Yuma to record the claim before anybody could git wise. I reckon that's why he was in sech a rush to git away."

"But he can't! It's ours!" Stella cried exasperatedly, with rising indignation.

"He can't, o' course, but he's done gone and done it just the same," Cactus Jimmy said somberly. "The way things looks to me, miss, I guess he can make it stick, too, unless either me or Mike can beat him to Yuma. I mean me," he amended quickly, "for Mike can't go out just now."

Cactus Jimmy's turbid thoughts turned involuntarily back to the Syenite tragedy, and the grave potentialities of the vexing situation reached him with tragic force.

"Don't you think that you could beat him to Yuma?" It was a question, but Stella's tone carried the sharp note of a command. "I can't bear to think of you and him losing it!"

"It ain't me I'm a-thinking of, miss," Cactus Jimmy muttered morosely. "It's you and him. I've got to beat him if I can."

"Shall we tell him?"

"No; it won't do no good; and if we do, he'll sure go out himself, and he ain't broke good to the desert yet, miss."

"But he ought to know!" she cried indignantly.

"He ought to, I reckon, if it was good for his health," Cactus Jimmy said in a dull monotone. "I can hit it across to the Quartzite Road, and mebby I can ketch an automobile going south. If not, I'll go on to Blythe and hire a car to take me to Yuma. It's a long trip, but mebby I can make it. I take it that Dunfield's gone to Syenite, where he'll ketch the stage; but, if I'm lucky, I might beat him. We'd better not stop to eat lunch, Miss Stella."

"It's after one now. and I'm almost famished," she said more calmly as she looked at her watch. "Let's eat just a bite, Mr. Jimmy, and then we shall hurry back to the Bowl. Time will be saved by conserving our strength; and you've got to checkmate him, Mr. Jimmy! You've just got to!"

She clutched at Cactus Jimmy's arm and beseeched him with a look out of those deep-glowing gold-gray eyes of her that made him clinch his fists with invincible determination.

"Don't you worry none, Miss Stella," he muttered through gritting teeth. "I'll sure beat him to it!"

"Hadn't we better take this paper along?" she questioned.

"No; we'll stick it right back where you got it." Cactus Jimmy took the location notice from her hand, stumbled back to the monument, and thrust it in place. "It's evidence, you know; and mebby if it can be proved that you and Mike was here first——"

"Of course we can prove it!" she interrupted passionately. "I was right here when he found it, and I saw him build the monument, and I watched him fill out the blank—and everything!"

"That'll help some, mebby," Cactus Jimmy meditated, his eyes averted from her. "But there's other things."

He caught himself and sent a disturbed look toward Stella, but she had not noticed. She had turned away from him and was impatiently opening the pail of lunch. "Let's not squander any time, Mr. Jimmy," she urged. "We shall eat and hurry back to the Bowl, so you can get a quick start. You must beat him, that's all!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE DISCOVERIES.

IT was after three o'clock when Stella and Cactus Jimmy reached the bottom of the Bowl. They exchanged questioning glances as they turned from the foot of the trail toward the hut. The still air of the quiet retreat seemed to be surcharged with suppressed excitement.

At one corner of the canopy Mr. Trumbull had Reese by the arm, and both seemed greatly agitated. Black Mike was standing beside a saddled mule which he had led to the adobe trough, and it was evident that he was impatiently crowding his preparations for a journey. Stella parted from Cactus Jimmy who hurried across to the trough.

"What's the idea, son?" Cactus Jimmy inquired, with the strain of apprehension in his voice.

"I'm going out!" Black Mike snapped tersely.

"Going out?" Cactus Jimmy gave him a vacuous look. "What for? What's the idea, Luis?"

"Cut out this Luis stuff!" The voice was crisp. "Mike—it's Mike from now on, just like it used to be."

"But you—but you can't go out!" Cactus Jimmy protested. "You don't know the desert, and it'll git you! You just can't go out, feller!"

"Can't?" Black Mike gave a defiant laugh.

"But you don't know the desert, Mike, and it'll git you sure!" Cactus Jimmy insisted.

"I'll go prepared. I'll take a couple of casks of water, some grub, and my nerve, and I'll cut across to the Quartzite-Yuma Road, where I may be able to catch a car. If nothing comes along, I shall keep on to Blythe. It'll be quicker than by way of Syenite, I think."

"Quicker—to where?" Cactus Jimmy was so agitated that he hardly noticed that Black Mike's plan coincided with that which he had mapped for himself.

"To Yuma."

"But—but I've got to go to Yuma!" Cactus Jimmy said in a dismayed tone. "And if you've got any business there, mebby I could attend to it for you."

"You're going to stay right here and watch the Bowl!" Black Mike declared belligerently. "Anyway, my business in Yuma is your business as well. I have just discovered that that skunk, Dunfield, has removed our location notices here in the Bowl, as well as the notices covering the two claims outside, and that he has substituted others bearing his own name. He's jumped all our claims, and he's gone to Yuma to record them. I've got to beat him to it."

"He—he's done what?" Cactus Jimmy demanded.

"He's done just what I said," Black Mike replied crisply. "And I don't think that's all of it, either. A few days ago I made a rich strike up near the bend in the ridge. I located you and Miss Trumbull in with me. I've got a hunch that he's jumped that claim, too. I'm going to pass that way and see."

"There ain't no use going up there, Mike," Cactus Jimmy advised stolidly. "Me and the girl have just come from up that a way, and he's sure done gone and done it."

Black Mike clinched his teeth. "I'll —I'll——"

"There, there, son!" Cactus Jimmy held up a warning hand. "I know what's in your mind, but you mustn't do nothing like that, Mike. And now, if you'll just git it out o' your fool head to go to Yuma, and you'll leave it to me, I'll sure head him off. If you start out the officers are going to pick you up."

"Officers! Huh!" Black Mike snorted his defiance. "I'm going myself, Jimmy. I'm not going to let that dirty skunk beat you out of your interest in these Golden Bowl claims—nor my dad and the old Mexican; and, above all, I'm not going to let him rob the girl and you of the Star of Hope. If it were myself solely, I wouldn't care that much." He snapped his fingers. "But I'm not going to let him put a dirty trick like that over on a pal of mine, and when it comes to robbing a girl ——" He suppressed his hot rage and, turning abruptly to Cactus Jimmy, asked in a changed tone: "Did you examine that ledge up by the elbow?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of it?"

"I've never seen anything to equal it, Mike. I'm afraid to guess how rich it is, but it looks to me like thousands to the ton."

"I don't know much about such things, Jimmy, but I was sure it was rich; and when that fellow Dunfield saw the specimens, he pronounced them worthless. Said they wasn't gold at all. I was positive it was rich, but I thought it was merely Dunfield's grouch that was talking. I didn't think he'd attempt to jump the claim. Now I've got to head him off. I am going to beat him to Yuma, but, if I should fail, I shall go after him in other ways."

"Nobody'd ever blame you much," Cactus Jimmy muttered. "But——"

"I don't mean that!" Black Mike spoke up quickly. "What I mean to do is to use the law. It's a serious thing to tamper with a monument, or a location notice, isn't it?"

"It's a felony if you can prove he done it."

"It's easy enough to prove," Black Mike asserted with vehemence. "There's Miss Trumbull—but what's the use?"

"Sure!" Cactus Jimmy exclaimed hastily. "But, the way things stand, it sure won't do us no good unless one of us beats him to the recorder's office. I reckon that's the only chanst we've got to save the claims, with all them other things agin' us."

"I'll beat him!" Black Mike's jaws set.

"But I reckon you oughtn't to go, Mike," Cactus Jimmy pleaded. "Just give me the chanst. I know the desert better'n you, and I'll sure beat him."

"I'm going!" Black Mike's tone was uncompromising. "I'm younger and speedier than you, and, since it's going to be a race, speed and endurance are the vital points to be considered. If he beats me to it——"

"But if you can prove that you located the claim," Cactus Jimmy interrupted hopefully, "mebby he won't git away with it."

"Of course, we can prove everything!" Black Mike ejaculated in a tone of disgust. "But can't you see that he's got every advantage? For one thing I was fool enough to use a fictitious name in all these locations. I don't know just what effect it will have, but it may invalidate the claims, or, possibly, merely nullify my interest. Then Dunfield says that dad has squealed on us, and it must be true, else how would Dunfield know it? In that case we're in for it right; for what can a man do when he's in prison? We'll be out of the way and——"

Cactus Jimmy looked at Black Mike in alarm. "Just what do you mean by we, Mike?" he asked. "You know I

wasn't mixed up in that thing in no way a-tall!"

"What's that?" Black Mike whirled upon him wrathfully. "You were in it just as deep as I was! Do you mean to tell me, if it comes to a show-down, that you're going to try to hedge and shift the whole thing over on my shoulders?"

Cactus Jimmy went cold. "No, I wasn't meaning nothing like that, Mike," he quavered. "I'll stand by you and take my medicine like a man, but——"

"Then shut up and help me get ready!" Black Mike snapped. "I'm out to protect you, the girl, dad, and the old Mexican at all hazards. Now get busy. While I fill the water casks and rope them on the mule, you pack some grub—enough to last me three or four days. I don't know how long it will take me to reach Blythe, in case I have to go that far."

"You ought to git there in four days, I reckon," Cactus Jimmy said moodily.

"Then I shall make it in three," Black Mike asserted aggressively. "Now hustle that grub, Jimmy."

"Have you got your snake-bite kit?" Cactus Jimmy queried as he turned, after taking a few paces.

"Always," came Black Mike's succinct reply. "I'm never without it—just as I'm never without my carbolic acid and spirits of ammonia. I'm all fixed for a desert trip. Now hustle that grub, Jimmy."

Cactus Jimmy's brain was in a turmoil when he turned away again and started toward the hut. He was Black Mike's pal, and Black Mike in a few unequivocal phrases had given him his cue. He was expected to help share his partner's burden.

He halted and for a moment contemplated retracing his steps to protest against the brutal injustice of it; but the memory of the black look which had crept into that dark, brooding face and the savage reproach in the voice warned him of the danger of incurring Black Mike's displeasure. Black Mike was just as relentless in demanding a pal's loyalty as he was in giving it.

But this was a phase of Black Mike's character which was new to Cactus Jimmy, and he could not understand it. It was not like Black Mike to involve his pals. In all his past he had always shielded them without counting the cost to himself; and Cactus Jimmy was both sorely perplexed and distressed when he again moved off dejectedly toward the hut.

When he drew near he saw that Reese had withdrawn, and Mr. Trumbull was gently stroking Stella's hair as he talked to her in a subdued undertone. Stella was leaning heavily on her father's arm, and when she saw Cactus Jimmy enter the hut, where the provisions were kept, she turned away and followed him in.

Cactus Jimmy went to the grub box. He found an empty flour bag and began to pack it with provisions. Stella, greatly agitated, reeled across the earthen floor and clung to his arm.

"Mr. Jimmy, why—why—is Mr. Mike going out?" she questioned in a constrained voice.

Cactus Jimmy cleared his throat nervously. "I sure hates to tell you, Miss Stella, but the same thing has happened to all our claims here in the Bowl that's happened to the Star o' Hope," he replied in a hollow voice.

"Oh! It—it can't be!" She lifted her trembling hands to her eyes and, staggering across to the bed, dropped down heavily and stared at Cactus Jimmy, with all her accumulated wretchedness pictured in her harrowed face.

"Mike says it's happened all right, miss," Cactus Jimmy affirmed in a lifeless tone. "That feller's sure gone and jumped 'em all."

Stella arose from the bed and tottered back to Cactus Jimmy.

"Of course!" She was laughing now with hysterical shrillness, as though the straining tension had suddenly snapped. "After I saw what he'd done to the Star of Hope, I—I—was afraid he had not stopped there. But you won't tell daddy, will you, Mr. Jimmy?" She clung to Cactus Jimmy's arm, and her eyes beseeched him. "Daddy's ready to collapse now, from all the terrible things that have happened, and he liked Mr. Dunfield, you know, and trusted him."

"I don't know what good it's going to do, but I'll sure keep mum if you say so, miss," Cactus Jimmy promised sullenly.

"Then daddy says we've got to keep Mr. Mike from going out—and you will go instead, won't you, Mr. Jimmy? He mustn't go out! We mustn't let him go out!"

"When he sets his head on doing anything, he won't listen to nothing, miss." Cactus Jimmy responded.

"But he's got to listen!" she said tensely under her breath. "Daddy's told me everything—how the officers are after him for holding up a stage and killing a man—and he says we mustn't let him go out, or he'll get caught, and I couldn't stand it, Mr. Jimmy!"

"And your dad knows about that and told you?" Cactus Jimmy asked.

"He said that Mr. Dunfield told him."

"Then if Dunfield knowed all about it, I don't see why the law hain't found us already—I mean him—out here."

"But Mr. Dunfield tried to protect him, and he diverted the search for him to the north in some way. I didn't quite understand it all."

"He said there was only one of 'em?" Cactus Jimmy moistened his dry lips, as the morbid question came raspingly from his raw throat. He gulped, for his discordant words had jarred against his ears, with the force of a confession of guilt.

"Daddy mentioned only Black Mike, and—but—but you were not with him, Mr. Jimmy?" As though shunning the contamination, her hand fell leaden from his arm, and she shrank back from him and stared, with a new horror in her tortured eyes.

Cactus Jimmy hesitated. Loyalty to his partner did not demand that he accuse himself before the distressed girl.

"No, miss, it wasn't me a-tall!" came his stifled denial. "I wasn't nowheres near when the holdup took place. I was in Syenite, when Black Mike's father and brother and them other people brung the dead man in."

She reeled back to Cactus Jimmy's side, seized his hand, and wrung it hysterically. "I'm glad you weren't with him," came from her pain-parched throat. "But, with the officers looking for him elsewhere, he's safe while he's hiding here—don't you think? And, if he goes out now, they'll catch him, and daddy says they'll hang him!" A pathetic moan quivered on her bloodless lips, and she leaned heavily against Cactus Jimmy.

"Pore little kid! Pore little suffering kid!" Cactus Jimmy said chokingly as he took her in his arms and carried her back to the bed. "I know just how you're a-feeling, miss, but I reckon you ain't no worse broke up than me. But it's got to come some time, I'm saying. He can't keep on hiding from the law forever; and, if he can turn a good trick for somebody he—he thinks a lots of—before he's ketched, he won't mind being hung none, I reckon. That's Black Mike clean through!"

She roused herself and sat up. "But we've got to keep him from going out!" she declared desperately. "We've got to save him!"

"All perdition couldn't stop him now, miss," Cactus Jimmy declared. "Anyhow, if he's made up his mind to go he's going, that's all. He's fighting for

you and his dad and a pal, and he'll fight it out, even if he knowed he was going to he hung to-morrow."

She arose from the bed again and lifted her palms to her eyes despairingly.

"But they must be watching for him and looking for him everywhere!" she said. "Daddy says there's a reward of five thousand dollars—dead or alive, and——"

"Where did your daddy git that?" Cactus Jimmy's voice went suddenly hard.

"Mr. Dunfield told him."

"I reckon I'm beginning to see through things a little." Cactus Jimmy jerked his sagging body erect. "I'm seeing through lots o' things now, miss, all of a suddent."

He hesitated, and she questioned him with her eyes.

"I'm beginning to see it all mighty clear," Cactus Jimmy went on slowly. "That feller Dunfield is going to record them claims first thing, then he'll git the officers to come here and ketch Black Mike. That means that Dunfield gits the reward, or part of it, anyhow. So it ain't much difference whether Black Mike goes or stays. He's in for it anyway, I reckon."

"Do you think Mr. Dunfield would do that?"

"I reckon so, miss. That's the way it looks to me, all right. Dunfield's going to do the whole thing at one crack."

"But if Mr. Mike stays, we can hide him somewhere."

"'Taint no use, miss. He says he going, and there ain't nothing'll stop him—unless——" Jimmy hesitated. "Mebby we could jump on him when he ain't expecting it and hog-tie him and then hide him out som'ers."

"That was daddy's plan!" she said with fervid eagerness. "If you agree to help, you and daddy and Reese could overpower him and——"

"It'll be some job," Cactus Jimmy confessed. "But mebby we could do it if we go at it right."

"You must do it, Mr. Jimmy!" she commanded vehemently. "Then you can tie him up, and we'll find some way to conceal him. We've got to save him, and what do we care for the gold if we can only keep the officers from catching him?"

"I'm willing to try, and I'm ready for anything that'll save him, miss," Cactus Jimmy promised. "And mebby we won't need to lose the claims, neither. After we git him tied up safe, I'll jump on the mule myself and hit the trail for Yuma."

Cactus Jimmy was not disturbed by the thought that he himself might be apprehended; but he knew that he had a better chance to get through than Black Mike who could not escape recognition, no matter where he went. But if he could beat Dunfield in the race to the recorder's office, he was willing to accept anything that might come after that had been accomplished. He did not doubt that a price was upon his own head as well as upon Black Mike's, but, fortified by the knowledge of his own innocence, he would be willing to risk being taken, for the sake of his partner, the girl, and the original locators of the claims.

"I think I could make the trip to Yuma myself," Stella suggested timidly, after a moment's pause.

"You?" Cactus Jimmy appraised the pathetic little figure. "You'd croak before you got twenty miles, miss. That's a man's job—a real man's job."

"Yes, I'm sure it's a man's job," she agreed soberly. "And it's going to be a man's job to keep Mr. Mike from going; but I shall tell daddy that you are willing to aid him in the attempt. But I can't think of Mr. Mike doing a shocking thing like that, Mr. Jimmy. He's so—so wonderful! I can't believe he'd commit murder!"

"He never has been the killing sort before, miss," Cactus Jimmy said. "He's done a lot o' plundering in his day, but he was never known to kill a man before, even in his wildest days, so far as I know. I reckon he didn't have to. All he had to do was to say he was Black Mike. Just the name scared people worse'n his gun."

"But to commit so brutal a crime—and to rob his own people—and then be so full of gayety right after it, as he has been——" Stella's sentence broke off abruptly. "Listen, Mr. Jimmy! He's calling you!"

CHAPTER XX.

BLACK MIKE'S START.

"HURRY, Jimmy!" came Black Mike's impatient voice. "Are you going to be all day with that chuck? Hurry up! I've filled the casks and am all ready to start!"

"All right, Mike! Coming up!" Cactus Jimmy called, as he hurriedly crammed the last biscuit into the bag.

Then he tied the mouth of the bag securely, and when he left the hut, Stella slipped out behind him. Black Mike had led the mule up close to the hut and was impatiently waiting for the provisions. A large canteen hung from the saddle horn, and a splashing water cask was suspended at either side of the mule. It was an awkward load, but, after a quick inspection, Cactus Jimmy muttered his approval.

Black Mike hurriedly fastened the bag of provisions behind the saddle, where his roll of papers had already been secured. "If I don't happen to pick up an automobile ride, that ought to be enough water to last me until I reach Quartzite, don't you think?"

Cactus Jimmy nodded. "Uh-huh. I reckon you can make it through to Quartzite all right, if you're keerful; but the mule can't drink out of a bung-hole."

"My hat will serve the purpose of a pail. And now you take care of this thing, Jimmy." Black Mike unbuckled his belt, with his .45 in the holster, and passed it to the other's hand. "It's Black Mike that's going out, you know, and he'd better go without any tools."

"Mebby you'll wish you had it before you git through," Cactus Jimmy suggested hypocritically, as he eagerly accepted the weapon.

He stepped aside and deposited the pistol on a near-by rock. He sent a sly glance toward Mr. Trumbull and Reese who were standing together near the corner of the hut nervously following Black Mike's movements; then he crossed over and joined them.

Black Mike turned toward Stella who was standing apart from the others. Their glances met for a moment. He saw the vivid fear that shone in her eyes before her lashes fell, and then the shudder that ran through her, as she turned her face from him in mute resentment of his gaze. He accepted the blunt rebuff stoically. It was his due.

A few brisk steps took him to Mr. Trumbull. "Good-by, Mr. Trumbull," he said a trifle huskily.

Reese and Cactus Jimmy stepped aside a pace. Black Mike had let down all his defenses now. He had created the opportune moment of the combined attack against him which had been plotted to balk his purpose; and, when his hand fell into Mr. Trumbull's, the other two men flung themselves upon him.

Black Mike was caught off his guard, and for a moment his amazement stunned him beyond the point of resistance; but it was only for a moment.

With the swift enlightenment that came to him, a new strength rose out of his superb rage. The handclasp had parted at the moment of attack. Black Mike whirled with mighty force and shook loose the hands that had closed upon his arms. Cactus Jimmy and Reese were flung away from him; but

when Mr. Trumbull, who had fatally hesitated in his part, threw his heavy weight against him and seized him about the waist, they promptly returned to the attack.

Black Mike shook them off again and, seizing Mr. Trumbull by the scruff, disengaged with a jerk the flabby arms from his waist, and then he shook the terrorized man, as a terrier shakes a rat. He lifted Mr. Trumbull up as if to crush him against a rock, but Stella's scream diverted his wrathful purpose, and he sent him spinning back upon the sand.

Cactus Jimmy had seized Black Mike from behind during the whirlwind struggle with Mr. Trumbull. Black Mike wheeled about just in time to see Reese lift a pistol toward him, and, with Cactus Jimmy still clinging to him, he struck Reese a blow on the jaw, before the guide could pull the trigger, and Reese fell down on the sand. Then he reached back, tore loose Cactus Jimmy's hold, and, seizing the little desert rat by both arms, he sent him catapulting through space, to come down with a loud grunt, a dozen feet away.

Black Mike backed off toward the waiting mule. "You treacherous skunks! And even my pal a Judas!" Exquisite pain mingled with the impressive rage in his voice.

The conflict had been so swift, and the unexpected climax had come with such dramatic suddenness, that it had left Stella gasping for breath. The end had come almost at the same moment her scream had saved her father from a grave danger.

Her brain whirled giddily. Her bewildered eyes followed Black Mike, as he retreated toward the mule, and then they turned back and fell upon the pistol which Cactus Jimmy had placed on the rock near the hut. It was but a few paces from her, and the moment she saw it her brain cleared. She still had a chance to save Black Mike from his folly.

A few quick steps brought her to the rock, and she snatched up the pistol.

"Now!" she said with quiet force as she cocked the weapon and drew down on him. "I shall have my say! You'll not leave this spot, Black Mike! Put up your hands and keep perfectly quiet, while the men tie you up. If you offer the least resistance, I shall shoot you. Hurry, men!"

The vanquished trio made no offer to rally to her support. Mr. Trumbull was slowly struggling to his feet, but the other two men were still lying where they had fallen.

"I could stand it from the men, but not from you, Miss Stella!" Black Mike's heavy voice was choked with tragedy, as his hands went slowly above his head. "Shoot, Miss Stella! Shoot quick!"

She quailed before those accusing eyes, and her false courage deserted her, when she saw the agony in that tense drawn face. Her hand trembled. She felt her fingers go numb at the pistol butt, and her arm seemed stricken with a paralysis. The weapon swayed in her hand, the fingers relaxed, and then the pistol tumbled to the sand. Her knees sagged, and she staggered forward a pace. Black Mike ran to her and, as she collapsed, caught her in his arms. He stooped and picked up his pistol; then, with infinite tenderness, he carried the limp figure into the hut and placed it on the bed. As he withdrew his reluctant arms, he looked down into the pale, upturned face.

The lips fluttered. "Don't—don't go! You're doing—it—for me!" came faintly on her breath.

Black Mike frowned and backed away lingeringly. Then he wheeled abruptly about and left the hut. Just beyond the doorway he met Mr. Trumbull who had risen and was approaching the entrance with hesitating caution.

"The excitement has got the best of Miss Stella," Black Mike said quickly. "She's in the hut. A dash of water will revive her."

He turned and took a swift inventory of Cactus Jimmy and Reese who were still lying where they had fallen; then he mounted the mule and rode in a brisk walk toward the foot of the western trail.

Mr. Trumbull barely noticed Black Mike's movements. He stumbled dazedly into the hut and, bending over Stella, asked in a bewildered tone: "Are you safe, dear?"

"I'm all right, daddy!" she answered faintly. "Just go away and leave me; but—but—is he gone?"

"Yes, he's gone!" Mr. Trumbull muttered dejectedly.

"Gone!" she moaned as she turned, sobbing, upon the pillow.

Mr. Trumbull tiptoed away from the bed, and, as he passed through the doorway, he sent an anxious glance toward the western trail. Black Mike was climbing it now. Then he turned back to the other two men, and he saw Reese rise and recover his pistol. Cactus Jimmy was still lying where he had fallen, but a struggling movement was a sign that consciousness was returning.

"Hold that man, Reese!" Mr. Trumbull ordered, as he snatched up the pieces of rope which had been prepared for Black Mike's wrists and ankles.

Reese turned to Cactus Jimmy who was now making a feeble effort to rise to a sitting posture.

"Just hold stiddy, feller!" Reese commanded as he covered Cactus Jimmy, while Mr. Trumbull advanced upon him with the ropes.

Cactus Jimmy stared dazedly into the black muzzle. "What's the matter?" he mumbled fatuously.

"You'll find out what's the matter as soon as you've come to proper," Reese replied with a dry chuckle as he passed the pistol to Mr. Trumbull, took the pieces of rope, and, pushing the bewildered man back on the sand, quickly secured his wrists and ankles.

"Good work, Reese!" Mr. Trumbull said approvingly, when it had all been accomplished. "We let Black Mike get away, but we've got this fellow safe, anyhow."

CHAPTER XX.

AFOOT ON THE DESERT.

WHEN Black Mike reached the lip of the rim he reined in his mule and looked back down into the Bowl. He was convulsed with rage, and his teeth gnashed together as he muttered:

"Dad has squealed, Cactus Jimmy's trying to hedge, and that skunk Dunfield has got the whole hypocritical bunch in league with him in his plot to get the claims!" His voice softened, but it was tinctured with pain when he added: "Even to the girl! But I'll save the claims in spite of them!"

He wheeled his mule about, dug his heels into its flanks, and rode in a rapid walk down along the ridge that come up from the south. A couple of miles down he came to the foot of a barranca in the crook of an elbow in the ridge, and there he halted his mule beside a boulder that rose up to the level of his saddle horn.

"I won't take it!" he said with determination as he lifted the .45 which was still gripped in his hand, and contemplated it for a studied moment. "It's Black Mike now, and he'd better pull his own fangs."

He deliberately reached over and dropped the pistol upon the rock. Then he turned his mule's head and looked out across the desert toward the western horizon.

"I'm off the track," he muttered. "That's where I've got to go—west and north instead of south. What's the matter with me, anyway?"

He shifted his course to a westerly

direction when he urged his mule on again. He rode until nearly midnight without making a halt, and then he came upon a patch of saccaton in a little valley. He camped there to allow his mule to graze. He ate a lunch and, after a refreshing rest, mounted and resumed his journey.

He did not stop until, just after dawn, he came to a cove at the foot of a mountain, where there was another patch of grass. He camped long enough to give himself and his beast some rest, and then he was in the saddle again.

By the middle of the forenoon the desert had become a furnace. The mule lagged, and its pace became laborious, while Black Mike felt himself succumbing to a creeping fatigue. He pressed forward to the base of a ridge, and, skirting it for a mile or more, he happened upon a thin splash of grass near the foot of the barranca. There he hobbled his mule and ate his meal and then curled up in the shade of a rock and went to sleep.

He arose in the late afternoon and pushed forward on his journey again. That night was but a dreary repetition of the night before, and the monotony held through the day that followed. Miles of travel through the sand; camp; and then miles of travel again.

He kept doggedly on, although he was cruelly taxing the strength and endurance of his mule. He himself seemed impervious to physical distress. He had been frugal with his water, but at the close of the second day his supply was beginning to run low.

In the early night he came to the Quartzite-Yuma Road. He was tempted to change his plan, turning southward, and try to reach Yuma on the mule; but he was unfamiliar with the road and did not know where to find water on the way. A friendly automobile might come along and pick him up; but there was scant travel on the road, and, without water in his canteen and casks, the direct journey on muleback did not offer a friendly prospect.

He decided in favor of his original plan, since it was safer and surer; and he turned northward toward Quartzite. Should he meet a southbound automobile, he would hail it, and, if he were given passage, he would free his mule that it might go on to Quartzite, where it could find water.

The moon was now at its maximum, and its light filled the desert with a mellow illumination. Black Mike had traveled the road for a couple of hours when, off in the distance, he saw the headlights of an approaching automobile. As it bore down toward him, he halted his mule, dismounted, and tried to wave it down; but the only response to his signal was a taunting laugh, as the car whizzed by.

And then Black Mike laughed—rather a wicked laugh. By the bright light of the moon he had seen that it was a county car, and the men who were in it were probably officers!

He remounted and rode on more cheerfully. It was midnight when he came to Quartzite. He stopped at the well at the foot of the slope, and the pulleys creaked, as he drew up the dripping bucket to water his thirsty mule. When he turned to fill his casks, a man carrying a pail, came strolling down to the well. Black Mike promptly discovered that the man was a motor tourist, and he bluntly asked him where he was bound for.

The tourist replied that he was going north. Black Mike tried to bargain with him to break his trip long enough to drive him to Yuma, but the tourist said that he was in a great hurry to reach his journey's end and declined to consider Black Mike's offer.

After he had filled his casks, Black Mike mounted and rode westward from Quartzite. He kept to the road that led to Ehrenberg. At that point he would cross the Colorado River and

go on to Blythe, less than two miles beyond, where he would have no difficulty in engaging a car to take him to Yuma.

His journey throughout the remainder of the night was eventless. He met no one on the road; and when dawn broke he turned and struck off into the desert. If it were true, as Dunfield had said, that his father had made known his latest crime to the officers, it would be well to take no chances on getting caught before he had finished the work which he had started out to do. And it must be true, else how would Dunfield have known anything about it?

As he revolved the matter in his mind, his thoughts dwelt upon his father with a tincture of bitterness; and yet, if his father had put the officers on his track, he could hardly be blamed for his act. Black Mike knew and admired his father's uncompromising respect for justice.

He crossed a ridge and, with the hills between him and the road, maintained his westerly course. He was confident that, by traveling steadily, with the usual few hours' rest in the middle of the day, he could reach Blythe by the next morning.

But he had not counted on the desert's treachery. It was late afternoon when the disaster came, after he had taken his midday rest and had started on the last stretch of his journey. As he was crossing a boulder-littered arroyo, he heard a faint whir. The mule shied, but it was too late. A sidewinder had fastened its venomous fangs into the animal's right leg, just above the ankle.

Black Mike dismounted and promptly despatched the reptile. Then he drew a bandanna from his pocket and, when he flipped it open, he smiled grimly at sight of the four crescent-shaped holes that were reminiscent of other happenings. He ripped the bandanna in halves and twisted one part into a tight ligature just above the tiny wound which he had immediately located. With the sharp blade of his pocket knife he cut the hair away and then scarified the wound; and, taking out his snake-bite kit, he injected a liberal quantity of permanganate of potash.

But already the leg had begun to swell. He threw the load from the mule's back and removed the saddle and bridle. The antidote proved ineffectual. The animal was warm, and the deadly poison was doing its work swiftly. The mule sank to its knees and then rolled over on the ground.

"It's no use," Black Mike said sadly. "It's mighty hard, old pal. I've done my best for you, but you're done for, and I've got to end your misery."

He picked up his pocketknife, which he had placed upon a rock, and opened the larger blade. He ran his thumb nail experimentally along its sharp edge. It was as keen as a razor blade. He dropped one knee to the neck of the suffering creature and held the sharp point to its throat. He hesitated; then his teeth set, and the blade sank to the hilt. Sick at heart, Black Mike arose and turned away from the struggling animal.

He picked up a rock in the arroyo, which contained a shallow, cuplike hollow, and, having filled the depression with diluted carbolic acid, he used the other half of his bandanna to cleanse his needle and knife blades. Then he tossed the rag aside.

His papers were fastened in a compact roll behind his saddle. He removed them and placed them in a pocket. Then he filled his canteen and unstrapped and took up the shrunken bag of provisions.

"I ought to be able to make it to Blythe by morning," he said aloud as

he started off on a brisk walk. "I'll work my way to some easy place to cross the ridge and get back to the road. Maybe some good-hearted chap will come along in a car and give me a ride to Ehrenberg."

After he had tramped across the sands for a mile or two, he picked up a buzzard feather and stuck it in the band of his hat. Then he turned about to look back in the direction where the dead mule was lying in the arroyo. Already the winged scavengers were circling above the spot that marked the scene of the desert tragedy.

CHAPTER XXI.

RECOGNIZED.

AFTER Black Mike had ridden away from Quartzite, the tourist who had met him at the well carried his pail of water up the slope to his camp. He lay down on his bed with that unforgetable face, which he had seen in the moonlight, vivid in his mind.

It was a distinctive face, in whose lines one saw the reflex of submerged pain; but it puzzled him to understand why it had impressed him. There was something indefinably familiar about it, but he could not recall where he had seen it before. He was thinking about it when he fell asleep.

When he awoke in the early morning he was still haunted by that dark, brooding face which he had seen at the well; and then it came to him why it had obtruded itself so persistently upon his mind.

He arose, dressed hurriedly, and went to the post office. He was sure of it now. A picture of that face was posted on the door. Along with the picture was a minute description of Michael Ford, known as Black Mike, with the brief details of the Syenite crime, and a reward of five thousand dollars was offered for him, dead or alive. On the same sheet was a description of James Webb, known as Cactus Jimmy, Black Mike's accomplice, for whom a reward of two thousand dollars was offered, dead or alive.

It was still too early for the post-office door to open, and nobody was about. He sat down on the deserted porch to wait for some one to come with whom he could share his thrills. The casual meeting with the stranger at the well had taken on a new significance. It had become a desperate adventure, and he craved the opportunity to talk about it.

Getting up, he walked restlessly about the camp, but nobody was astir. He came back to the post office and saw a car coming up the road in a cloud of dust. He watched its approach, and when it was driven up to the well, he hurried down to transmit the news of his discovery to its passengers.

Two men alighted from the car which he noticed, as he drew near it, bore a county license plate; and when he appraised the men he saw that each wore a deputy sheriff's badge.

"Officers, I see," he said succinctly.

The taller of the two men gave a jerky nod. "Deputy sheriffs," he averred tersely. "I'm Vincent, and my partner's Driscoll."

"Chasing somebody?"

"We're on a man hunt, and it's got us all tied up in a knot," Vincent admitted. "And, I tell you, stranger, we're beginning to get pretty sore about it, too."

"Any clews?"

"Plenty of them, but they all end right against a cliff, a thousand feet straight up."

"I suppose you're looking for that fellow whose picture is stuck up there on the post-office door," the tourist intimated, a trifle pompously.

"Black Mike? Sure! And he's a slick one, stranger, believe me! Every officer

in the State's on the lookout for him. Held up a stage and killed a man near Syenite a couple of weeks ago; then he and his pal struck off north right after the job, and somehow they've succeeded in making a clean get-away."

"What would you say if I were to tell you that I saw Black Mike right here at this well, about half-past twelve last night?"

"I'd say you were locoed!" Vincent growled.

The tourist laughed. "Well, I'm locoed then," he said wisely. Then he zestfully related to the amazed deputies the startling facts of the midnight meeting with the desperado.

"I'll bet that's the same fellow who tried to get us to stop when we were chasing down the Yuma Road last night!" Vincent exclaimed.

"Sure it was!" said Driscoll. "I though there was something queer about him. We're a fine pair to pass him up when he's begging us to catch him."

"More than likely he'd have got us if we'd stopped," Vincent said grimly. Then he began to quiz the tourist for more details.

"I suppose," said the tourist after he had answered the crisp questions of the skeptical officers, "that I shall be entitled to a part of the reward for putting you on the right track."

"Stranger, if you want the reward, or any part of it, you go out and get him," Vincent snapped with irritation. "It'll be worth all of five thousand dollars to take Black Mike. However, we're sure much obliged to you, fellow," he said more cordially. "We've been following false clews for more than two weeks now, but we'll run this down and see what there is to it." Then he turned to his companion. "We've got plenty of gas, Driscoll, but we're short on chuck. Suppose you run down to the boarding house and get some grub, while I fill the containers with water. Then we'll be off."

CHAPTER XXII.

PURSUED.

IN less than half an hour the two officers were spinning down the road toward Ehrenberg.

"We ought to overtake him before he gets halfway," Vincent, who was at the wheel, remarked as he speeded up the car. "However, I don't think that he has followed the road very far. If he has he's sure got his nerve."

"That's Black Mike's way," Driscoll stated. "I headed a posse that chased him after the Cherry Creek holdup. We were sure all the time that we were hot on his trail, which led north into the mountains, as we supposed; but, just when we thought we were closing in on him, he showed up in the southern part of the territory. We found out afterward that he had gone to Prescott and had taken the train to Phoenix, and nobody had recognized him. After the Agua Caliente affair he didn't stick to his usual tactics, but took to the desert, and that was his undoing."

"He may try the same trick this time," Vincent ventured. "So keep a sharp lookout for his mule's tracks on your side of the road, Driscoll. I'll watch my side as best I can while I'm driving. Maybe he left the road somewhere and struck off into the desert."

"Not likely," Driscoll said dryly. "I've noticed mule tracks all along; but you can take it from me that there's no use straining our eyes. It's my guess that he has gone straight ahead to Blythe, where he's probably figuring on losing himself in the cotton fields. If that's his game, we ought to be able to overtake him before he gets halfway. Just give 'er the gas, Vincent, and turn 'er loose."

They had tire trouble on the way, and it was nearly noon when the two officers drove into Ehrenberg. They had not met a car on the entire trip, and at the ferry they were told that

no man on a mule, answering to the description of the fugitive and his mount, had crossed the river that day.

"It's my guess now that he's gone into the desert, all right," Driscoll admitted; "and we got by him back on the road somewhere. We'll just have to retrace our tracks and see if we can pick up the point where he left the road."

Vincent drove slowly on the return trip, and both he and Driscoll made careful scrutiny of the road all along the way. They were almost ready to give it up and turn back toward Ehrenberg, when Vincent let out an exclamation and slid the car to an abrupt stop.

"Here it is, Driscoll!" he said. "He's turned right here and struck off south. Let's get out and take a look."

The infallibility of Vincent's keen eye was given confirmation when the two men stepped down and examined the spot which had been indicated. The trail left the road at that point and led off, not to the south, but in a southwesterly direction.

"It's up to us to follow him," Driscoll declared grimly. "You know what we're up again, Vincent, if it's really Black Mike who's riding that mule. Are you game?"

"Sure!" Vincent assented avidly. "We're out to get him, and I'm primed for the job."

"That country over yonder seems pretty rough." Driscoll looked out across the heaving space. "Can we follow him in the car? Do you think we can make it?"

"I can take this thing wherever a mule can go," Vincent replied as he climbed back to the wheel. "It will be rather slow going, but we ought to overtake him before dark."

The trail was plain enough in the sand, and they had no difficulty in following it. After it crossed the ridge, it turned due westward, running parallel to the Ehrenberg Road. There were times when it was necessary to make detours, when Driscoll would get out and follow the trail on foot, until Vincent succeeded in finding a way around. In due time they came to the dead mule in the arroyo and both men got out to make an investigation.

"A sidewinder got his beast," Driscoll said. "He had to kill the brute, and he's gone ahead on foot from here."

"Things look better!" Vincent stooped and picked up a piece of bandanna. "And it's sure Black Mike, all right, Driscoll," he announced as he flipped open the rag and squinted at the two crescent-shaped holes; "and he's gone off and left part of his regalia."

Driscoll surveyed the saddle and the casks. "He sure left a good outfit behind him," he said. "We'll take the saddle and bridle along with us. No use leaving them here."

"Of course not!" Vincent agreed as he lifted them up and loaded them into the car. "How long has that mule been dead, do you suppose?"

"Not more than an hour or two, I think. He's sure to keep on going, and we've got to try to get a line on him before night."

"Sure, and we'd better hurry along," said Vincent as he took his place at the wheel, while Driscoll climbed in beside him. "Keep a sharp eye ahead, Driscoll, for I've got to watch pretty close to be able to stick to the trail."

When they had followed the footprints for a couple of hundred yards, they discovered that they shifted abruptly from a straight course toward the hills and struck off in a direct line across a wide bay of sand toward the horn of a crescent in the ridge, miles away.

"He must be trying to reach the road again," Vincent remarked. "He's making for that low place in the ridge away off yonder, where he can get across without much climbing. If he gets over the mountain he'll sure give us the slip,

for he can be to Blythe before we can get out of the desert. With night coming on, we'll have to hang up on this side of the ridge until morning, while he'll just keep on going."

Driscoll merely grunted. His keen eyes were diligently searching the saguaro-dotted flat and slopes for a moving object. The trail was leading straight toward a low gap in the ridge, and the two deputies were apprehensive that the fugitive had already passed beyond it and had given them the slip.

The sun had dropped down, and the brief twilight was beginning to thicken into dusk, when Discoll gave a low exclamation and clutched at Vincent's arm.

"Stop that car, quick!" he commanded brusquely.

It had been a tense half hour that had elapsed since they had left the dead mule. Vincent's nerves were tingling with excitement, and he killed the engine when his feet pressed abruptly against the pedals.

"Well?" His sharp query was hardly more than a jerky expulsion of breath.

"I've got him spotted," Driscoll said calmly. "He's sitting down across yonder at the foot of that gap, as though he were getting his wind before beginning the climb."

"I see him!" Vincent whispered in an awed undertone.

"You ought to," Driscoll muttered. "He's in plain sight now. I've got it sized up that he has heard the car and has seen us, and is now waiting to give us a warm welcome. He's a dead shot, Vincent, and so swift that the eye can't follow him. Are you game?"

"He can't be more than two or three hundred yards away, and I could pick him off from here with my rifle," Vincent said, evading Driscoll's pertinent question. "We'd better play safe and kill him, I think. The reward's the same, and there's no use taking chances."

"I'm not that kind of a yellow cur, Vincent," Driscoll snapped with caustic scorn. "I'm not a pot-shot sportsman. We'll take him alive if we can, and we're not to kill him unless we're forced to. Besides we're not even sure that it's Black Mike. Neither of us recognized him when we passed him on the road, and we've only got the word of that fellow at Quartzite that a man who looks like Black Mike's picture rode out this way on a mule. We've got to be sure before we begin doing any shooting."

"But there was his mask that we found back by the dead mule," Vincent contended.

"That doesn't prove anything," Driscall returned. "Other men poke holes into bandannas besides Black Mike. He may not be our man at all, and we've got to go slow. Just the same, we shall act on the presumption that it is Black Mike; and, if we're going to do anything toward finding out about him, we'd better get busy before night slips upon us. Are you game?"

"Sure!" Vincent replied quickly, now ashamed of his suggestion which had brought his partner's sharp rebuke. "Let's get out and separate; then you come in on him from one side, while I come in from the other. If it's Black Mike, we'll be the real thing when we bring him in alive. But look at him now, Driscoll. He sure sees us all right. He's standing up and is looking straight toward us. I wonder what's his game?"

"We'll soon find out. Let's go!"

Driscoll's snappy courage acted as a stimulant upon Vincent. Both men got out of the car, took their rifles from the tonneau, made a swift inspection of their .45, and, after an exchange of a few hurried words, they set out through the receding dusk to close in on their man.

Vincent's suggestion had been adopted. The two men separated, and the course of each described a wide arc

in the maneuver that had been planned. There was no shelter for the concealment of their movements. Even the saguaros and ocatillas stood far apart, and the starved mesquite was too sparse and stunted to afford a screen; and, while the dusk was swiftly deepening into a mellow gloom, objects were still plainly discernible at a considerable distance.

The man at the foot of the gap stood perfectly still, with arms folded calmly. With the curiosity of a stalked antelope, he was following the movements of the two officers. His motionless outline was silhouetted against the gray rock behind him, and both Driscoll and Vincent, watching, with rifles cocked, for a surprise at any moment, interpreted the passive attitude as one of open defiance.

They suspected a crafty trick; and, as they began to draw in, each increased his caution. That motionless figure, standing in front of the gray rock, seemed so arrogantly indifferent to their approach that both officers, without relaxing their guard for a moment, began to suspect that they had been made victims of a hoax. It was not like Black Mike to allow himself to be cornered and taken without offering desperate resistance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAPTURED.

NARROWLY Black Mike watched the approach of the two men. He had neither seen nor heard the car until a moment before it had come to a stop. He had sat down beside the rock to rest before beginning the climb up through the gap, and, overcome with fatigue and drowsy from his several days of insufficient sleep, he had dropped off into a doze.

He had deliberately gone weaponless on his journey, and, when he became conscious of the near presence of men, he wisely recognized the futility of flight. If they were officers in pursuit of him, an attempt to get away would expose him to a rifle shot; but, whether they were officers or not, the automobile might afford him a quick means of reaching his destination. Thus he reasoned.

He really hoped that these men were officers. If he were taken, he would then be conveyed immediately to Yuma and he would have a better chance to defeat Dunfield's purpose; for, though a prisoner, he would be allowed the privilege of filing his documents for recording. That much would not be denied him; and, after it had been done, he had little concern for his destiny.

A tragic despondency had festered on his spirit. It was hard to have his own father turn against him and betray him; but he could stand that, for there was justice in it. He could even condone Mr. Trumbull's treachery. Mr. Trumbull was out of his element and could be easily influenced by an oily tongue. But the knowledge that Cactus Jimmy, his own pal, had repudiated him, and that he and Stella Trumbull had given themselves to the conspiracy against him, filled him with implacable gloom.

And yet his purpose to save them from the penalty of their own perfidy had never faltered. If capture would aid him in serving them, then he was willing to be captured. He had become entirely indifferent to his own fate.

The cautious strategy of the two men who were now closing in on him made it patent to him that they were officers. He did not doubt it now. Both fight and resistance were impossible; and, with stoic fatalism, he deliberately surrendered himself to the inevitable crisis. He listlessly lifted his hands high and, with eyes closed, he tilted his head languidly back against the rock.

It was so astonishingly unlike Black Mike that Vincent and Driscoll, both of whom had already recognized him,

were suspicious of a trap. Black Mike had crafty ways. They regarded his passive attitude as a pose to tempt them to relax their caution; and, as they came close, with their rifles now shifted to left hands and with pistols drawn and fingers touching the triggers, both with nerves tense, the slightest suspicious move might have drawn a deadly volley.

Black Mike smiled wanly and said wearily: "How do you do, gentlemen. If you're after me, you've got me."

The two deputies were still wary. "What sort of a trick have you got up your sleeve this time, Mike?" Driscoll questioned suspiciously.

"You've got me, I said." Black Mike's voice lost its listlessness and now tingled with sharp resentment. "So get me out of here and put me into Yuma as quickly as you can. I've got some business to attend to there that can't wait."

"You'll have considerable business to attend to in Yuma after we get you there," Vincent remarked flippantly. "I'll hold him steady, Driscoll, while you lift his guns."

"No guns on me, gentlemen," Black Mike announced curtly.

"No?" Driscoll laughed good-naturedly. "Black Mike without guns? You can't fool me, old boy. You'd hardly start out to pull off a job without the necessary tools."

"I figured that I didn't need any tools for the job that I had in mind," came the indifferent response.

"We'll take 'em off of you anyhow, Mike," Driscoll said dryly. "But I'm going to slip the links on you first. Turn around, face to the rock, and keep your hands high till I tell you to drop 'em. Keep him covered, Vincent. I'm not going to take any chances."

Black Mike obeyed the injunction with scrupulous precision.

"Now, down with 'em easy!" Driscoll ordered as he reached up, drew Black Mike's arm down and back, and quickly snapped the manacles in place. "I feel easier!" he declared when the operation was completed.

"I won't feel easy until you get his guns off of him," Vincent remarked with frank distrust. "If all that's said about Black Mike is true, he can draw and shoot with his wrists in the irons."

"By Jove!" Driscoll exclaimed, as he searched Black Mike for weapons. "He's told the truth! There ain't a gun on him. What's the idea, Mike? Lose 'em, or have you got a girl?"

"Both," Black Mike replied succinctly.

Driscoll removed the prisoner's knife and lifted a roll of papers from a pocket. "What's this, Mike?" he asked.

"Some important business documents. Take good care of them, Mr. Driscoll."

"Sure! And so you know me, do you?"

"From the old days. I knew you even before I heard your partner call you by name."

"Well, well! Those were good old days, Mike. And what's this stuff?" Driscoll removed the snake-bite kit, the bottle of spirits of ammonia, the vial of carbolic acid, and the testing outfit from Black Mike's pockets.

"My testing chemicals and my standard medicine kit when I'm on the desert," Black Mike replied easily. "I'm prospecting these days, you know."

"Sure!" Vincent laughed. "Prospecting for some more swag. If you've cleaned his pockets, let's get back to the car, Driscoll. I'll take his chuck bag and canteen. Have you had supper, Mike?"

"Not yet."

"Then you'll sit in with us," Vincent proposed with bubbling good humor. "I'm as hungry as a lobo, myself."

"So am I," Black Mike confessed, as Driscoll turned him about.

"I suppose you know what we're after you for, Mike?" Driscoll questioned, as he and Vincent led their prisoner across the strip of sand toward the car.

"Of course!" Black Mike replied gloomily. "Dad had to give me away, and I didn't think he'd do anything like that."

"Yes, he gave both you and your pal away," said Vincent. "He's strictly on the square, that old man is. By the way, I don't suppose you'd mind telling us where we can find that fellow, Cactus Jimmy, would you?"

"And I don't mind telling you to go plumb to blazes," Black Mike retorted shortly. "If you want Cactus Jimmy you go out and find him."

"Same old Black Mike!" Driscoll laughed. "All right, old man. No harm done, of course. But we'll find Cactus Jimmy before many days."

The dusk had lingered for only a little while, but its swift melting into night was barely perceptible, with the light of the full moon falling bright on the sands.

Black Mike's flagging spirits began to revive with the prospect of reaching Yuma ahead of his calculations. He hid his depressing gloom under an outward show of cheerfulness, and, after they had reached the car, a pleasant flow of talk attended the meal, which was spread out on paper placed on the ground. Before they had squatted down to the meal, everything had been removed from Black Mike's pockets and placed on the front seat of the car, his ankles had been shackled, and his hands shifted to the front of him.

When they had finished the meal and the two deputies had lit their cigarettes, Black Mike, hot with impatience to be on the way, urged them to make a quick start.

"We had an awful time getting here in broad daylight," said Vincent, "and I don't believe I'd ever be able to drive the car out at night, even with a full moon to help show me the way. We've got plenty of grub and water, and I guess your business can wait, Mike; so, if it's O. K. with Driscoll, we'll camp right here till morning."

"Just as you say," Driscoll returned indifferently. "We can take our turns watching our man, and, with the irons on him, he won't need much watching."

Black Mike promptly entered a protest. "If you'll let me drive, I can get out all right," he proposed.

"You? And where did you ever learn to drive a car?" Vincent questioned with a laugh. "Maybe you were the warden's chauffeur while you were in Florence—what?"

"I was an honor man for a while," Black Mike replied, "and was stationed in one of the highway camps. While there I drove a truck part of the time, and later I had one of the automobiles. Then some prominent citizens rose up in righteous indignation and made such a howl that I was withdrawn from the honor camp and chucked back into prison again."

"Maybe you can drive all right, but I don't think we'd care to trust you at the wheel, fellow," Vincent said. "You might take a notion to run us over a cliff or straight into a deep cañon. I guess we'd hardly want to trust you, Mike, and certainly I won't trust myself with the job of getting out of here at night. Since it's all right with Driscoll, we'll just camp right where we are until morning. We'll get you to Yuma in plenty of time to attend to that urgent business you have on your mind."

Black Mike was vexed. He had foreseen in his capture an opportunity to reach Yuma some time during the following day—more than likely before noon. He believed that that would be time enough to win in his race with Dunfield.

"It would be much safer for you to start immediately and get me behind the bars as quickly as possible," he urged. "Something might happen to make you sorry if you don't."

"Just what's your game, old-timer?"

"I have no game other than that I want to head off grave injustice," Black Mike replied caustically. "If you can get me to Yuma by to-morrow noon—or even by three o'clock—I may be able to obstruct a conspiracy to defraud a group of innocent people of certain valuable rights. Justice is my only motive in urging you to start at once."

"Getting awfully righteous all at once, are you, Mike?" Vincent's question carried the mere trace of a sneer. "Anyhow we'll take care of the justice end of it for the present, and the courts can continue where we leave off. I had a hard time getting in here by daylight, as I said, and I know I can't make it out by moonlight. I don't just savvy why you're so anxious to get us to make the trip at night; but, whatever your game is, it's not going to work. We'll make you as comfortable as possible, and we're going to camp right here till morning. That's settled."

"I'm sorry." Black Mike's voice was heavy with disappointment.

"Oh, you needn't be," Driscoll said with a friendly laugh. "We'll take good care of you and'll treat you right, Mike. You won't have any complaint to make."

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

A SUCCESSFUL HOMESTEADER

THE case of Miss Anna Johnson, of Fallon, Nevada, is a striking instance of how a woman no longer in the prime of life left her humdrum job in an Illinois town and went West to win health, happiness, and a solid independence. Eleven years ago Miss Johnson found herself in failing health and with a total capital of three hundred and fifty dollars. She was a church deaconess and a teacher of manual training and agriculture in a boys' school in Illinois when she came to realize she needed a life in the open. Quite by chance she came across an article in a magazine setting forth certain facts with regard to the sale of some land in Nevada.

Almost immediately she made her plans to go West, take up a homestead, and engage in the poultry business. Within two months she landed at the little town of Fallon, which then was a small settlement without any of the attractive "outsides" that go to make little villages a wonder and a delight to the eye. There were no sidewalks, no lawns, few trees, and fewer painted houses. Nothing daunted by the physical aspect of the place, she sensed that here was the beginning of what promised progress and independence. In a few days she selected a site for a homestead, entered her claim, and at once set about to build a cabin. With a borrowed horse and wagon she hauled lumber from Fallon and began to build a bridge across the big irrigation ditch which ran in front of the site on which she had decided to build. Her claim consisted of eighty acres, and in that first year she succeeded in getting five acres leveled and seeded in alfalfa. To-day, forty-five acres of her holding are under cultivation, and until recently she managed personally the problem of irrigation.

In the first year of readjustments she decided to raise a turkey crop and began her experiment with seventeen birds. As little scientific data was to be had on the subject, she decided to make her own observations. She now has a flock of four hundred and fifty birds, and a large fund of turkey knowledge which she has gained by actual experiments with the birds. In season and out of season, she has had to fight weasels, skunks, badgers, and coyotes. She can handle a gun like a man.

Thirty Miles of Thirst

By Edward T. Glynn

SPRAWLED in the scant shade provided by a little clump of mesquites the two men silently watched a third as he came trudging slowly across the shimmering sands of the far-reaching, soft-purring desert. Now and then he stopped, swayed uncertainly, and sank to the ground. But always he rose again and continued his advance.

At last he staggered to within a few yards of the watching pair in the shade of the mesquites; and there, exhausted to the final ounce, he flopped face down upon the blistering, sun-baked earth—and stayed.

Simultaneously the two men rose and moved his way. One, the older of the two, a tall, lean, hatchet-faced man, smiled tolerantly as his younger comrade dropped beside the fallen stranger and turned him over on his back.

With swift-moving hands he opened the stranger's shirt front and felt of his heart. After a moment he lifted his gaze into his partner's thin, half-sneering face.

"Joe, give him a drink," he said easily. "He ain't done yet."

The sneer on the other's lips at once gave way to a snarl of protest.

"The devil I will, Dave," he replied quickly. "You know what we got—water just for one. You know what we just had to do—you and me. You don't——"

The younger man ceased swabbing a handkerchief across the stranger's silt-caked, agonized face, and deftly jerked a pistol from his hip. He aimed its short, ugly muzzle full upon the other's chest.

There was a grim menace in his slow-spoken words.

"Give him a drink, Joe," he repeated, "and make it a good one, Sabe?"

For the space of a moment the older man stood hesitant, his malevolent glare held by the fascination of that levelled gun; then, muttering an oath, he dropped to his knees, unstrapped the canteen slung at his waist, and pressed it to the stranger's cracked, swollen lips.

With a little shudder the stranger presently struggled to a sitting posture and swept a hand across blinking, unseeing eyes. There was something all devout in the three words that escaped his twitching lips: "Thank—Heaven—water!"

Thereat the younger man signaled his partner to rise. He lowered his pistol, but not to its holster. He spoke slowly,

and with a meaning the other plainly caught.

"Joe, I guess that's all," he said quietly. "I guess you better go. There isn't going to be no hard feelings over this on my part," he added grimly, "but you can suit yourself. I just felt like it wasn't quite right to let this here stranger cash in without at least drawing down a white man's chance—that's all. Maybe you can't see it that way yourself, considering it was your water; but you can take it from me, Joe, that water wouldn't have done you no good, either, if you hadn't come across.

He waited a moment, as if to let his words sink home; then ended with abrupt finality "Well, Joe, I guess you better mosey. This here gent needs my attention and me, well I just want to hang up this gat."

A moment the two men stood silently returning each other's challenging gaze; then, without a word, the older man turned on his heel and shambled sullenly away into the desert's engulfing void.

Half an hour later, under the rough ministrations of his youthful savior, the stranger returned to full consciousness. With a little shudder that coursed his whole frame he sat for a spell, his weary, smarting eyes straining back into the maws of that terrible inferno from which he had just been snatched more dead than alive. Slowly he then gained his feet and sought the other's gaze.

"Son, I thank you," he said fervently; "I thank you." He let his eyes run thoughtfully over the younger man's face a moment or so; then gave way to a strange little smile. When he spoke again there was that in his tones which condoned the blunt directness of his query.

"Son, where's your partner gone? I saw him for just a second when I came to after the first drink of water. Is his name Dorgan?"

The other quickly swept the stranger's face, and after a moment he deigned reply.

"You knew him—Dorgan?" he asked slowly.

The stranger nodded; his smile tightened.

"I reckon I ought to, son," he returned reflectively. He spoke slowly and painfully, his tongue still thick and swollen after his long thirst. "I ain't seen him in five years, but I reckon I wouldn't forget him in a hundred. I just got a glimpse of him a while ago; but that glimpse was enough. It's all I've been thinking of since he gave me the water—only I knew right well he wouldn't be here if I ever woke up."

The stranger paused, as if to appreciate better the growing wonder in the other's face. When he resumed his smile had changed to one not good to see.

"Son, maybe it ain't none of my business," he said, "but ain't you and Dorgan just been out there and staked a claim?" He nodded back across the desert, indicating no particular direction. "And weren't you just coming in to file on it and get supplies," he went on without awaiting the other's answer, "when your canteen sprung a leak and you matched for the one that was left, and Dorgan won? Ain't it so, son—or am I wrong?"

Something in the stranger's tones allayed a sudden rush of resentment within the youth called Dave.

"Yes, it's so," the latter conceded after a moment. "You're right. Only I didn't——"

The other interrupted with a mirthless little laugh.

"Yuh—only you didn't know he'd tricked you—Dorgan," he broke in. "You didn't know he'd played you for a sucker in his dirty, low-down game. But I'll tell you, son; I'll tell you about him—Dorgan an' me." He paused briefly; then went on with obvious difficulty:

"It ain't the first time he's done it, son; the first time he's double crossed a pard like he's double crossed you. He did it to me and to others I know. Some of them never got in—leastways I ain't never heard of 'em since.

"It's the same old trick of his—the same old dirty crooked game. Always goes out with a pard and grubstakes around until he strikes what looks like a prospect; then its back to town for supplies and to file. And always the other fellow's canteen springs a leak and they have to match for the one that's left, and always Dorgan wins.

"Always he wins, son, and leaves the other fellow out here to shuffle for himself, an' maybe die like a dog of the thirst; and then back he goes and cleans up the claim for all there may be in it. Oh, cripes, but he did it to me, son; did it to me, and by Heaven I won't be happy till I see him pay me back, step by step, across the thirty miles o' torture I went myself."

As the stranger ended, the smile gone from his lips, and the light of a terrible vengeance blazing in his eyes, the younger man's wonderment gave way to a look of sudden, abhorrent comprehension. It was he who broke the momentary silence. When he spoke it was half aloud, half to himself.

"So that's Dorgan, eh?" he declared. "So that's the kind of a snake he was? Tricked me, eh? Tricked you—tricked 'em all? So that's how come my canteen leaked—he fixed it so himself? Oh, if I'd only known, only suspected what a skunk he was I'd of shot him dead like a snake."

He paused and let his gaze wander off across the desert in the direction his recent partner had gone. It was with a hopeless little shrug, however, that he presently spoke again.

"Well, pard, I'm sorry he's got away, the skunk," he said, "but it sure looks like he's tricked us this time for keeps. Without water——"

The stranger raised an intercepting hand.

"There's water over there, son, back o' that rise—about six miles away," he said. "I was heading for it myself when—when I went out."

The younger man dropped a sudden oath.

"Over there, eh?" he exclaimed. "Over there? Why that's the way Dorgan—" he broke off short and shook his fist in the air. "Oh, the lyin dirty crook," he said fiercely, "water over there an' he tried to steer me off in the other direction. Oh, if I ever——"

The stranger touched his arm.

"Son, maybe we might ketch up with him—with Dorgan—if we hurried," he said. "I reckon he won't be in no hurry himself, not unless he recognized me—and I don't think he did."

The other caught the grim smile on the stranger's lips and nodded his head.

"If you think you can make it, pard," he said holding the stranger's gaze, "let's go."

"Son," and the stranger's ironic smile came again, "I'd crawl this desert on my hands and knees if I thought I could only see that snake again. Sure, let's go."

It was under the pitiless rays of a noonday sun that, an hour later, the stranger and the youth called Dave climbed down the farther side of a low, barren range that loomed ghost-gray against the background of the desert and slipped behind an outjutting fringe of rocks.

There, less than fifty yards away, squatted in front of a water hole, drinking a long, deep draft, was Dorgan. A moment or two the pair back among the rocks surveyed their unsuspecting prey in gloating triumph; then, of a sudden, the younger of the two reached for his pistol and swept it to aim.

Before he could fire, however, the

stranger gripped his hand and forced the weapon down.

"No, son, not that way," he whispered imperatively. "Leave this play to me."

His own automatic in hand he stepped quickly forth and barked a command that rang out like a pistol shot on the desert stillness.

"You at the water hole—hands up!" he shouted. "Get 'em up quick an' keep 'em up high. I'm comin' for your gun."

With a startled cry Dorgan scrambled to his feet, hands obediently raised. He half turned as the stranger stalked quickly to his side and jerked a pistol from his hip.

A new look then swiftly overspread his face—a look of utter horror and dismay—and he staggered back as if from a blow. It seemed a full moment before he could gain speech; and then, wide-staring, terrified eyes glued upon the leering, gloating visage before him, he almost screamed: "You—Kelty!"

The stranger's leer changed to the semblance of a smile—a smile that seemed to strike new terror into the heart of the cringing, miserable Dorgan.

"Yes, Dorgan, it's me—Kelty," he came purringly, "I guess you didn't recognize me back there a ways, when my face and body was all twisted with thirst, eh? Back there where you gave me that drink—when this here kid made you come across at the point of his gat!"

He nodded at the youth now standing at his side, eyes glowering full into Dorgan's livid, twitching face. "Well, at that, I don't blame you much for not placing me, Dorgan," he presently pursued. "It's five years since you seen me last; five years, an' I reckon you've been thinkin' I was dead all the time. You sure had reason to think so anyhow; an' it ain't no thanks to you that I'm not."

Again he briefly paused and smiled malignantly into the wretched Dorgan's face. "But I ain't no ghost, Dorgan—no hauntin' memory you are apt to forget in no special hurry," he continued gloatingly. "Maybe it's these whiskers and that scar on my cheek what did it—what fooled you; I don't know, an' it doesn't matter. The thing of it is, Dorgan, I'm glad I'm living and I'm glad I've met you and—well I reckon you know why!"

As he paused again a horrified cry escaped Dorgan's lips and the cringing wretch threw himself in a piteous heap at Kelty's feet.

"Oh, Kelty—Jack—don't shoot me—don't kill me," he whimpered. "I've got five thousand dollars back in town. I'll——"

With a snarled oath Kelty stooped and picked up Dorgan's canteen.

"No, I'm not going to shoot you, Dorgan; leastways, not if I can help it;" he intercepted. "No, I'm not going to shoot you," he repeated grimly, "but, at that, I don't think you'll ever need this canteen of yours again—leastways not on this here expedition. Consequently, Dorgan, I think I'll just put a hole in it—like the same you put in mine."

With a little flip of the hand Kelty sent the canteen spinning into space, and perforated its center with a single shot. As the canteen plopped back to earth before Dorgan's horror-stricken eyes Kelty again addressed his hapless victim.

"Dorgan, get up and listen to me," he declared. "It's thirty-five miles from here to the end of the desert. Thirty-five miles, an' thirty of them, Dorgan, you're goin' to make without a drop o' water. That's what I did when you tricked me, Dorgan—and that's what you're going to do now to square accounts."

As he waited a moment, wetting his lips, Dorgan burst into another spasm of pitiful appeal. Kelty kicked him aside with a curse.

"Dorgan, I'd ought to plug you right where you are,' he said. "You don't deserve even this half a chance I'm giving you. But I'd hate to even kill a snake

without givin' it at least a fightin' show —even a snake like you. Thirty miles o' desert, Dorgan—an' then you get a drink. That's all I'm askin'—all I want; an' then it's up to the kid."

He paused again and unhooked the empty canteen slung at his side.

"Dorgan, I'm going to fill this canteen o' mine now," he said, "an' then we're off. It's up to you what you want to do —feed the buzzards here, or shag those thirty miles."

As Kelty knelt beside the water hole Dorgan swept his panic-stricken gaze toward his recent partner Dave.

"Dave, I didn't mean——" he began.

The other sneered.

"If you last those thirty miles of Kelty's," he cut in crushingly, "don't you ever come back into the desert again. Remember you are just paying up Kelty's score and not mine. I'll let mine ride—but I won't forget."

With a despairing sob Dorgan struggled to his feet and turned toward Kelty in a last pitiful appeal.

"Jack—Kelty—I've got ten thousand——" he began again.

Kelty vented an oath. His hand shot to his holster and he shoved the muzzle of his automatic hard against Dorgan's chest.

"You've got thirty miles to go—or one second to live," he declared ominously. "Now what'll it be? It's your move."

With a shudder Dorgan recoiled before the leveled gun and turned sobbingly away. Slowly he set off across the sands. His automatic still in hand, Kelty fell in behind, and then came the kid.

Thus step by step, mile after mile, the little column advanced throughout the long, hot afternoon; Dorgan in the lead, Kelty next, and the youth called Dave bringing up the rear.

Overhead in a coppery sky the sun beat down with merciless brilliancy; among the sands the heat devils danced and whirled in seeming mockery before the half-closed, smarting eyes of the hapless wretch in front. Nowhere a speck of shade; nowhere a sign of life Nothing but trackless vistas of burning wastes; nothing but endless leagues of blinding, scorching, ever-shifting sand..

Once a buzzard wheeled suggestively above a shelve of rocks and Dorgan, plodding wearily on ahead, halted in his tracks, clapped his hands over his eyes and cried hoarsely: "Oh—Heaven!"

Then he staggered on again as if inspired with a new-born determination to live—live—live.

In the cool of the desert evening Dorgan, his head reeling, his eyes aflame, awoke to find himself stretched out in the center of a little grassy oasis which he vaguely placed somewhere in his thoughts. He was alone. Sitting up he glanced slowly around until his gaze rested on a canteen within his easy reach. From beneath the water bag projected a sheet of soiled paper bearing a few scribbled words.

Raising the canteen to his lips Dorgan drank long and greedily. Then he set the canteen down and picked up the scribbled note. It read:

"You just about made it—the thirty miles. As maybe you know you are now only about five miles from the end of the desert. Soon's you are able you can make it in. This canteen was mine—Kelty's—but I'm leavin' it to you. After you once drank out of it I couldn't use it no more; not after a snake. Now just one thing else. Once you are out of this desert don't ever come back. Take that from the kid."

A thin sickly smile overspread Dorgan's face as he tore the missive up and threw the fragments away. Slowly he gained his feet and stood for a spell gazing back into the purpling haze of the desolate wastes. Then facing toward town he voiced a sudden-made resolve:

"Curse the desert anyway" he said. "I'm off of it for good."

Minus His Rattles

By Reginald C. Barker

Author of
"Pi..acate Peak and the Pink Cockatoo,"
"The Porcupine's Revenge," etc.

"PRETTY, ain't it?" inquired "Sagebrush" Collins as he watched a predatory blue wasp trying to drag away a caterpillar about twice its own size.

"Pretty!" exploded "Twisty" Grimes, whom the prospector called pardner. "I'd like to know what you see here that you call pretty."

Sagebrush Collins gazed across the vast expanse of jumbled, black lava beds that lie upon the north side of the Boise River, and seemed to consider. "Yeh," he said at length. "I call it pretty; makes a man think of what the world might be, but ain't. After a man has lived among the lava beds for a while, he's a whole lot more apt to appreciate the beauty of the valley." And he pointed in a southerly direction to where, below them, lay the Boise Valley, a vast, green panorama of tree-studded farms.

"It useter be like this, down there," continued Sagebrush Collins; "that is, until they dammed the river—nothing but sagebrush, buckbrush, and rattlesnakes for nigh two hundred miles, clear to the Owyhee Range, and then some. Took a *man* to cross the valley in them days; sometimes you found water, but most of the time you didn't. Now—well, life is easy down there in the valley; now it don't take a man to cross it no more—not since they dammed the river. No, Twisty, I'll take the lava beds for mine."

"But what are the lava beds for?" asked Twisty Grimes unbelievingly, for he was from San Francisco, somewhere south of Market Street.

Sagebrush Collins shook his head.

"Ain't no use trying to explain to you, Twisty," he said. "Guess the lava beds are just kind of reserves that nature made for things that the white man don't like. Take that green shrub growing over there; that's poison ivy. Get it on your face, and the chances are you'll be blind for a while. S'pose the valley was full of that stuff, Twisty?"

"What's the good of supposin' such things?" asked Twisty. "It don't get you anywhere."

"Yes, it does," contradicted the old prospector. "Seems to me that nature put that poison ivy here to show us how mighty onpleasant she could have made the world if she had been minded to. The same way with the rattlesnakes that are beneath lots of these chunks of lava. Nobody bothers 'em here; still they serve as a mighty good reminder that there ain't any around the towns—only human snakes."

"What do you mean by human

snakes?" asked Twisty, his eyes narrowed.

"Well," replied Sagebrush Collins, "the rattlesnake will never strike without warning a man. Leave him alone, keep out of his way, and he won't bother you. But there's lots of humans around the big cities—aye, and in the country, too—that will strike you down or do you dirt; but, onlike the rattlesnake, they never warn their victim. Such is what I calls human snakes."

"You oughter been a preacher, Collins," Twisty Grimes remarked with a sneer.

"Suppose a rattlesnake had no rattles," suggested the old prospector.

Why this simple remark should have stirred the ire of Twisty Grimes, can only be laid to a vagary of the warped brain that lay behind the low forehead of the partner, whom Sagebrush Collins had met for the first time but a month previously, warming a chair in a pool hall, down, out, and broke.

For a moment Twisty Grimes did not answer, but stared across the lava beds with narrowed eyes; then: "I'll blow the rattles off the first rattler that we meet!" he exclaimed venomously. "Then we'll see what happens."

"Suit yourself, pardner," said Sagebrush Collins, "but I wouldn't do that for a hundred dollars!"

"Thought you said these lava beds were full of rattlesnakes," said Twisty Grimes, as, sweating beneath their back packs, the partners wound their way up the trail that led beneath the overhanging shelves of liver-colored, honeycombed lava that walled the sulphurous waters of Hot Spring Creek, at the head of which lay the "Golden Dream"—Sagebrush Collins' claim.

"They are here, all right," asserted the old prospector, "but it ain't no good looking for 'em until you hear a warning——"

"Brrrrrr! Brrrrrrrrr! Brrrrrrrr!"

Stopping in his tracks, Sagebrush Collins stood quietly looking around, but his partner, who had never before heard the song of a disturbed rattlesnake, made as if to pass him.

"What's the matter, Collins?" he inquired sarcastically. "Getting tired?"

"Didn't you hear him?" was all the reply he got as the old man looked searchingly around without moving from his tracks.

"Hear what? The rustling of dry grass among the rocks?" asked Twisty.

"Rustling of death's bells!" exclaimed his partner angrily. "There's a rattler, and a big one, within six feet of us. Ah, there he is!" And Sagebrush Collins pointed to a block of lava at one side of the trail, upon which there seemed to be a splotch of something mottled in gray and brown.

Alarmed by the movement of the old man's hand, the great snake again erected his tail, and, as Twisty's eyes followed his partner's pointing fingers, he saw the rattles vibrate like the coil of a fine steel spring.

"Brrrrr! Brrrrrr! Brrrrrr!" And swaying above the coils was a wedge-shaped head with little protuberances like horns puffed out above fixed and lusterless eyes, also a darting tongue, viscid and black.

"There's your rattler," quietly said Sagebrush Collins. "I told you he'd warn us."

"How far can he strike?" was the question of Twisty Grimes as he took from his belt a Colt automatic pistol, caliber .45.

"Not much over his own length, if any," was the reply. "Better leave him alone. He ain't done nothing to us, and there's lots of room to pass."

But Twisty Grimes was slowly walking toward the serpent that never for a moment ceased his warning of death.

Bang!

'Losing your nerve?" inquired Sagebrush Collins, for Twisty had scored a clean miss, and the steady whirring

of the rattles never for an instant ceased.

Bang! With a convulsive shudder of its mottled body, the huge rattler slid off the rock and disappeared, but not before the two men saw that, where a moment before the beautiful mechanism of the rattles had whirred their warning, there was now but a crimson-stained stump.

"What is a rattlesnake without his rattles?" gibed Twisty Grimes as he replaced his gun in its holster.

"There's two kinds of snakes," was his partner's comment, "rattlesnakes and human snakes. And," he added beneath his breath, "of the two, give me the rattler."

II.

"Pretty much of a dog's life, this prospecting game, ain't it?" remarked Twisty Grimes one evening as the partners sat in the little cabin that Sagebrush Collins had built upon his claim at the head of Hot Spring Creek, on the west slope of Lucky Peak.

"Depends on what you call a dog's life," answered his partner. "I don't know that there is a much happier animal than a dog, take him by and large —'specially a sporting dog; and, after all, prospecting is a sporting game."

"So's poker," retorted Twisty. Then, reverting back to his original subject: "What I mean by a dog's life is this: In Frisco I've seen stray, gaunt-looking tykes, nosing in ash barrels and cans for scraps of bread or bones or anything that had been thrown away. They'd rather live that way than have a decent home and three squares a day—just like a prospector."

Sagebrush Collins smiled at the simile.

"In a way you are right, Twisty," he admitted, "but mostly you are wrong. It ain't that the dog would rather eat them scraps than to have his 'three squares' a day. Dogs is like men; there's some of 'em as like to think their boss is a god, and is content to follow him around and love him and worship him, and be petted when their god feels like it and kicked when he don't. Then there's other dogs—the kind you was speakin' of. They can see through the thin skin that covers the brute in every human, and they don't fool themselves for a minute by settin' up a man for a god—and gettin' chained up every night for their pains. No, siree, that kind of dog would rather take a chance of findin' a grubstake in a refuse can—and still be his own boss. Now prospectors is like that, Twisty. They are mostly men as won't be bossed, and, like the stray dog, once in a while a prospector strikes it rich——"

"And another feller with more brains comes along and takes it away from him," put in Twisty. "All same dog."

"And," continued Sagebrush Collins, ignoring his partner's remark, "when he does strike it, the gold is clean and free from taint. The prospector don't rob no widows and orphans nor take money from the poor. An' if he don't find nothing? Well, out among the mountains and deserts and lava beds, he gets time to think of things that never come into the heads of them that work for a boss."

"So does a poker player," and Twisty Grimes grinned as he produced a thumbed deck of cards from his pocket.

Twisty Grimes was not in the hills because he liked the life. It had happened that, while in the city, Sagebrush Collins had dropped into Larrigan's Pool Hall and fallen into conversation with Twisty, who had "hit him up for a feed." By the sunken chest of Twisty and the hectic spots in his cheeks, the old prospector had recognized the advance guard of T. B., and in the goodness of his heart had proposed to Twisty that he spend the summer with him upon his claim. If Sagebrush struck it rich, Twisty was to have daily wages.

In any case, he would stand a chance of having his lungs healed by the clean, pure mountain air.

At first Twisty Grimes was unable to do very much work, but, as his lungs healed and the plain, wholesome food began to mend a constitution run down by nights spent in the dives of a great city, Twisty began to feel like a new man, and to think that he owned the claim. All of which Sagebrush Collins appeared not to notice, as side by side the partner knelt in the face of the crosscut they were driving and, with three-and-one-half-pound single jacks, hammered away at the drills that were steadily eating toward the ledge that lay fifty feet ahead.

"Suppose we find gold when we strike the ledge, how are we going to get it to Boise City?" asked Twisty Grimes, for in his ignorance of mining he expected that the ledge itself would be a solid mass of gold.

"It'll be easy enough to get the capital to build a trail or even a wagon road across the lava beds, if we have the stuff to show," explained his partner.

"Capital! Why do we need capital?" asked Twisty. "Why not take a couple of bucketfuls of gold down to the bank ourselves?"

"Buckets of blue mud!" exclaimed his partner in astonishment. "You don't think the whole works will be solid gold, do you, Twisty?"

"Well, why are we tunneling into the mountain?" asked Twisty.

The old prospector grinned.

"For the same reason that dog you was speakin' of, digs into a refuse can," he replied. "The dog has to move a whole lot of waste, and, when he does strike his grub he don't know how much of it there'll be, but he's got an idee there'll be some, or he wouldn't be diggin'!

"Sometimes, of course, a feller strikes a pocket of the pure stuff, but not very often. Mostly the gold is in the quartz in such fine specks that it can't be seen; but, even at that, the rock may be all-fired rich and only need crushing in an ore mill to make a man rich for life."

"Then I hope we find a 'pocket,' as you call it," was the wish of Twisty Grimes.

The old prospector looked at his partner in silence for a moment, then he said quietly: "It wouldn't take a very rich pocket to pay your wages, Twisty," which was Sagebrush Collins' way of letting Twisty know that he didn't own the claim.

"Wages!" For days the word rankled in the mind of Twisty Grimes as he hammered upon the head of his drill.

"Wages!" With every mouthful he took at the little cabin, the word stuck in his craw.

So Sagebrush Collins thought he was the boss, did he? And he—Twisty—was the dog that worshiped Sagebrush as a god. Well, Twisty only hoped that they would strike a pocket of gold, and he'd see about that.

"Guess I'll have to go down to Boise and get another twenty-five-pound box of powder," said the old prospector one evening. "There ain't more'n enough left for another round of holes; and, while I'm gone, Twisty, you can be a-hammering."

"Why not both of us go?" asked Twisty Grimes. "I'm getting pretty well fed up with these hills, anyhow. We ain't going to make anything, and I might just as well get back to the city."

"Better stay with it a couple of days longer, Twisty," was the reply. "I kinder hate to leave the claim alone just now. You see, we are getting pretty close to the ledge, and one of us oughter stay. I won't be away over a couple of days, and when I get back, then if you feel you can't stand it any longer, all right."

Getting close to the ledge already,

were they? This was something Twisty Grimes hadn't counted upon. He pretended to consider.

"All right, then, Collins," he said. "I'll stay until you get back. Only, for the love of Mike, don't be any longer than you can help."

III.

In mud-stained overalls, Twisty Grimes leaned upon a tamping stick at the portal of the tunnel in which the old prospector and himself had worked for so many weeks. He leaned and looked toward the West where, although he could not see it, forty miles away, Boise City lay bathed in the glow of the setting sun. But Twisty's thoughts were not in the city just then, nor were they with the old prospector who had befriended him in his hour of need.

The sun sank, and slowly a purple haze shaded the valley below and crept like a veil up the brown foothills, lingered for a moment over the black expanse of the lava beds, then, fleeing before the advance of night, reached and shrouded in the gloom the spot where Twisty stood.

Only the steady drone of unseen insects broke the silence of evening as Twisty reëntered the tunnel. Not for long did he stay within; but, when he returned to the outer air, he no longer carried the tamping stick. Instead, he held in his hand a miner's candlestick and an open pocketknife, the blade of which was soiled with tar, as though it had been used for splitting fuse.

Boom! A muffled report sounded from the tunnel. Again came the sound, *Boom!* The ground vibrated beneath Twisty's feet as, back in the hill, the dynamite did its work.

"One, two, three, four, five!" counted Twisty. "And that's that. Now we'll see what we'll see."

Hardly waiting long enough for the powder smoke to have cleared the mouth of the tunnel, Twisty, candle in hand, entered, bending low to avoid the acrid fumes that hung close to the roof. Reaching the scene of the explosion, he stopped and took a pick from a fissure in the rock walls.

Thanks to the instruction he had received from the old prospector, Twisty Grimes had placed his holes so well that the explosion had filled the tunnel for a distance of four feet with a mass of shattered rock. Eagerly, Twisty bent over the débris, flashing his candle to right and left. Then he gave a cry, for across the new face of the tunnel lay a six-inch band of white quartz that was streaked and ribboned with yellow metal. Even Twisty, in his ignorance, knew it to be virgin gold.

All that night Twisty Grimes worked. By the time morning dawned over Lucky Peak, there remained no sign of the gold-flecked vein of quartz, for it had only been a rich pocket pinched off at both ends by barren walls of granite.

In the gray of the dawn, Twisty Grimes looked at the place in the tunnel where he had buried most of the rich quartz. "And now we'll see how it feels to be boss," he remarked to himself as he carefully removed the last traces of his work from above the buried ore.

"The chances are," he mused, "that the old man will give up the claim now, and then I can come back and—— Just the same, I'll be going away now while the going is still good," and with that he picked up a sack containing the richest of the rock and with it returned to the cabin.

Twisty Grimes had been sure that he would have no difficulty in finding the trail to the lava beds that lay between Lucky Peak and the Boise River, but he did not know that, while it is easy for a tenderfoot to follow a trail uphill, it becomes another matter when a

trail leads downhill, and every gulch, ridge, and ravine looks exactly like the rest. So it came to pass that Twisty lost a great deal of time wandering off the right trail, and it took him five hours to reach the upper end of the lava beds only ten miles from camp.

Unknown to him, at the same time Sagebrush Collins entered the lava beds from the lower end. With Twisty on the trail part of the time and off the trail most of the time, it was noon, a blazing noon, when from the top of a block of lava he caught sight of a figure which he guessed to be that of his partner picking his way among the glassy formations.

For a moment the panic of guilt seized Twisty Grimes, for he knew that if Sagebrush Collins saw him he would have to explain his presence upon the glassy trail. There was but one thing to do; he must hide the gold-bearing rock he had stolen before Sagebrush Collins arrived.

Twisty looked around, and suddenly he seemed to recognize the place. Ah, he had it now! The lava slab upon which he was standing was the same one upon which had lain the rattlesnake whose rattles he had shot off.

As he thought of it, Twisty grinned. Then, climbing down, he took from his back the sack of ore and shoved it into a blowout beneath the lava slab. "That's that," he said. "Collins will never know now that I struck it rich. I'll just tell him I got tired of waiting," and, with one hand upon the rock, Twisty straightened up. He had heard no sound to warn him of danger, no hint that death was lying in wait. But, as he straightened up, he saw upon the top of the rock where lay his hand, a huge, mottled rattlesnake, coiled and ready to strike.

Twisty knew that he dare not move his hand for fear of irritating the great snake whose head was not two feet distant from his face as he stared over the rim of the rock. He knew that death was but a few seconds distant, for he could not let go of the rock in time to avoid the strike of the snake. He knew, too, that the slightest movement of his hand would be sufficient to invite the death that lay behind those curved fangs. Yet it was impossible to stand the strain much longer, for Twisty knew that, involuntarily, the muscles of his hand would twitch.

Seconds that seemed hours dragged themselves along while the lusterless, fixed eyes of the snake stared into the distended ones of the man. Still the snake did not strike, and Twisty saw the knuckles of his hand showing white through the tightened skin. Then suddenly he had a premonitory warning that the muscles of his hand were about to twitch. He thought he could feel the creeping of his nerves from his shoulder to his wrist! Probably it was his imagination, but surely he could feel a ripple of nerves crawling down his arm. Closer and closer to the wrist came the nerve ripple, then suddenly his hand moved.

Bang! Headless, the body of the great rattler writhed off the upper side of the rock and fell upon the trail, where Sagebrush Collins stood with drawn gun.

Suddenly released from high tension, the nerves of Twisty Grimes gave way, his hand slipped off the rock, and he fell backward in a dead faint.

"Yeh, I struck a pocket while you were away, and I cached some of it in the tunnel and brought that out with me," was the manner in which Twisty Grimes explained the presence of the sack of ore he pulled from beneath the rock. Then quickly he changed the subject. "I thought you said a rattlesnake always warned a man," he accused.

"I never heard of one that didn't," was the old man's reply. "It's only human snakes that don't."

"Well, that rattler didn't warn me," asserted Twisty Grimes, ignoring his partner's insinuation.

Sagebrush Collins looked at the convulsively writhing body of the great snake.

"That's your own fault, though," he said.

"How do you make that out?" asked Twisty.

With his foot, Sagebrush Collins straightened out the body of the big rattler, and Twisty saw that it ended in a half-healed, tailless stump.

For a moment Twisty's face was a study of conflicting emotions as he realized that only the accuracy of his partner's aim had saved him from a horrible death; then, slowly, the good that dwells somewhere in the heart of every man came to the surface. "I guess," he acknowledged, "that you were right, Collins, about there being two kinds of snakes. There," and Twisty pointed to the body of the rattler, "lies one, and I," he said slowly, "am the other and the worst of the two, for in that sack is the richest of the ore. I figured on getting away with the whole works. But —well, it wouldn't have done me much good if you hadn't happened along when you did," and, with downcast eyes and pale face, Twisty Grimes awaited his sentence.

Slowly Sagebrush Collins untied the sack and emptied its contents upon the ground, and with a word he examined one of the richest chunks of yellow-flecked ore.

"You are right, Twisty!" he said at length. "It wouldn't have done you much good, for your 'rich strike' is nothing but yellow iron pyrites, known in the West as fools' gold!"

LARGE DEPOSIT OF MAGNESITE FOUND IN NEVADA

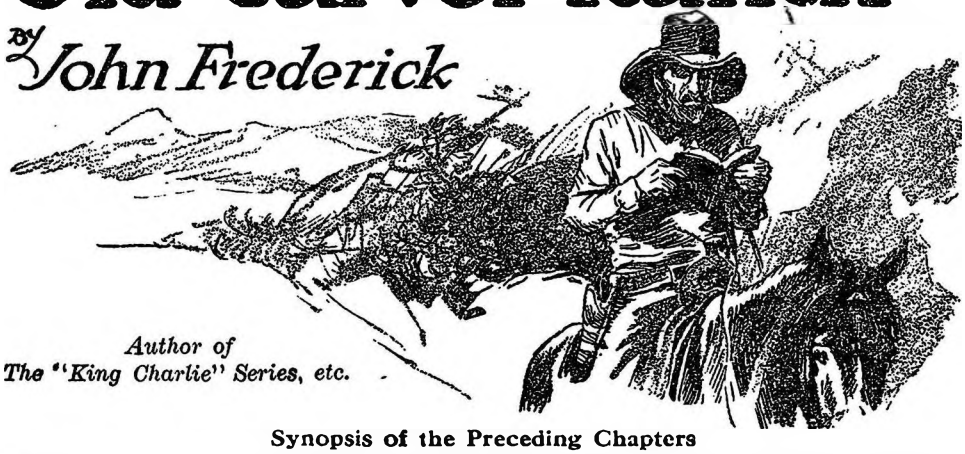
A MASSIVE deposit of magnesite, which promises to yield a ready and available supply of this material, has recently been brought to the attention of the United States geological survey. The deposit lies in Clark County, Nevada, in the valley of Muddy River, one of the tributaries of Virginia River, a few miles above the town of St. Thomas. The material has been known for some time as kaolin, and successful experiments for utilizing it as a porcelain clay are reported to have been made, though they have not yet resulted in the exploitation of the deposit. The recognized outcrops have been located as mining claims, and some preliminary exploration and development work has been done.

The so-called kaolin is a magnesite, so the geological survey states, and it was deposited in a highly magnesian sedimentary bed, a part of a regularly stratified series of sedimentary beds exposed by stream channels that cut across a low ridge at the upper edge of Muddy Valley. The deposit forms a chalky-looking bluff, dazzlingly white in the bright sunlight. The material is porcelain white, fine-grained, and massive. It is remarkably free from foreign material and has the structureless appearance characteristic of magnesite.

This deposit is included between beds of sandstone below and shale above. The lower contact is sharply defined, but the magnesite grades up into the overlying beds. The purer part of the deposit consists of beds aggregating at least two hundred feet in thickness. The whole section lies in the form of a "hog-back." Unlike most other deposits of magnesite, in California and elsewhere in this country, this is not a vein deposit, but closely resembles the deposits discovered in 1911 at Bissell Siding, near Mojave, California, both being interbedded with sandstone and shale. The new deposit at Muddy River, however, appears to be both larger and more regular than the Bissell Siding deposit.

Old Carver Ranch

By John Frederick



Author of
The "King Charlie" Series, etc.

Synopsis of the Preceding Chapters

AFTER ten years of wandering, during which Tom Keene has been a professional gambler, he returns home, to find his father about to die. Old John Keene's legacy is a Bible. With his father's passing, Tom renounces his worthless life and sets out to teach his fellow men that greatest happiness is born of greatest trust in one another.

After preaching this doctrine for months, Tom has an opportunity to put it into practice. He meets John Carver, "The White Mask," when that notorious desperado is wounded and being pursued by a posse. Tom puts himself in the outlaw's place so that Carver will have a chance to get his wife and little daughter, Mary, out of the country. Tom is caught. Carver has agreed to exonerate Tom by sending a signed confession to the authorities after his departure. But Carver stays on, and Tom is forced to bear the full burden of The White Mask's crimes.

Tom is released from prison after eight years of servitude; his innocence is still not established. His sole purpose now is to be avenged on those who took advantage of him. He finds a gold mine, and uses his money to buy old Carver Ranch. He allows the Carvers to stay on and manage the ranch and keep house for him. Tom lays a trap for Carver. It succeeds, and, as a result, Tom can expose Carver as a highwayman at any time he pleases.

Jerry Swain, a wealthy ranch owner, is ambitious for his son to marry Mary Carver. He gives Jerry, junior, ten days in which to get her promise to be his wife. Jerry, who is a coward to the core, enlists the aid of Mary's mother by promising to buy off Tom Keene. When Mrs. Carver has a talk with Mary, the girl consents to the marriage. She will resign herself to a loveless match to save her parents from disgrace.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

KEENE HANDLES A COWARD.

ASTONISHED, Tom Keene drew rein, and Major came to a jog trot. It was the sound of a man's voice singing in the cottage near the big ranch house that had startled him. It could not be, he told himself, that John Carver was actually singing on this day of all days. But, listening for a moment, full recognition of the voice came to him.

With an oath, anger and bewilderment alive within him, he sent Major on at full speed again. Crossing in front of the cottage, he struck the butt of his quirt heavily against one of the pillars of the little porch.

"Carver!" he called.

The singing ceased. Presently, steps hurried to the door, which was opened by Carver himself, a rather dim figure in the gathering hour of the dusk.

"You're feeling better to-day, Carver, eh?" asked Tom.

"I was singing an old song my wife used to like," muttered Carver in answer.

Tom swung to the ground and tossed the reins to the other.

"Take Major and put him up. Maybe you'll feel like singing to him. What the devil has happened to you? Have you found or inherited a fortune?"

"Is there anything wrong in sing-

ing?" asked Carver, half sullenly and half in fear. As he spoke, he gingerly fixed his grip on the reins and regarded the great stallion in dread.

Tom Keene watched him for a moment, then turned and strode for the house. He rounded the corner in time to see the kitchen door open and Jerry Swain, Jr., come out of the door and down the steps from the rear veranda to the ground, whistling and swinging the riding crop which he affected instead of the usual quirt used in that cow country. Tom regarded him with a start of surprise and detestation. From the day of his first encounter with the fellow over eight years before until now, he had heard no good of him. The narrow, handsome face and the small eyes, set close together and giving a foxlike look to his countenance, were indelibly connected, in Tom's recollection, with the holdup after his first winning in the gambling house of Will Jackson at Porterville. As he hailed him now, he thought of the mingled knavery and cowardice which Swain had shown on that occasion.

At the sound of his voice, Swain whirled sharply on his heel and even jerked back his right hand in a gesture which unmistakably showed that he was carrying a concealed weapon on his hip. Plainly, he was not expected back until dark. In fact, he had announced when he left at noon that he would be late on the road and had left orders for a dinner served accordingly. That was the reason he had overheard Carver's song; that was the reason he now saw Swain leave the house.

The smaller man waited uneasily, not at all sure of the reception which he would receive. But Tom put him instantly at ease with a cordial handshake.

"The first time we met," he said, "we were taking opposite sides of a question. I hope we'll get on better now."

Jerry Swain hoped that they would. He wished that everything might prosper with "Mr. Kenyon." In the meantime, he would be late home unless he hurried.

"But why hurry?" asked Tom. "Dinner will be ready here in half an hour. And I see that you've been with Mary, peeking at her dishes, no doubt, before they were cooked. But if you've seen them already in the oven, wait to see them again on the table."

Jerry Swain hesitated, glaring anxiously at his formidable host as though he wanted to escape, but also as though he felt that he must curry the favor of the big man.

"The only place I could see Mary was in the kitchen," he declared, "she was so busy there. As for staying——"

The suspicions of Tom were instantly sharpened.

"Tush," said he, "you must stay. I have grown lonely here for an entire month. Come in. Besides, I have some old whisky left over in a corner of the cellar from a better day."

His joviality had already produced a mellowing effect. But the mention of the liquor was a conclusive point. And up the steps they went, chatting like the best of friends. In five minutes they were safely established with glasses and a black bottle; and at the second drink Jerry Swain's tongue was loosened, exactly as Tom had known it would be.

The air of constraint vanished, and they sat in an atmosphere of good fellowship. It was agreed that Jerry was to stay for dinner. The moment that agreement was reached, Tom called for Mary, and she came in to them.

"Another place for to-night at the table," he requested. "Mr. Swain is staying."

Mary turned with a wan, joyless smile toward Jerry Swain. And after that acknowledgment of his coming, she looked back to Tom with lackluster eyes. The big man studied her keenly. He had seen her in the bitterest trouble for

the past month, and yet he had never seen an expression of such suffering in her face. He could not avoid connecting her sadness with the coming of Swain.

When she was gone, he turned the talk, however, on other subjects, and in the meantime he began to ply Jerry with liquor. It was not raw-edged moonshine, but old stuff as smooth as oil and of a deceptive strength. Jerry was decidedly mellow before they sat down at the table, and throughout the meal Tom plied him with well-regulated care. He was drinking himself, and an equal amount, but his mind was working ceaselessly, and the alcohol had no apparent effect.

In the meantime, it was necessary that he draw out the truth about Jerry Swain's visit to Mary Carver. He waited until the soup which began the meal was gone, and until the slender white hands of Mary had brought the meat. The edge of Jerry's appetite was gone by that time, and he was ready for words. Tom opened the subject deftly.

"A good cook," he declared, "is like a good artist; she's born, not made. There's Mary Carver, now, for an example. So far as I can make out, she was raised to be the lady of the family, but, when the pinch came, see what she's done!"

It needed no more than that to tap the floodgates of Jerry Swain's emotions.

"Cook?" he exclaimed. "Mr. Kenyon, when you speak of her, you speak of my future wife!"

And the last words fell upon the ears of Mary as she entered from the kitchen bearing another dish. Such was the alcoholic enthusiasm of Jerry Swain that he would have started up from the table with a fervent address had not the gloomy look of Tom Keene held him a little in check. When she had passed out again, he resumed his eloquent praise of her.

She possessed, he declared, every virtue. Her loveliness was beyond compare. And upon this subject he quoted a man whom he vowed to be always infernally right, namely, his own father.

"But," interrupted Tom, "I fail to see, Mr. Swain, how you are entitled to such a wife as she."

"Entitled to her?" said Swain, almost sobbing with self-denunciatory enthusiasm. "Why, I'm not entitled to a single smile from her. I'm not worthy of looking at her. But luck is behind me—luck and the old man. And the old man always has his way. The devil and the deep sea combined couldn't beat him. He's a known man, is old Jerry Swain. A dozen of the hardest have tried to down him one time and another, but he's always come back to the top like a cork, and they're the ones who have gone down in the end! Well, sir, it's he who wants me to marry Mary Carver now; and, because he wants it, it has to happen. He's succeeded in everything else he's ever undertaken, and now he says that the rest of his life will be failure unless he gets me married to please himself. You understand?"

Only too well the big man understood. His prey was about to slip through his fingers. The marriage of Mary would withdraw her, and at the same time it would put in her hands an enormous weapon to use for the benefit of her parents. Money, Tom knew only too distinctly, was a power which could evade danger of a thousand sorts. His own fortune had taught him that. But what was his own fortune compared to the great wealth of Jerry Swain? It was a mere nothing. To make sure of John Carver's destruction, he must make sure that this marriage did not take place. He went steadily ahead in his brutal campaign.

"I say again," he said, "that she's very much too good for you, Swain."

The fact that he was being insulted gradually filtered to the inner intelligence of young Jerry. In an instant he was in an ugly, half-drunken rage. But the cold voice of Tom went on: "Swain, if you were simply a gambler and an idler, you might do. But not as a highway robber! That, certainly, will never do!"

All the fumes of alcohol were suddenly swept from the brain of the other as a broom sweeps cobwebs clear. He peered at Tom with a working face of dread. He attempted to speak. And yet he could not continue. Even though the identity of Tom had been revealed to him by Mrs. Carver, he had hoped against hope that his own indiscretion of eight years before could not be used against him. Now he saw those hopes shaken and on the verge of disappearing.

"Highway robber?" he echoed.

But here the face of Tom smoothed suddenly as the door from the kitchen opened and Mary Carver entered. He turned the talk away. And Swain, realizing that he must not show his horror to the girl, managed to force a laugh. So she disappeared again, and Tom leaned forward once more. Jerry Swain was a thoroughly sobered man by this time. He realized that he had talked too much.

"Keene," he said, "what do you want?"

"Ah," sighed Tom, "that was what I hoped for. I simply wanted you to admit, in the first place, that you know me. In the second place, Jerry, I want you to remember that the club that I hold over John Carver—oh, I know well enough that they've told you—is the club that I hold over you!"

"Good Lord!" cried Jerry Swain. "You'll try blackmail?"

"I'll try anything."

"But it's eight years ago that I—— Keene, no court in the world would believe that you'd keep silent for eight years about such a thing."

And Tom Keene knew that he was perfectly right. It was only by the power of physical fear and, more than that, sheer bluff, that he could control Jerry Swain.

"You're a fool," he said calmly. "I've waited because I had no way in which I could use you, Swain. But things have changed. I can now use you very neatly, and I intend to. You shall not marry the Carver girl, my friend. You hear me? You shall not marry her!"

Jerry Swain sat gaping at him, his left hand resting on the edge of the table and twitching violently. If ever there were murder in the eyes of a man, Tom was seeing it now in the eyes of Jerry Swain. But he saw a greater thing, a controlling fear, also.

"In affairs like that," said Swain, "one man can't control another. You ought to know that, Keene. You can't stop me from marrying Mary Carver! Even if I were to go to prison the next day——"

"You would," said Tom slowly and heavily. "You certainly would."

"Why in the name of Heaven——" began Jerry. But his host interrupted him.

"Why I'm going to do it," he said, "is something you can guess when you have a chance to think. But the important thing for you to know, Swain, is that I'm a man who is determined to have his own way in the matter. You can't put me aside or alter me. My mind is made up and is as fixed as stone. I'm going to crush the Carvers, root and branch. I'm going to smash them, Swain. And here you are going to help me. Sit down!"

This last was called forth by the hasty rising of Jerry from his chair as though he would seek refuge in flight —anything to avoid facing the deadly eyes and the low, muttering voice of Tom. But he slumped back at once and

sat half cowering in terror, half crouched in rage, and Tom guessed, and guessed correctly, that if his own head turned for the slightest part of a second the slender hand of Jerry Swain would fly for the revolver on his hip. For what could be easier than to avoid any ill consequences from the shooting of an ex-criminal such as he? No court would convict him!

But not for a moment did his glance waver from the evil and contorted features of the rich rancher's son.

"Look me in the eye, Swain," he ordered. "I've gone through eight years of a pretty steady torment. Do you think I'll let you stand between me and the Carvers now? No, no, man! Think again! I'll break that expensive back of yours first. You hear?"

Jerry gasped and winced back. It was impossible for him to think of gun play now. His hands were trembling far too much.

"When she comes in next, Swain," went on Tom, "I'll tell you what you're going to do. You're going to say to her: 'Mary, I've been talking to Mr. Kenyon, and I've changed my mind. I can't marry a cook!' "

"Say that to her? I'd rather have my tongue torn out!"

"That's what you think now. But you'll think otherwise in a moment. If you don't, at the least I'll turn in what I know about you to the sheriff to-morrow. That's the least, and that least means arrest and jail for you."

"It means exposure of you as a jailbird, also."

"What is exposure to me, Swain? It's nothing. I only assumed a different name so that I could get the Carvers into my power. Now the name means nothing to me. But to you, Jerry? What would your father say if that arrest should take place?"

Jerry Swain started in his chair, and his eyes became as bright as the eyes of a cornered rat.

"Keene," he said, "you devil—you fiend!"

"But more than that," said Tom. "If you should fail to say to her what I've told you to say, you would have an immediate reckoning with me, Swain. And that might be worse than facing your father, even."

Jerry Swain stared at him with eyes so eager that they would have pierced to the meaning behind a mask; but Tom Keene, trained in the deception of prison guards, trained by living a lie for five years, a lie from which he never deviated a step, presented an unreadable face to him.

And, before Swain could speak again, Tom poured a brimming glass of whisky and pushed it toward his guest.

"Drink!" he commanded.

Automatically the other obeyed. The whisky disappeared. And, as though at a signal—as though this were her cue to come out upon the stage—Mary entered from the kitchen. The lifting of Tom's forefinger furnished the signal; and then, as though infuriated by the predicament in which he found himself, Jerry Swain grew spotted white and red with rage. It gave a wonderful reality to his tone and to his words.

"I've been talking things over with my friend, Mr. Kenyon," he said, "and I've made up my mind, Mary, that I can't marry a cook. I suppose you'll understand!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MARY IS BAFFLING.

IN justice even to Jerry Swain it must be said that he had no sooner spoken than the full horror of what he had done rushed upon him. He scowled down at the table, then reached hastily for the bottle and filled himself a glass of whisky unbidden.

In the meantime, Tom Keene glanced with grim satisfaction at Mary Carver. She had halted in the middle of the

floor, but, as the meaning of the words of Jerry Swain reached her, it seemed to Tom that her first reaction was one of astonishment, then joy. Only after this did she feel shame.

When she had gone out again, Jerry Swain pried himself up from the table, resting heavily upon his hands. The whisky had all at once taken possession of him. His face was bestial.

"This isn't the end," he declared. "You and I will cast up the account later on. My father—he'll take a hand —and then——"

He could no longer speak, but, turning away, he stumbled for the door. And Tom, following lest the other should turn around as soon as he was in concealment and attempt a shot from behind, saw his victim stagger down the steps, drag himself up the side of his horse, and slump heavily forward in his saddle. No sooner had the dark of the night closed behind his form than Tom turned back to the table and rang the bell for Mary Carver.

She came at once and stood just inside the door. Plainly she had spent the interval in thinking hard upon the probable consequences of what Jerry Swain had just done, for now she was whiter than ever, and that wretched, haunted look was in her eyes. Tom motioned her forward, and she came a little closer before she halted, always with her eyes fastened upon him in dread.

He observed this without concern. That he was being brutal in the most vicious sense of the term, did not at all disturb him. What was of importance in his estimation was simply that he had succeeded in reducing her to the proper state of subjection, and that he could now use her as a tool at his will. Also, he had turned the first great counterattack of the enemy with the most consummate skill, he felt. He had made Jerry Swain destroy himself.

"I'm sorry," he said to her, "but a man can't prevent his guests from making beasts of themselves. I'm sorry that Swain hurt you. You can be sure that he'll never have the opportunity to do so again."

She did not answer. She merely watched him. And that quiet watching seemed to Tom more eloquent than words. He would see that terrified and horrified glance again, he was sure; he would see it in his unhappy dreams. And yet there was an unfathomable patience about her. It was as though she had some resource of strength which was hidden away from the observation of the world, but which was nevertheless real.

"You can talk out to me," he said. "I know you want to talk. Then tell me what's going on inside your mind. Did you ever dream that there was a man in the world low enough to conceive such a thing—to jilt the woman he was engaged to at the table of another man? Tell me, Mary, did you dream that there were men of such caliber in the world?"

She still paused. Her glance went down to the floor, then flickered up to him.

"I might as well tell you now," she said. "When you sit on this side of the table—where you are now—the other side of the room acts as a sounding board. And it throws the sound of every voice clearly in the kitchen. I heard you tell him what to say."

That was all. She spoke without raising her voice. She spoke, apparently, without malignant hatred. Yet Tom felt as though he had been struck on either cheek with a light but stinging hand, so hot was his flush!

"I had a reason for it," he said gloomily, to justify himself. "I had to make him show you what a hound he is. Good Lord, Mary, you couldn't be married to a fellow like him! It would be absurd. There's more manhood in

five minutes of you than in five years of Jerry Swain. And that's why I made him break with you. But what will you do when he comes cringing and crawling to you and trying to make up?"

"I don't think he will," said the girl.

"You don't?"

"I do not."

It thrilled him strangely to hear her talk.

"Come," he said, "sit down here at the table and tell me what is going on in that strange mind of yours. Sometimes I feel that you're not thinking or feeling at all. But then, again, something like this happens and makes me know that you are thinking, thinking, thinking, all the time. Sit down!"

She moved hastily to obey him. But she paused before she sat down.

"It will be much better for me to stand here," she told him.

He did not insist.

"Tell me why you think he won't come back?"

"Because," she answered, "cowards are ashamed to show that they are cowards."

"Cowards are—— By Heaven, that's deep!" He leaned his heavy head upon his doubled fist. "You see he's a coward, well enough. But cowards are proud. Yes, that's true. They're proud. They dare not allow themselves to believe that the world knows what they are. So you're sure about it? He won't come back to you?"

"I think not."

"But if he did come back—a yellow-livered hound such as he's proven himself—what would you do then, Mary?"

"Go with him," she answered without the slightest hesitation. "I should follow him if he came to me."

"What! Follow him? You'd do that? Why, Mary, life with him would be torture for a proud, brave girl like you."

"There are others to think of," she said. "There are others to whom I owe a great deal."

"Your mother and father, eh? You would marry him. And then, through his father's money, they would be saved from me. Is that the way your thought runs?"

And she astonished him beyond measure by replying with the most perfect calm: "Yes!"

It actually brought him up out of his chair, and he went around the table with great strides until he stood before her and towering above her.

"What the devil do you mean by that, Mary? What do you think I am here for?"

She did not answer, but neither did she wince. She faced him steadily; her eyes held firmly upon his. He could not press that question home, and he reverted to another.

"You'd go with him—and yet you don't love him, Mary."

"No."

"I can't make you out. It's blasphemy for you to marry a man you don't love."

She did not answer. He felt that he could only drag words from her now and then. And he felt, also, the ceaseless movement of her brain, weighing him and judging him and seeing through and through him.

"The whole truth is," he guessed suddenly, "that you are already in love. Is that it?"

"Yes." Once more she shocked him with astonishment.

"You are? In the name of—how long have you been?"

"For several years."

"For several years? Something carried out of your girlhood, then? Some one of whom you have never told a soul?"

"I have never spoken of him—only to you."

"Not even to your mother?"

"No."

"Then why is it you tell me?"

"Because it is better that I should tell you everything I can."

"That will make it easier when things come up which you can't tell me?"

"Yes."

He fell back a half pace so that he could study her with greater care, but she baffled him still further. There was a thousand times more to her silence than he had been able to guess. His imagination began to reach at the truth about her in great strides, but still he fumbled vaguely and could not be sure. Only he felt that there was something unique in her, something which no other woman in the world possessed.

"In the old days," he said at length, "you would have been a martyr, I guess. You would have been one of those who died singing—at the stake! That's all!"

He dismissed her with a wave and went out under the stars. He could not have remained another moment in that room without pain.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JERRY GETS HOME.

IT was a sobered and trembling Jerry Swain that reached his home later that night. In the first place, he had never arrived at a point of drunkenness so complete that he did not realize what would happen if his father saw him in such condition. Not that the stern old rancher was a teetotaler, but he despised beyond measure those who could not put a limit upon their desires for food and drink.

So he had diverted his horse from the home road and gone on a roundabout way. Before he had ridden half an hour, he dismounted beside a trough and put his head under a faucet. This refreshed him, and, when he rode on, the water, evaporating from his head and face, cooled him wonderfully.

Only one grisly danger faced him, and that was that he had to encounter his father before he went to bed. It was an old rule and an inviolable one in the Swain household that, no matter how late he came home, he must say good night to his father. He could not shrink from it. Moreover, Jerry Swain, Sr., was quite apt to be up, for, as age and disease rapidly weakened him, and as he was in constant pain, he dreaded the loneliness and the long anguish of his bed and cut his portion of sleep shorter and shorter. And still to the very last he was clinging to the régime which, in the opinion of his preceptor, was to make him die a cultured man even if he did not live to enjoy that quality.

Therefore, he stole long and vitally needed hours from his sleep and gave them to his study. And here it was, in fact, that his son found him on this dreadful night. He strove to pass off the meeting casually.

He simply opened the door, depending upon the distance and the dimness of the lamplight to veil his face from his father, and upon the great effort which he made, to cover any inequalities in his voice.

"Well, sir," he said, "here I am back. Nothing important to report, though. Besides, I'm horribly fagged. I'll tell you about the trip in the morning, if you don't mind."

"Certainly, Jerry," said his father kindly. "Good night."

"Good night," breathed Jerry.

He closed the door, feeling that Heaven had interceded for him; but, even as he closed it, he heard the small, sharp voice calling: "Jerry! Oh, Jerry!"

It was the breathless quality of the tone in which he said "Good night" that caught the watchful ear of the other. He opened the door once more, grinding his teeth. Then he mustered himself for a strong effort.

"Well, sir?" he asked cheerily.

He found that his father, suspicious,

was sitting erect in the chair; but, at the sound of that cheerful, steady voice, he sank back again. But still he glared from beneath knitted brows at his son.

"Did you see Mary?" asked Jerry Swain, Sr.

"Yes. But in the morning——"

"Well——" began the father.

And then something caught his eye. It did not make him sit up, but he settled even deeper into his easy chair and with a gesture bade the younger man approach. Jerry, Jr., with a feeling that the greatest crisis in his life was upon him, went slowly, slowly across the room. And still he acted a part as well as he could. He covered a yawn.

"Tired out from riding all day and talking," he remarked through the yawn, and he dropped his hands upon the back of a chair and rested there, directly in front of his father but, in a cunningly chosen position, deeply buried in shadow.

The long, lean-fingered hand of Jerry Swain, Sr., went out and lifted the shade from the lamp. At once the son shrank from that blasting, betraying flood of radiance. He knew, as he bowed his head, that his father had seen the stains where the water had dripped across his coat and shirt, and that the cool eye of the old man had dwelt upon the tousled, uncombed hair. He was lost, utterly lost. And he waited for the blow to fall.

To his amazement, shadow rushed again over him as the shade was replaced on the lamp. He heard his father saying, almost gently: "Sit down, Jerry."

He slumped into a chair, more unnerved by surprise and anticipation than he would have been by the actual berating which he felt to be hanging over his head.

"Look at me!"

He dragged his glance up and forced it to reach to the face of his father.

"Jerry, you've been drunk."

"Drunk?"

"That's what I say. I say that you've been drunk again—you've made a beast of yourself again!"

The alcohol half paralyzed the brain of Jerry, not by its presence, but by the aftermath. He felt a sense of weakness running to his finger tips. He knew that he was beginning to shake. Unless he got away quickly, he would be utterly lost. But what could he say? What could he do?

"You found Mary?" asked his father, suddenly leaving the subject of the drinking incomplete, and bewildered Jerry the more by the shift.

"Yes, he breathed.

"And she said?"

"Yes." The word slipped from Jerry against his will. He would have given thousands to recall it, but it was spoken.

The effect upon his father was magic. He leaped out of his chair, rejuvenated. He ran to Jerry, caught both his hands, and wrung them.

"Heaven be praised, Jerry!" he cried. "This one good day's work outbalances all the bad ones that you've done before. No wonder you've celebrated—and if you've gone too far I can forgive you this once. It's human to err. Go up to bed, then, and sleep until you're fit to walk and talk again. Then we'll go over things in detail. I want to know each scruple of everything that happened."

He fairly lifted Jerry from the chair and urged him toward the door, but, just as they reached that door and apparent salvation for Jerry, there was another change on the part of the suspicious father.

"You seem all-fired calm about it," he declared. "What's wrong with you, Jerry? What's going on inside your head?" Suddenly he stopped and halted his son. "Jerry, have you lied?"

It seemed to Jerry that he would go

mad unless he escaped at once from that prying tongue.

"I haven't lied. She said she'd marry me. But then she changed her mind —I mean I told her——"

"By Heaven, I think you changed yours!"

He flung the taller and younger and stronger man from him.

"What sort of fool are you?" he panted out.

Jerry was fast falling into a state of collapse.

"It was Keene," he said, only desperately eager to shift the blame to the shoulders of another. "It was that devil, Tom Keene!"

"What? Tom Keene? The White Mask?" shouted his father. "What has that murderer to do with Mary Carver?"

"Not Keene—I mean Kenyon—I mean Keene is Kenyon——"

"Jerry, you've gone mad! Sit down yonder and straighten this tangle for me!"

"No, no! I can't stay here. I've got to be alone. In the morning——"

"The devil fly off with the morning. I may be dead before the morning dawns. What I want to know now is what you mean by Keene and Kenyon being the same?"

"'Simply because the names are somewhat the same, I mixed them——"

"You gave the first name, too, Tom Keene and—but Jerry, you've kept something from me. Out with it, now, for I'll have it sooner or later. And if I have to fight for it, it will go all the harder for you!"

The son writhed. He struggled to find some excuses, but there were no remaining loopholes for escape. He was being drawn deeper and deeper into the net.

"For Heaven's sake listen to me!" he exclaimed. "I only meant that——"

"You've lied!"

"I tell you, Keene was pardoned. I mean—— No—when he thought I could save the Carvers if I married Mary, he made me tell Mary——"

His father raised a hand and stepped back from him. Jerry slumped into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"I'm going crazy," he gasped out. "I —I don't know what I'm saying. In the——"

"But I do," said Jerry Swain, Sr. "I begin to get a glimpse of a very queer truth. Keene and Kenyon are the same—Timothy Kenyon—Tom Keene—not very dissimilar names, at that. I should have thought of it. Tom Keene is pardoned, picks up some money somewhere, and, altered by his eight years in prison—without that big black beard of his, for instance—he comes back under an assumed name to —to do what?"

"I——"

"Answer me!"

"Oh, Lord, if I tell you, they'll murder me!"

Jerry Swain stepped closer to the unnerved son. His own face was a singular study of disgust and scorn and agony as he viewed the cowardice of his son.

"Who are they?"

"Kenyon and Carver—I mean——"

"What has Carver against you?"

"Because he knows I know him. That's what he holds against me. He's tried to murder me already. He knows that I could send him to prison in a minute and——" He stopped and raised a horrified and bewildered face. "Good Heaven!" he whispered. "What have I said?"

His father drew up a chair opposite and sat down. He struck his clenched fist sharply into the palm of his other hand.

"You've said just enough to get me started. Now, Jerry, here you sit until you've made a clean breast of it. Begin talking!"

CHAPTER XL.

OLD SWAIN HAS A JOB.

IT was nearly midnight when the tap came at the library door of Jerry Swain, Sr. He deliberately laid aside the book he had been reading, put the place card in it, and then called: "Come in!"

The door swung open. John Carver stepped into the room, while the servant who had ushered him in reached for the doorknob and drew the door closed. In the bright light of that room, John Carver blinked, barely making out the features of the other. Neither was he put at ease by the greeting of the rancher.

"Sit down over here, Carver. No, in that chair yonder, where I can watch you. I like to watch a man's face when I'm talking business with him. I can't have too much light on a man's face for my purpose!"

John Carver took the designated chair. He sat down on the mere edge of it, his hat clasped between his hands, and his glance wandering here and there and only furtively reaching the face of his host. In quite another manner he had been used to face Swain in the old days when his own father yet lived and the fortunes of the two families were more or less equal. But now he was like a serf before a feudal lord—a guilty serf, far remiss in his dues. And indeed he felt that in the cramped, withered, dying body of Swain there was a more dangerous power than in all the brawn of his own body.

The very next speech of Swain was a bomb that shattered whatever remained of the composure of Carver.

"Carver, I've talked to Jerry, and he's told me everything!"

He went on, as the other flinched back in the chair: "He told me everything, or, rather, I dragged it out of him. It seems that he is a rascal. He's been keeping you poor. If this earth of ours were a place where the most perfect justice is done, I have no doubt that I should not express my willingness to reimburse you for every penny you were blackmailed out of by my son. But this earth is not such a place of justice, and I believe that when a fool is trimmed he deserves his trimming, as a rule. It makes the rest of us keep our wits about us."

Here John Carver seemed about to speak, but he could find no words. Only the cold voice of the rancher was browbeating him back toward his self-possession, and this seemed to be the result which Swain most desired. He nodded with satisfaction as the black scowl gathered on the face of his visitor.

Then he jumped to his point, leaning suddenly forward in his aggressive way and saying: "The point is, Carver, that you and I are suddenly in the same boat, and that there is one thing holding us both back. That is Tom Keene."

Carver leaped from his chair, but the raised hand of Swain literally pressed him back into it.

"Yes," he said, "I know everything. I know that you're The White Mask. I know that you sent Tom Keene to prison in your place. But be at ease. I'm not one of those who holds up his hands in horror on account of the sins of others. I have some tidy little sins of my own to ballast the ship with, you see. It is a little raw to send up the man to whom you owed the life of your daughter and who actually kept you from the bloodhounds. But I'm not the one to wail about such matters. Tom Keene played the part of a fool, and he has paid the fool's price—eight years in prison!"

He drew a long breath.

"Now to come back to you, Carver. You have to get back on your feet, and you can't as long as this Keene, like a devil, keeps you under his thumb. Therefore, your enmity to him is established on a strong enough basis. For

my part, I freely admit that the thing I want most is to see Jerry married to your girl. And, since I have found out the pitiful weakness of the rascal, I am keener for the marriage than ever. I have to have stronger blood to bolster up mine. My grandson must have some bone and fire of spirit, so that marriage must take place, but it can't take place on account of Tom Keene. He won't stand for it, according to Jerry, because he very rightly sees that it would mean that you and Mrs. Carver would be drawn under the protection of my power. This is perfectly clear."

"Are you trying to show me that Tom Keene is the man who is making my life a torment?" grumbled Carver, for the speech of his host had been long enough to permit him to recover some of his poise and self-assurance. "If I'd run into the cliff, would you think I wouldn't know what was stopping me from going ahead?"

"I wouldn't ask that. I'd simply ask if you knew how to get the cliff out of your way."

"Eh?"

"I mean this—since I see that you're the kind of man I can talk to—Tom Keene must die, John!"

"Good Lord!"

"What? The White Mask, and yet you turn up your eyes at that?"

"No matter what I've done in the past, I've never done that, Swain. If that's your way, it's no wonder you've got on in the world. But I've never shot at a man except to defend myself."

"You'll start now, then," said Swain. "You're going back now to the ranch, and you're going to find Tom Keene and kill him. You understand? You're going to simply brush him out of your way and mine!"

But John Carver rose slowly and stood with braced feet and doubled fists, glaring down at the rich man.

"Swain," he said, "I sure used to envy you. But I'm through with that. I see the kind of gent that you are, and it plumb sickens me. Like father, like son. That's sure true. Young Jerry ain't worth the powder it would take to blow him to kingdom come, and old Jerry ain't much better. He's climbed by driving other folks into the mud. Well, Swain, here's one dirty job that you'll have to do yourself if you really want it done. I'm going back, and, no matter what becomes of me, I tell you I'm a better man than you, Swain. Good-by!" And he turned and stamped out of the room.

Jerry Swain sat for a time with a stunned look. At length he swept a hand before his face as though brushing a cobweb from his brain. Never in his life had he so completely misjudged a man as he had misjudged John Carver.

There remained a task which must be accomplished. He got up from the chair again and began to walk back and forth in the room, his step halting, his feet trailing in the velvet softness of the carpet. As he walked, his thoughts formed with the greatest rapidity. He had scored a great failure; he must balance it with a great success.

Ten minutes later he had made up his mind firmly, and, having made it up, he started to act at once. First he went to his room, laboring slowly up the steps. Then he changed into his riding togs and slipped a revolver into his hip pocket. Next he went to a closet full of dusty, musty, unused clothes and extracted from a box a great sombrero. When he had knotted the big sombrero at his throat and jammed the hat over his eyes, he was suddenly changed. He went back ten or fifteen years at a step and seemed to be once more that restless Jerry Swain who had been still driving on his way toward a great success with a remorseless energy.

But when he started down the stairs from his room, the pain in which he

took each step warned him that he was far from his old self. Only the face remained the same, and would be the same to the last.

He went out in the darkness to the stables, but there he did not select for saddling one of those dainty-limbed, light-stepping thoroughbreds which he had brought in at a great cost to please his son. Instead, he put the saddle on a down-headed cow pony a full fifteen years old if she was a day, and then sent her shambling out into the night.

She was old, she was vicious, and she brought a series of muffled groans from her rider as she bucked to work the kinks out of her limbs. But at length she shook her head savagely, admitted the presence of the old master by pressing her ears flat along her neck, and struck into a lope which she could maintain, at will, for the rest of the night.

And the old master well-nigh demanded this feat of her, for he pressed on steadily through the night until in the dawn they were in a high tangle of mountains far from their starting point. Looking back as the rose-hue of the morning grew, he glanced down to the blue distance where his home must be. There they still slept while he schemed and fought for them. What would become of the house of Swain when he was gone?

Again the chill of shame and dread pierced him when he thought of his craven son. And he gave the spurs to his mare and forced her at a gallop up a sharp slope. At the top, the ground gave back in a rough shoulder thick with trees, and behind these trees was the dim outline of a log cabin screened by the grove almost as though by night. To this house he went, dismounted, and pushed open with his foot the unlatched door.

Glancing inside, he saw no less than five men asleep on rude bunks. On opposite sides of the room four of them slept in a double tier like the berths on a ship. But along the wall facing the door was a bunk of more luxurious dimensions. The intruder, with the faint dawn-light to help him, moved stealthily around and peered at every face and form.

The four were young giants of the mountains, thick-thewed, framed to give and receive the shocks of battle, with ragged beards already growing on their chins, and with their uncombed, seldom-cut hair tumbling over their eyes. They were close to the brute, indeed. Where their hands hung limp over the edge of a bunk, they were of appalling suggestiveness of power.

Jerry Swain noted all of these facts with the most consummate satisfaction before he went to the other end of the room, carefully avoiding a litter of traps and other gear of hunters. Like a shadow, he reached the fifth bunk and leaned over the sleeper, who was a man fit to be the sire of such a brood of sons. A heavy beard, black as ink—blue-black and shimmering faintly in the dull light—flowed over the great arch of his chest. His face, even in his sleep, was set in the lines of indomitable and sullen pride and ferocity.

When Swain dropped a hand on the muscular shoulder, the first impulse of the sleeper was to reach out and grapple silently with the stranger. His tremendous grip fell upon and well-nigh crushed the invalid, already suffering from the effects of the long and wearying ride. But a whisper came from the unresisting Swain.

"It's I—Jerry Swain!"

Instantly, he was released, and the trapper, fully clothed as he had lain down to sleep, started up from the bunk. Swain laid a finger across his lips as a signal for silence, then led the way out of the shack. He continued until they had passed the outskirts of the little grove. Then he faced his towering companion.

"Well, Landers," he said slowly, "you haven't changed much. Your beard is a little thicker, and I see you have four big sons instead of the four little shavers that I used to know. But otherwise your family seems to be about the same."

"It is," said the gigantic mountaineer. "But you—I can't say as much for you, Swain. You look plumb petered out. I'd say that you been living inside too much. If you was to try six months of this life up here, your chest would begin to stick out again. You never were much for size, but you used to have strength of your own, Jerry! Well, well, I'm glad to see you! It brings some of the old days red-hot and boiling back to my mind, Swain!"

"Memories like that," answered Jerry Swain, "I put away where they won't get out and trip me up."

"Never fear me, partner. I keep mum!"

"I'm glad you do. Otherwise, there are folks that would take a terrible lot of interest in what you could tell 'em, Landers!"

The big man nodded. Then he buried his thick, dirty fingers in his beard and waited, his eyes sharp and small as the eyes of a fox in spite of the unwieldy bulk of his body. Indeed, he seemed in more ways than one to have the mind of a fox directing the leonine frame of his body.

"I'll be quiet enough," he said. "But it ain't for that that you've rode clear up here. You ain't that fond of your old friends that you'd go a-riding to see 'em, Jerry!" He chuckled in great enjoyment of this small jest.

"No," said Jerry, "I've need of you. I want some work done."

"The sort of work that I last done for you?" And, at the mere thought, big Landers glanced in dismay over his shoulder at the listening trees.

"That sort of work—exactly," said the rancher.

Landers started.

"I'm through with that," he said. "You paid well. It started me off and got me fixed up with guns and traps, and I still keep a little in the bank—enough to keep me going fine, Swain, without no more deals of that kind. No, I don't want to talk to you about it!"

"Don't be a fool," said the other scornfully. "You have more than yourself to think about. Haven't you four sons? Are you going to turn them loose with nothing but their hands to help them?"

"By Heaven, have you come here trying to get them into some of your dirty work? I'll throttle you first, Jerry!"

Jerry Swain shook his head impatiently.

"You don't follow me," he declared.

"I follow you too well. I ain't going to listen to that smooth tongue of yours, neither. I've been honest the last fifteen years, and it ain't going to be you, Swain, that'll change me now!"

Jerry Swain stepped back a trifle and looked with a smile of pity—the smile of a superior man—upon his companion. At length he said gently: "The last time that I came to talk business with you, partner, I was talking a few hundred dollars. It will be different now."

"Eh?" said the trapper.

"Why, Landers, I am now a wealthy man. How did I become wealthy? By not allowing my conscience to trouble me. But no matter for that. The important thing now is to make you see things in the new light. This would mean prosperity for you. It would mean that you and the boys could buy a small farm down on the river—some of that river bottom land that you used to hanker for in the old days——"

"You remember even that?"

"I never forget such things," said the other. "They are the handles by which a man may be lifted up and put down

again. The little things are what rule us, Landers, eh?. But no, partner, think of that farm by the river!"

"I dunno what you're talking about," said Landers half mournfully, half angrily. "Couldn't touch any sort of farm down there for less'n four or five thousand dollars!"

"Well?"

Landers started.

"What do you mean, Swain?" he gasped out.

"I simply mean that four or five thousand dollars wouldn't scare me out. I'd still be willing to talk business!"

There was a sort of groan from Landers.

"Tell me what it is. If I can do it, I'll try."

"You can't. Not you alone, Landers. No, you're a good man, a mighty valuable man. But you can't do this. It will mean work for you and your four big sons."

"Then I'll let the work go. I'm going to raise 'em with clean hands!"

"You're a fool. Their hands will be just as clean on the farm—when they get there!"

Another groan came from Landers, but then he brushed the other away. "I'll not listen!" he vowed.

"Yes, you will," replied the smaller man. "I'm just starting to talk!"

And big Landers wheeled slowly, uncertainly, and came back and stood vast above the form of Jerry Swain.

CHAPTER XLI.

FIVE AGAINST ONE.

WITH such violence was Tom Keene roused from his sleep that he sat bolt upright in his bed. But immediately he perceived the house to be in the grip of one of those sudden wind storms which plunge across some hundreds of miles of mountains between dark and dawn, making the tallest trees, the stoutest buildings, shudder and tremble under their touch. Such a storm was now shaking the old Carver house, and Tom, having listened for a few moments, was certain that what, in his sleep, had seemed to him like creaking on the stairs, must certainly be nothing but the effect of the violent wind. He lay back in the bed, accordingly, and no sooner was his strong body composed than, as is the gift of those who live in the open, he was instantly and soundly asleep.

His dreams, however, were by no means smooth. He passed through a confusion of dangers in that hurried sleep. Once more he wakened, and this time he opened his eyes with the certainty that, a moment before, a shaft of light had been playing upon his face. At least, the certainty was so great that he lay motionless upon the bed, stirring not so much as a single hand, but waiting, waiting, while his heart pounded with a foolish violence that startled and puzzled him. Then, gradually, watching himself every inch of the way, he turned his head.

He knew, by the current of air which swept across his face and his bared right arm above the bedclothes, that the door to the room was open and the wind was whirling down the hall of the old house. The work of the storm might easily account for this, since he never locked that door. But a strange and profound instinct told him also that there was another human being in the room!

Slowly he began to gather himself, drawing up his legs and heaving himself by imperceptible degrees upon his left elbow. At the same time he recalled that he had not left his revolver anywhere near the bed. And at this instant there was a long, loud squeak from the floor of the room near its center.

He waited for no more. There was such a blind panic rising in him that he feared that, if he waited longer, he would be too paralyzed to move.

Therefore, he flung himself out of the bed as he was, barehanded, diving head-first like a football tackler, and sending the bed sliding across the room with the back thrust of his long legs.

He was in mid-air from that leap when he heard fierce, quick, surprised voices—not one, but what seemed to him a dozen. The room must be full of men!

Then his shoulder and the side of his head struck a heavy man just below the hips, and the latter toppled instantly forward upon him. A revolver exploded, and by the flash Tom caught a glimpse almost too fast for the senses to register what they perceived. Four other men—men of gigantic stature—were in the room, and steel gleamed in the hand of every one of them.

But that fierce, low dive catapulted the fifth man ahead of him, and they smashed against the wall. He thought he felt the bones of the man's body crush with the impact. At least he heard the thud of his head against the wall. And then the form of the big fellow relaxed.

At the same time, with a storm of curses, the others rushed at him. He heard and felt their heavy feet coming. They would drive low, grappling to find him on the floor. Accordingly, he jerked himself up and leaped out, throwing his body as high as he could.

His knees smashed against the head of a man leaning exactly as Tom had imagined he would. There was a scream of pain and rage from the other. Tom himself was sent tumbling head-long over the floor.

Luckily, he rolled in the direction of the door, and, springing to his feet, he lunged for it. But at the same time three men converged in a terrific rush at that spot. They struck Tom. He felt himself wrenched and torn by mighty hands and went down under a loading, a reaching, gripping, writhing, cursing humanity. Yet they dared not, in the dark, strike with a weapon for fear of injuring one another.

Then a great voice called: "We've got him. Get a light! Show the lantern, somebody!"

Under the stimulus of that threat, Tom gathered himself and rose to his knees, pitching that load of three heavy men up from him. They flattened to him with shouts, and he tore his right arm loose. He struck up—there was a gasp and a groan of rage and pain. He clubbed fiercely to either side. Then he sprang to his feet, and the three pairs of arms slid from him. They were not altogether harmless, however. At least they caught his night clothes and stripped most of them from his body.

Half naked, and drunk with the sense of his strength unloosed for the first time in his life—a strength unknown even to himself—he forgot to flee. He merely lunged out, seeking a new prey. He smashed against a man in the dark. A gun exploded, and a pain jabbed through the left thigh of the big man. He barely felt it. The flash of the gun had revealed the other for an instant. Tom reached for the image which had been printed black in the instant's light.

He found it. He found also a swinging fist which hurtled through the air with power enough to have felled an ox. It landed fairly on the side of Tom's face. It slashed the skin and flesh like a knife, and a warm trickle ran down his cheek. But the next instant he was in on the foeman. He lifted him up—a writhing, heaving giant—and then dashed him to the floor. There was a shout that was instantly stifled in the crash.

Then a bit of circular, cold metal was jabbed against his back—they had seen his shining body in the light of other flashes—and the gun exploded. He had whirled so that, instead of driving through his body, the bullet merely raked along his outer ribs after plough-

ing through the fleshy part of his back. For an instant it turned him sick. Then he struck out wildly with both fists, felt his left connect solidly, and the man went down!

Here there came the grate of metal on metal, a quick sound like the scratching of a cat's paw against a window glass, and light spurted across the room.

It showed the reddened body of Tom. It showed a big, bearded man in the corner, smashed against the wall and even now barely in the act of raising himself in a bewildered fashion. It showed another lying face down upon the floor with his arms outstretched and a pool of crimson around his head.

Another was doubled up and writhing in agony. A fourth was a black silhouette, leaning over the lantern. And the fifth man stood back against the wall with a revolver in either hand. He blazed away with both weapons at the shining target.

Tom felt something like the edge of a red-hot razor slash across his forehead, and another ripped his throat; hot trickles poured out with the touches. Then he flung himself back. He seized on the man who lay writhing, and with a huge upward lift he wrenched the man to his feet in time to meet another fusillade from the gunman.

The stream of bullets which the man with the guns had started could not be instantly stopped, it seemed. He had splashed lead through the mirror, sending a tinkling and crashing shower of glass to the floor. He had scarred the planking and broken the window and cracked the bed, but now, as he got the range for the second time, the shining body was obscured by a darkness which was the form of the man who was picked up from the floor. It did not matter. The bullet drove home. There was a loud shriek and a convulsive struggle of the unfortunate fellow who served Tom as a shield. Against his chest struck a heavy blow as a slug which had torn through the body of the victim and been half flattened by the resistance of flesh and bone, now spent the very last of its force against Tom. But it made only a small cut and fell to the floor.

In the meantime, the two gun fighters, maddened at what they saw they had done, came charging in, intent on digging the muzzles of their weapons against the body of Tom before they pulled a trigger.

There was a strength of madness in Tom. He had felt the body of his victim grow limp. Now he swayed the body back and hurled it in the faces of the onrushing assailants. But even as he did so, and sprang forward to follow up the charge, he saw the big bearded man, who had fallen beneath his first blind attack, reaching for his revolver which had fallen close at hand.

CHAPTER XLII.

MARY TAKES A HAND.

IN the cottage behind the big house, the first of the roaring gun fire from the ranch house brought all the three inmates to their doors, quivering with the cold. Mrs. Carver carried a lamp which she shielded so that the light fell only on the wild face of her husband and the pale face of Mary at an opposite door, as she gathered her bathrobe more closely around her.

"It's Swain!" groaned John Carver. "It's the hired murderers of Swain at work. Lizzie, our troubles with him are over, but the devil burn Swain! Look! There's a whole army of 'em!"

They had hurried to the side window. They could see, in the windows of the upper room where Tom Keene slept, the quivering flash of guns exploding, at intervals, and a huge shouting and trampling, and the shocks of heavy bodies, until it seemed that the

wall of the house must be torn out by the impacts.

"Father!" cried Mary. "Take help to him. Here—here's the revolver——"

Her mother knocked down her hand.

"Are you mad, Mary? D'you dream that I'd let him go up there to be murdered?"

"But can we stand here and watch it? Oh!"

The last was a shriek. A light had showed in the room, and a swirl of silhouettes of many struggling men passed across the window. It seemed, in the flurry of many shadowy bodies, that the room was literally packed with men shouting and cursing, and over the uproar came the great booming voice of Tom Keene as he battled.

"Then I'll go!" cried Mary Carver suddenly. "It's murder!"

She started for the door. Her mother caught at her, but her stiff hands were utterly incapable of stopping the girl. She slipped through them and hurried on. There was a shout of dismay from her father, but before he could get clear of the door of the cottage, she was away and had raced half of the distance to the house, clutching the great revolver.

As she whipped through the door, she saw her father halting behind her. Then she rushed for the stairs leading to the upper story, knowing that she would have to carry help alone. And she had never fired a weapon in her life, even at a mark, to say nothing of a human being. How she could be of the slightest assistance, she did not know, but she knew that in some way, when she got there, she would try to help, even if it were only with the strength of her hands.

So she flew to the head of the stairs and down the hall. Through the open door she saw a strange picture which in a flash was printed deep in her mind, to haunt her the rest of her life. One man lay face down on the floor, his limbs twisted strangely, and she knew at a glance that he was dead, though she had never seen death before. Another man was picking himself up from a corner of the room, a mighty, bearded man whose clothes were half torn from his back, and who seemed to have been bodily flung to the place where he was now staggering to his feet.

Two others were locked in a fierce embrace with a half-naked giant whose body was a mass of open gashes. And she saw the mighty lift and knotting of his muscles as he strained at the two. He had fixed the fingers of his right hand on the throat of one, and, as the fingers dug deeper and deeper, the throttled man wrenched his head far back, his features convulsed and blackened, though he still persisted in grappling with the giant. The second of those locked with the seminude warrior, had twined his legs with the legs of the other and was attempting to wrench him to the floor. Indeed, he had fallen to one knee, and there he hung braced. And above that sinister group of three stood a fourth man, with his wide-shouldered back turned to the door, and in his hands he was swinging up a heavy chair to batter out the brains of the defendant.

These things, which take so long in the telling, had been perceived by the girl in one flash of the mind, and in the next she knew that the wounded fighter who was about to be crushed was the man know to her as Timothy Kenyon, cruel, implacable, strangely delighting in torturing others. But above and beyond his cruelty she saw now that prodigious strength battling for life, and with that strength a dauntless courage that filled her to the throat with wonder and with admiration.

She jerked up the heavy Colt, seizing it in both her hands, but at the thought of discharging the weapon she

shrank far back into the shadow of the hall. She saw the chair heaved up to full height in the hands of the assailant, and then the eyes of the victim turned up and saw the impending ruin, not with terror, but with a shout of furious defiance.

That shout gave strength to Mary Carver. She thrust the revolver before her, and, knowing that she had no time to aim, or not even thinking of that somewhat essential feature, she pulled the trigger.

The bullet struck the ceiling exactly in the center where the old chandelier, with all its tinkling and shining fixtures of glass, was attached to the plaster above by a narrow chain. That chain was severed. The chandelier hurtled down.

But the sound of the exploding gun had made the man with the chair leap back to avoid the attack, and the blow which would have killed Tom Keene did not fall. All four of the assailants who were now capable of seeing, looked toward the door, and they saw a revolver flash and explode twice in rapid succession, very much like the firing of two guns.

The figure of the holder of the weapon was shrouded from them. What they knew was that the lantern near the door had been unhooded so as to cast a flare of light over the room while it left the hallway in darkness. In a word, they were made perfect targets, while the new assailants could shoot safely from the dark into the light. In the meantime, the chandelier had splintered upon the floor with a terrific crash. And there is nothing so appalling to excited nerves as an unexpected noise. Moreover, on the outside, John Carver, half out of his senses, was shouting to Mary to come back, and then swearing in a thunderous voice that he was coming for her.

No wonder, in that critical moment, that it seemed to the four that the hall was filled with rescuers, and that more waited in the night outside the house. They stood not upon the order of their going, but they went, and the father led the way. Straight through the high windows they plunged, then raced down over the shelving roof below, dropped to the ground, and made for their horses.

Mary Carver found herself, after all the confusion of sound, suddenly standing in a silent room with a dead man lying a step in front of her, and against the far wall the crimson form of Tom Keene sinking down and propping himself feebly upon one shaking hand. She ran to him and dropped upon her knees before him, striving to peer into his face, and feeling that in his eyes she could read whether or not he were mortally hurt.

"Mr. Kenyon!" she shrilled at him. "Mr. Kenyon!"

He seemed to be falling to sleep. His head dropped down with a jerk, and he was sagging toward the floor. She reached out and gripped his shoulders, shining with crimson. Under her fingers the great muscles slipped and rolled. She cared not for the stains, and, indeed, she did not even seem to see them.

"Mr. Kenyon!" she cried again. "Are you—have they—the cowards—have they killed you?"

He did not answer. He only sank lower.

A moment later, John Carver, at the door of the room, saw his daughter, having pulled the arm of the wounded man across her shoulders and around her neck, attempting to lift him to his feet, quite regardless of the stains that dripped and were smeared upon her.

He ran to her aid. Between them they half dragged and half carried the staggering bulk to the bed, and there they laid him.

"I'll—I'll get to Porterville," stammered Carver. "I'll bring out the

sheriff. I'll prove that I ain't had any hand in this and—— Heaven above, he stood off five of 'em!"

"You can't go to Porterville!" cried his daughter sternly. "You've got to help me here. He isn't dying. He isn't going to die. A man like him—why, cowards couldn't kill him!"

He was so overcome with wonder that he obeyed without a word. The blood from a scratch had been too much for her to look at. Now all this carnage seemed to mean nothing to her. She managed everything, working with a sort of frenzy until the wounds were tended, the bleeding stopped. And, under her directions, her father, having helped as he could, now removed the body of the dead man with great effort and cleared the wreckage from the room.

"It's young Si Landers!" he confided to his wife in a whisper of awe. "It must have been all of them Landers—the whole five of them. And the five of them giants wasn't enough to beat Tom Keene. What a man! And don't go near Mary. She's in a sort of frenzy. She won't talk. She just works. She ain't like herself."

But when the mother came to the head of the stairs and looked in, while her husband now rode for the doctor, she found Mary Carver sitting with folded hands beside the bed, her face calm, and a smile of strange happiness just on the verge of appearing on her lips.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"I BELIEVE."

IT was the middle of the next morning that Jerry Swain came again to old Carver Ranch, spurred on by the mingled admonitions and threats of his father. Though the attack on which the elder Swain had counted so much, had failed, at least it had temporarily crippled Tom Keene. It would be a month, said the doctor, before he could walk again. None of the wounds had been of a vital nature. Loss of blood was the main thing that held him back, that and the shock of the long struggle maintained when he had only nerve-power to buoy him. Therefore, young Jerry Swain sneaked to the house and sought Carver.

His greeting was strangely unenthusiastic.

"I'll get the wife to take care of Keene and send Mary down to you," he said. "But she's gone plumb queer about this. I never seen nobody wrapped up in a job as much as she's wrapped up in taking care of him!"

"You start in and give her some reasons to persuade her, then," suggested Jerry angrily.

But the other shook his head. He seemed to have grown much younger and happier in the past day.

"Now that Mary has saved him—well, I ain't worrying so much," he said. "Mary can decide what she wants to do for herself."

"There's only one thing," said Jerry eagerly as the rancher turned away. "Does she know that Kenyon is Tom Keene?"

"She don't. And she ain't going to learn it from you, Swain!"

She did not learn it from Jerry Swain. Indeed, she learned very, very little from him. She descended to the hall and walked straight up to him with infinite contempt in her eyes.

"I know why you've come," she said, "and I've come down to tell you that I'd rather work for a man like Timothy Kenyon than be the wife of a man like you."

"He'll make a slave of you!" breathed Jerry.

"I'd rather be his slave, then!" cried Mary tremulously.

And, when he attempted to speak again, she turned her back on him and went up the stairs. And Jerry Swain sneaked out of the house and back to

his father. "They've all gone crazy," he reported. "They don't want me to marry her now!"

"Crazy?" said his father bitterly. "They're just beginning to show good sense. Get out of my sight. I need to be alone!"

So Jerry Swain promptly got. As for Jerry Swain, Sr., he had something new to think about, and that was what would happen if the Landers family were caught and old Landers confessed who had hired him for the work of the previous night.

But the Landers family was never caught. The three remaining sons, separating each to a different direction, melted away among the mountains. Only the father of the family was run down, three weeks later, and cornered by a whole posse. The fight that followed was a terrible page in history, but Landers died before he would surrender. Jerry Swain was not betrayed.

It was to announce that death that Mary Carver broke the rules and entered the room of her patient in the midmorning. Since he had so far recovered that he could sit propped in bed with pillows, he had laid down a strict law that no one should enter the room save with his meals. And now, when she tapped, he bade her enter with a sullen growl of leonine depth and power. When she stepped inside the door, she found that his scowl matched his voice. He stared silently, waiting for her to speak.

Never once had he relaxed in this attitude. Never once had he expressed to her gratitude for what she had done for him, even though he had learned from the doctor how he had been saved in the crisis, and how she had kept him, afterward, from bleeding to death.

"They did it to make sure of their places," he had told the doctor, and she had overheard.

But in spite of that insult she had continued to nurse him with perfect devotion and with a sort of curiosity, feeling that he could not keep up the barriers forever.

Now he listened without interruption to the account of the fall of Landers, closing his eyes and lowering his book while she talked. When she had finished, she slipped back toward the door, but he surprised her by calling her to him.

"I've made up my mind," he said, "that you deserve some reward for this nursing. Casting around for what it should be, I've decided to send you to Denver and let you hunt around there until you find the sort of position you're equipped for. I'll stand the expenses."

But she shook her head.

"You'd rather stay here, I suppose," he sneered, "and take care of me?"

"Yes," she said meekly.

All at once he exploded.

"Don't you suppose I know what's in your mind?" he roared.

She stepped close, raising her hand with a frightened face.

"You musn't do that," she warned him. "It may throw you into a fever. I'll go out at once. I'm only sorry that I troubled you, but I thought you might wish to hear——"

She retreated as she spoke, but his call stopped her and brought her back to him, anxious and unwilling. As she came to the bed, he caught her wrist with his lean hand, in which there was only a ghost of his old power.

"I've been making you out a devil on the inside and a saint on the outside," he said gruffly. "It's just popped into my head that you may mean what you say. Mary, where do you get the strength to listen to me?"

"It needs no strength."

"But you've worked to save my miserable self."

"I saw you fighting like a hero," she said with a sudden warmth. "Is it strange that I have tried to help you? Oh, if you would only believe——"

She stopped, but he urged her on.

"Talk," he said. "Get it out of your system."

"You hate every one," she said. "You trust no one. You take your pleasure in tormenting us. But oh, don't you see that there's a thousand times more good in you than you yourself will admit?"

"Where did you learn that?" he asked.

She stepped back again.

"I'm going to show you," she said. "But if you laugh at me then, I'll hate you and despise you!"

She left the room, and he heard her heels tapping swiftly as she ran down the stairs. In a minute or more she was back, a little breathless, flushed, but walking with a sort of defiant pride which he had never seen in her before. Her right hand carried something concealed in the fold of her skirt, but when she was close to him she drew out and placed in his hands a little battered, time-yellowed Bible!

It slid open in his hands, the thin sheets flowing like water. And his eye struck like a blow on the line so long ago familiar to him that each word was like a well-remembered human face. "I will sing of loving kindness and justice——"

He crushed the book shut with such force that the binding was wrenched and torn, and that sight drew a cry of pain from the girl. She tried to seize the book from him.

"Oh," she cried, "there is no soul in you, then—only brute force! Give it back to me! Give it back to me!"

He pushed her away, but she struggled to get it back.

"I've thought there must be kindness and gentleness in a man as big and as strong as you!" she sobbed, the tears beginning to stream down her face. "Because the man who owned that book was to me as big and as strong——"

Her words suddenly were converted into a stream of musical sound with no meaning in the syllables.

Through the brain of Tom Keene a thousand recollections were running. The Book which had sent him out to bring loving kindness into the world, had fallen from his hands into the hands of another. And what he had failed to be, she has proven. This was the mysterious source, then, of her courage, her divine patience, her exhaustless sweetness of nature!

Once more he had sat beside her and talked in another year. That spirit which had been in him, and which he had considered as empty as wind, had sown the seed in this girl, and in her it had grown. This was the source of the difference between her and her parents, the pure spirit, the self-respect, the holy dignity of young womanhood. It was something which he had given her.

There was a mighty melting of the heart in Tom. It was as though the work of the long, lazy, warm spring were done in a day, melting the winter from his nature. He had felt himself always beaten, hopelessly defeated, shamed. And now he looked back to what had been a glorious victory.

Suddenly, his hands were loosened, and he gave back the Book to her.

"Keep it," he said. "In the name of Heaven, keep it! It was my father's before me. I give it to you freely."

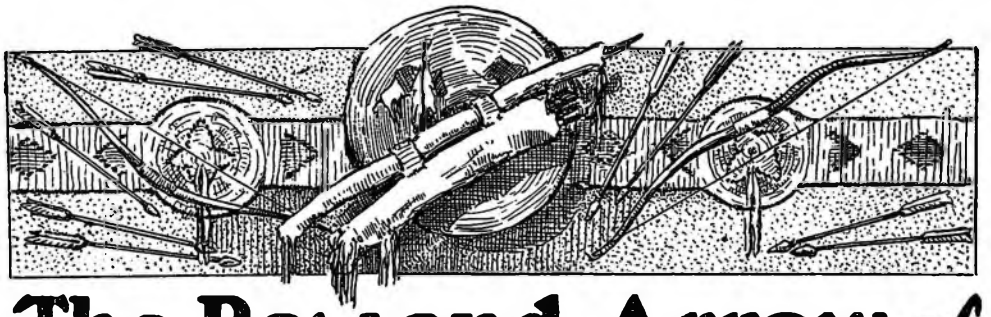
It struck Mary Carver to her knees. The Bible slipped to the floor. Their faces were close. Their spirits were unguarded.

"Oh, Tom Keene," she cried, "I've been waiting all this time! Why wouldn't you tell me?"

But it seemed to poor Tom that the weight of all his sins was dropped upon his shoulder. He looked up from her.

"Lord God," he said, "I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief!"

THE END.



The Bow and Arrow of the American Indian

By E. Clark Richards

THE invention of the bow as a weapon of war and the chase, is buried in the obscurity which enshrouds the beginnings of most historical objects of primitive people. While no one knows when the bow and arrow were first adopted, it is certain that their use was as widespread as the distribution of man. Primitive society adopted it as the most ready instrument by which to gain its food, defend itself against its enemies, and establish its power.

While the bow probably never held as important a place as a universal weapon among the inhabitants of a forested land as it did among the dwellers in an open country, nowhere in the world did primitive man reach a higher degree of efficiency in its use than among the redskins of our own Western plains. The archery annals of England are filled with tales of the skill and accuracy of the British knights of the bow, but the aboriginal American bowmen were more than a match for Robin Hood and his men.

To bring down a heron on the wing with a single arrow was regarded by English archers as a test of extraordinary skill. But the American Indian did that as a matter of course, and with far smaller birds. So deft indeed was his use of the bow that he could shoot an arrow upward, and when it fell it would pierce a sparrow feeding on the ground. The Apaches boasted bowmen, it is said, who could place an arrow in the ground and then shoot another arrow into the air with such accuracy that it would split the first when it fell.

Not much is known about the bow and arrow in South and Central America, but from the plains of northern Mexico northward this weapon was used with a skill and knowledge unknown elsewhere in the world. Even a superficial study of the bows, arrows, and quivers of our North American Indians, as represented in the splendid collection in the National Museum at Washington, will bear out this statement.

While our eastern-coast Indians used the bow, they never advanced beyond the use of the simplest single-stick type, and they never attained more than a moderate degree of proficiency in its use. As soon as they obtained firearms from the Europeans they dropped at once the bow as a serious weapon. It is a matter of history that the great

supremacy of the Iroquois tribes, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was largely traceable to their substitution of firearms for the Iroquois bows which were much larger than those of the Western Indians. The prairie tribes were fair bowmen, and the Chippeways of the Great Lakes region were strong arrow men. All these tribes had many excellent woods at their command, such as hickory, oak, ash, hornbeam, sycamore, and dogwood. Their bows were all "selfs," that is, made of a single piece of wood, but they were not as carefully shaped as those of our Western Indians, and they were seldom ornamented in any way. The fur quivers, however, were almost invariably elaborately adorned with beads and fringe.

Some years ago Professor Mason pointed out that bow-staves, in various stages of readiness for work, were kept in every wigwam. An Indian always had a sharp eye for a piece of wood or raw material which could be used in this way. He saw the possibilities for a good snowshoe frame or a bow or arrow, or an arrow head, in every piece of excellent wood or flint stone. His leisure moments were used to bend, straighten, steam, scrape, and shape these treasures. Moreover such articles as wood for bows, the scions for arrows, the stones for the heads, and even the plumage for feathering, were looked upon and treated as articles of commerce.

East of the Rocky Mountains all the tribes, with the single exception of the Sioux, made their bows of a single piece of wood, since suitable wood was readily obtainable by search or barter. The single-piece bow was also the type popular with the Indians of northern California and Oregon, where the abounding yew furnished an excellent wood for this weapon. The bow of the northern California and Oregon Indian had certain characteristics of its own. It had a peculiarly thin, broad shape, and the artistic standards of the region demanded that the bow must be polished, sometimes carved, often curiously painted, but invariably well cared for. The quivers, of course, came in for an equal share of elaborate treatment.

But the high peak of redskin ingenuity manifested itself most unmistakably in those large areas of the West where bow wood was rare or entirely nonexistent. Here the natural deficiency was supplied by methods which cannot be duplicated in the rest of the savage world. Taking three or more pieces of wood, often very poor in quality, or resorting to horn, whalebone, and other adaptable materials, the Indians shaped a remarkably efficient and workmanlike bow. Among the best examples of the composite type of bow those of the Sioux take highest rank.

The Sioux bow has been pronounced the most graceful type of bow known among savages, and it has the symmetrical curves of the classic Cupid's bow which was modeled by the artists of Greece and Rome from trophies captured by victorious generals from the nomadic tribes of Asia and the steppes of Scythia. Taking the horns of cattle and gazelles, these hostile tribesmen prepared their weapons by joining them together with a third piece, thus preserving to some extent the natural curvature of the horns. This center piece is called the grip, and the ends of a bow are named the horns. Sinew or rawhide bandages always concealed the joints, so that the bow appeared as a single stick.

Between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevadas stretches a vast dry and depressed area which we used to know as the Great Basin. In all this region, from northern Mexico to the headwaters of the Mackenzie River, the bows were at once short, thick, and narrow. To provide them with the

requisite strength, flat bands of shredded sinew were glued at intervals along the back or wrapped about the stock. In this way elasticity as well as strength was secured. Since in many cases the bows were constructed of more than a single stick, this reënforcing was essential. Though their tools were few, and often their materials the most unpromising, like willow and birch shrubs, these redskin bow makers overcame the natural handicaps of the region by their unwearied patience and skillful fingers, turning out a creditable as well as a serviceable weapon.

In the art of reënforcing naturally weak materials the Eskimo Indians exhibited extraordinary ingenuity. Instead of glued bands they employed cords of twisted sinew. After securing these bands about the horns of the bow they braided or laced down the outer side, with long strands bound into cables and held by frequent half hitches; these elaborate methods for strengthening the bow made them almost equal to bearing the entire strain put upon the weapon. In the treeless Arctic coast regions of the Eskimo often a hunter could find nothing to serve for bow material except strips of bone or caribou antler.

The bag or case in which the Indian carried his supply of arrows as well as his bow, is called the quiver. Almost without exception the northern American Indian found an outlet for man's natural love of beauty and decoration in the making of his quiver, which was often an elaborate affair. The finest attainable furs were used for this purpose, and on them the individual lavished his skill in needlework and embellished it with the trophies of his prowess. The shields of the knights of chivalry were no more precious in the sight of their medieval owners than were the quivers of our native redskins. While the quiver in the first instance served as a case for carrying the bow and arrows, it was primarily intended to keep them dry. It is obvious how important it was to provide against wet or dampness, for a warped bow, or a wet string or braided fiber, left the hunter hopelessly handicapped with an inaccurate and untrustworthy weapon. In addition to holding the bow and arrows, nearly every quiver was provided with a pocket for carrying the owner's fire-making materials. These he could not afford to expose to either wet or dampness, and this pocket provided a certain security against loss as well.

Every Indian adult carried these implements as a matter of course. He would no more have gone without his quiver than the ordinary American would go without his hat. From boyhood the Indian was trained in the art of shaping the bow, and from childhood he was familiar with its use. In the nature of things some were naturally better bowmen and marksmen than others, and every tribe numbered a certain select few who had an outstanding knowledge in selecting the materials and a surpassing skill in shaping them into the superior bow. These artisans of the Indian community were always regarded with marked respect, and their advice in the matters of their craft was eagerly sought and faithfully followed. A bow shaped by a clever bow maker was highly prized and handed down from father to son. When these men became too old to hunt or make war, they became the official makers of good weapons. Before the door of their lodges they sat in honorable ease, plying their nimble fingers to the shaping of the weapons which they were too old to wield. But they were happy, as well as proud, to turn out an excellent weapon for the younger warriors and hunters on whom depended the good fortune of the tribe.

Fortunately the splendid tradition of archery has not been allowed to fall into complete desuetude by the modern

American Indian. Bow and arrow and Indian are, of course, no longer convertible terms, and the expert bowmen among our reservation Indians is no longer an expected phenomenon. However, among many tribes a certain number of skillful archers are found, and a few of the young bucks have measured up to the high standards of their fathers. Both for the sake of an honorable historical tradition and the love of a splendid sport, it is to be hoped that our native American Indians will never suffer either the making of the bow and arrow, or their expert use, to die out among them.

THE PAPAGO DESERT IN ARIZONA

IN southwestern Arizona is a region including some thirteen thousand square miles, which is called the Papago country, because it was long ago inhabited by the nomadic Papago Indians. It is one of the driest parts of the United States. This broad expanse of desert country, which lies between the Gila River and the Mexican boundary, contains many remarkable natural phenomena. Groups of volcanic and other mountains abound, and these are separated by broad, alluvial basins, which, though the rainfall is slight and the temperature high, sustain a scant growth of desert plants, including orchardlike groups of strange trees. The traveler is at once impressed with the bold slopes of the mountains, the general absence of watering places, and the peculiar forms of the vegetation. The majesty and the mystery of the desert are here strikingly revealed, and one gathers that the Papagos must have taken on something of both while wandering continually up and down this unusual region.

FIRST SETTLER FOUND

A COMMITTEE of the American Legion searched through Beadle County, South Dakota, for persons to take part in an historical pageant which was held there in July. In the course of their search, they came upon the original settler of the county, Charles Miner, and his family. The Miner family came into Dakota Territory in 1859, and twenty years later Charles Miner settled on the James River, a few miles south of Huron.

Although he had suffered the loss of one of his hands in a recent accident, Mr. Miner was in good health and consented to drive in the pageant the last remaining yoke of oxen in this section of South Dakota. The director of the pageant declared that this is the first time in a long experience when he had been able to secure the original first settler to take part in such a spectacle.

STRANGE CONSIGNMENTS BY PARCEL POST

TO the long list of queer articles transported by the parcel post of the United State must be added two shipments of the Far West. Through the medium of the parcel post two baby ostriches were recently received in the far northwestern corner of the State of Washington. The ostrich "peeps" were about the size of full-grown brown leghorn hens, and they had been forwarded from the southeastern corner of the United States, in the Florida peninsula.

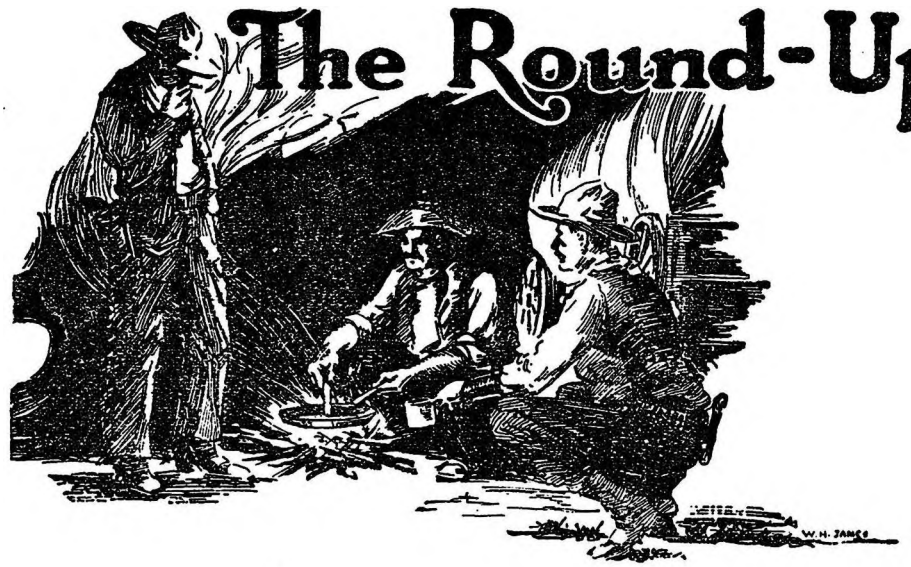
From the far Northwest there recently arrived in Seattle a seventy-thousand-dollar shipment of furs from the Kuskokwin River district. The consignment consisted of ninety sacks and included pelts of red and white foxes, marten, beaver, and muskrat. This is said to be the first time parcel post has been used for fur shipments in such large quantities.

Historical Events of the West

GREAT OCTOBER DAYS IN THE WEST

October 1, 1864.—Helena, Montana, founded following a gold rush.
October 1, 1890.—Yosemite National Park set aside.
October 2, 1900.—Two sets of tunnel borers meet in the center of the Great Northern's cascade tunnel.
October 3, 1842.—Marcus Whitman starts on his across-the-continent ride "to save Oregon."
October 3, 1877.—General Miles defeats Chief Joseph and his Nez Percé warriors.
October 4, 1857.—Mormon Danites destroy the wagon train and supplies of the invading army of the United States.
October 5, 1899.—A carload of gold ore from Deadwood is received at Denver.
October 6, 1834.—The Methodist mission, the first settlement in Oregon, established.
October 6, 1867.—The Mormon tabernacle completed; no nails or other iron used.
October 7, 1875.—Iron pillars, marking the Montana-Canada boundary, placed.
October 8, 1805.—Lewis and Clark embark on the *Clearwater*, the last stage of their journey to the Pacific.
October 9, 1776.—Dolores Mission founded, San Francisco.
October 10, 1858.—The first overland mail reaches San Francisco.
October 10, 1863.—Telegraph to Denver completed; ten words to New York cost nine dollars and ten cents.
October 11, 1809.—Meriwether Lewis killed.
October 12, 1826.—Advertisement appears in the Missouri *Intelligencer*, Franklin, Missouri: "Runaway boy. . . . Christopher Carson, sixteen, small of his age. . . . One cent reward." Kit Carson breaks into history.
October 12, 1891.—Nugget worth six hundred and fourteen dollars found in Plumas County, California.
October 14, 1832.—Henry Vanderburgh, noted fur trader, killed by Blackfeet.
October 16, 1891.—Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians sell million acres in Wyoming for fifty-five cents an acre.
October 17, 1841.—The first California emigrants, Bidwell's party, start across the Sierras.
October 18, 1861.—Brigham Young sends the first telegram from Salt Lake City.
October 19, 1849.—Stansbury begins his survey of Great Salt Lake.
October 20, 1792.—Mount Hood discovered and named by English sailor.
October 20, 1890.—Pike's Peak cog road completed.
October 21, 1868.—A great earthquake shakes California.
October 22, 1861.—Overland telegraph completed to San Francisco; the end of the Pony Express.
October 22, 1862.—Fort Douglas, Utah, established.
October 23, 1814.—Astoria sold to Northwest Fur Company; the end of the American fur trade on the Pacific.
October 23, 1875.—The first railroad in Washington begun from Wallula to Walla Walla.
October 25, 1894.—A great prairie fire sweeps western Nebraska.
October 26, 1853.—Lieutenant Gunnison killed by Utes in Utah.
October 27, 1871.—The Denver & Rio Grande is built to Colorado Springs.
October 28, 1855.—Indians massacre nine settlers on White River in Puget Sound region.
October 28, 1921.—Cloudburst destroys a British Columbia town and drowns thirty-six.
October 30, 1769.—Portola discovers San Francisco Bay.
October 31, 1846.—The Donner party snowed in; beginning of the greatest tragedy of the Sierras.
October 31, 1864.—Nevada becomes a State.
October —, 1823.—The South Pass of the Rockies discovered by Provost.
October —, 1887.—John L. Routt buys famous Morning Star Mine at Leadville for a thousand dollars.
October —, 1915.—Arrowrock Dam, at Boise, Idaho, completed; the highest in the world.

The Round-Up



HOWDY! Just a word from me, a guy named Ike Lewin, who wants to put in his oar and help out 'Long Center,' of Reno, as he knows what he is talking about, although I have made the rodeo at Reno for two years and never saw him around. He may have been sitting on the fence.

"Anyway, as to riding bronks with a spade bit, it's all wrong. If a man got on a green colt with a spade bit, he would pull him over on top of himself. Most of the bronk peelers use a hackamore; some—quite a few—use a snaffle bit to start a horse on, and ride him sometimes for six months with that or the hackamore, letting the horse carry a spade, but never using it until the horse is accustomed to it.

"Now as to horses or geldings, very few boys out here ride mares, but then we have a sorrel mare in our corral that is a real cutting horse. My boss, I believe, has the best string of real cow horses in the country at present. And none of his boys carry their ropes on the left; they are all right handed.

"Yes, it is customary for a bronk peeler to saddle his own horse. I have never seen any go ten feet in the air. It might be that old Lathrop was sitting on this one himself. During the war I often thought I was ten feet in the air, but then after I'd step off they would tell me that the mount dragged his feet along. Lathrop is right; they were a bunch of orang-utans they sent to war. I know; I rode them for four years at the Chicago stockyards.

"Now as to one of the authors making a mistake, that's natural; the best of them do. But keep on with the good work. WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE is a real magazine. And it makes no difference if they ride them with a mane hold just so we get the stories. I am for WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for one and all times."

Mighty interestin', Ike, mighty interestin'. Of course there're always differences of opinion about things. Let's take the question of bits first. Bein' a little batty in the head about horses ourselves, we've got some strong opinions on bits; but they are not the opinions of everybody, nor does everybody agree with us by a long shot.

Personally, if a horse will go anywhere near right in a snaffle bit, we use it on him. With a drivin' bit, we use a plain bar half-cheek bit, preferably covered with leather or rubber. We

always use this type of bit in winter to keep the horse from havin' his lips and tongue skinned by stickin' to the bit. We wish there was a law that all horses had to have leather or rubber-covered bits in winter. Did you ever put your tongue on your skate when you were a kid and have it stick there?

We have bought horses that had been driven with the darndest collection of junk in their mouths you ever saw: double-wire bits, war bridles—all kinds of stuff. We have taken this kind of horses, put plain, rubber-covered bits in their mouths, and they have gone along like lambs. We feel that a cruel bit in a horse's mouth makes a puller out of him. His jaws get numb with pain, and he just fights it.

What is called a double bridle in the East, consists of a broken snaffle and a curb bit. The reins of the curb are attached to the end of a ring in a long cheek. In addition to this, a chain runs under the horse's lip. There is a ring in this chain, and through this runs a small leather strap which is attached to both cheeks. We have seen horses run away with this rig on, a strong man pullin' for all he was worth on all four reins; for there's another rein, we forgot to explain, which runs to the snaffle bit.

But—and there's always a but—you know there are on sale all kinds of controllers, as they are called. And there are lots of men, horsemen—and good ones—who will tell you how they fixed this or that puller with some kind of fancy device which made it torture for the horse to attempt to resist it.

You speak, Ike, of startin' a horse on a snaffle bit, not usin' a spade until the horse is accustomed to it. That's the way we feel about it, but don't think for a minute, Ike, that there aren't fellows who start right in with the theory that, because a colt is a colt and is likely to feel and act a little wild, it's better to strap him down every way possible. And they put all the bits in his mouth they can stuff into it and, in our opinion, thus do everything possible to ruin his mouth. And a horse with a good mouth is a joy and a delight; and a horse with a bad one, as you know, Ike, is awful. If you want to come in thoroughly exhausted after a ride, just mount a lugger, a puller, a borer. A hundred yards on a borer will tire you more than—well, perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say —ten miles on a horse with a velvet mouth.

Now about this ten-foot jumpin', Ike; we not only agree with you, but we are ready to back you up. As we said here in The Round-up when we met on the 29th of July, ten feet seems powerful high to us. The record, we think, for the high jump is eight feet one inch. "Confidence," a horse owned on Long Island, holds it. We have an idea that Dick Donnelly put "Heather Bloom" over a jump a little higher than that, but only in practice, we think.

We have seen a good many high-jumpin' contests; they are a feature in lots of Eastern horse shows. And believe us, a horse jumpin' over eight feet sure does have to climb. He does literally climb. Of course, as you say, it may have seemed ten feet. The first time we jumped a horse three feet, it seemed like he never was goin' to come down. We even had time to wish he wouldn't come down, because we felt sure we would go off of him when he did. Just like when we took our first soldier jump off the dock into the water, we sure thought we never would come to the surface again.

Thank Heaven, more horses are bein' trained now than broken. But it takes time to train a horse, to handle him; whereas you can break him, crush him, show him who's boss, in a comparatively short period.

As usual, we will be glad to have opinions as to bits and bitting.

The Swapper's Exchange is conducted for our readers. As explained in the Round-up of the March 25th issue we must make a flat-rate charge of one dollar for each ad received after April 1st. While this is the charge for one insertion of an advertisement, we will, if space permits, run it again without extra charge. On account of the necessity for making up a magazine in advance of publication date, it will be about eight weeks before your advertisement will appear. It must be distinctly emphasized that any who take advantage of this service, do so with the complete understanding that the Editor and Publishers of this magazine will not hold themselves responsible in any way for losses sustained by readers, nor can they act as arbiters in disputes. A remittance should be sent with each advertisement, addressed to "Swapper's Exchange," Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

KNITTER, new auto, with complete outfit. I will exchange this for any two of the following articles, or any one and $25—16-gauge, double-barreled shotgun, .30; .32-20 repeating rifle or carbine; .32-40 carbine; .22 repeating rifle; .32-20 or .38 or .45 Colt six-shooter, with 6-inch or 7½-inch barrel; pair of black-and-tan foxhound pups, 3 to 8 months old. Earl R. Homer, Box 147, R. D. 1, Youngstown, Ohio.

WATCH, Elgin, jeweled, with 25-year case and 20-year guaranteed 14 carat chain; these are slightly used. I will swap them for a Winchester rifle, .25-20 or .30-30, lever action, with long barrel. Also, I have one pair of Chevalier glasses made in Paris—to trade for ivory stocks to fit single-action Colt army revolver. Willis Enbanks, R. F. D. 4, Hillsboro, North Carolina.

HULL, for hydroplane, 16 feet by 42 inches; 5-horsepower marine engine; Metz auto motor; 19-inch speed propeller; anchor; Schebler carbureter. In exchange I want guns, motor cycle, bicycle motor wheel, or field glasses. Charles Goss, El Dorado, Iowa.

RIFLE, Winchester model 1894, 10-shot repeater. Will swap for Colt .38 or .45 Frontier single-action six-shooter, .38 or .45 Colt government model automatic, or cash. Also I have a Baker 12-gauge, double-barreled shotgun. What will you swap for it? F. L. Morse, care of F. M. Sherman, Windy Row, Peterboro, New Hampshire.

SADDLE, Texas cowboy; genuine pebble-grain leather chaps; fancy leather cuffs; Stetson hat; Mexican spurs; leather cowboy's bridle; .41 Bisley model Colt, with belt and holster. What kind of revolvers have you? I will swap for these or cash. K. McCulloch, R. F. D. 2, Jeffersonville, Indiana.

MIMEOGRAPH No. 76; mechanical-drawing set; maple manual training bench and coin collection, 90 pieces; old books and paintings. I will swap for hand printing press with outfit, 5x8 or larger, or typewriter. R. Gordon, 650 Center Street, Waukegan, Illinois.

SHOTGUN, Ithaca, 16 gauge; Remington .22 repeater; Winchester 1906 .22 repeater; .32 hammerless revolver; fishing rod and equipment; various tools; typewriter; various other articles. For particulars of swap address C. D. Hilty, Box 42, Bluffton Ohio.

VIOLIN; manicuring set—to swap for .22 revolver and holster. John Stahnick, 340 Wolf Street, Syracuse, New York.

LAND: 5 acres in Gloucester County, Texas; survey No. 52 in block M 1; ivory-handled .44 six-gun; .22 rifle. I will swap these for something worth $400—a good car or land in the Northwest. Joseph D. Parle, care of S. S. "Bayspring," Key West, Florida.

COURSE, in law, complete in 12 volumes. Will swap for typewriter or anything useful. W. E. Williams, Knoxo, Mississippi.

WIRELESS EQUIPMENT. I will swap it for a good two-cylinder Harley Davison or Indian motor cycle; canoe, or Colt .45 automatic. For further particulars address H. J. Harmon, 19 Popular Street, Mt. Joy, Pennsylvania.

AUTOMATIC, .32; one box of cartridges; small diamond tie pin. I will swap these for .45 Colt automatic or .45 six-shooter. Leo Degenhardt, Mendota, Illinois.

VULCANIZER, Haywood, complete plant; Palmer Photoplay course. Will swap for cash, guns, rifles—or what have you? Ray P. Seibert, 502 Lancaster Avenue, Rd. 1, Reading, Pennsylvania.

WANTED: Information as to where a young couple could file on a homestead, with timber and grazing facilities. Cash to exchange for a relinquishment with improvements and stock. William R. Link, 4209 North Whipple Street, Chicago, Illinois.

RIFLE, Remington model 16, .22 Ross hi-power, bolt-action sporter, with 24-inch barrel; .32 Colt automatic, with new holster; other articles. For particulars of swap address John Kelley, 112 Graham Avenue, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

COURSE in real-estate salesmanship, new. Will swap for .32 Colt automatic or almost anything. W. S. Hunt, 201 Brower Building, Bakersfield, California.

CRUISER, 40 feet long, 9½ feet wide, with 50-horsepower, heavy duty motor and closed glass cabin, complete in every way; house boat, with 5 rooms, completely furnished; speed boat, 24 feet long, with very fast 30-horsepower engine. Will swap for any good-paying business or cash. Address Box 464, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

HOUSE, containing 3 rooms, with one acre and 35 rods of subirrigated land, in Parker, Idaho; new 3-room house and lot, 50x200 feet, on Main Street, in Drummond, Idaho, close to Yellowstone National Park. For particulars of swap address C. F. Thompson, 951 North Street, Chehalis, Washington.

KODAK; fishing rod; telegraph instrument; sword; motor bike; revolving atlas of the world. I want a Westinghouse wireless receiving outfit with vacuum tubes, or cash. For further particulars address C. A. Carnagian, 251 Shawmut Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts.

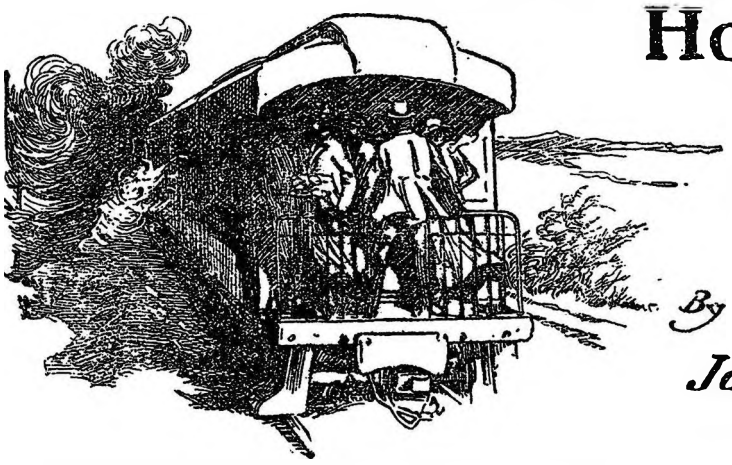
FIELD GLASSES; 2 watches; shotgun; flash light; blackjack; knife with case, complete army suit. I want a canoe, .45 Colt revolver, and .30 Winchester rifle with box magazine. Milton Englun, Rockville, Maryland.

RANCH, in mountainous game and trapping country, northwestern Oregon. For particulars of swap address G. E. Stellmaker, 611 Minna Street, San Francisco, California.

REVOLVER, .45 Colt single-action Frontier, with 7½-inch barrel; belt and holster; Remington .44 single-action Frontier with 8-inch barrel. Will swap for cash or useful articles. E. R. Becker, 2256 North 16th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

WAR BONNET; Indian pipe; various Indian articles and wearing apparel—to swap for beaded buckskin clothes. William A. Edwards, 214 Thomas Street, Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania.

Where To Go and How To Get There



By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THE HISTORY OF CASPER, WYOMING

SITUATED close to the geographical center of Wyoming, Casper furnishes an instance of the remarkable growth induced by the development of rich oil fields in its immediate vicinity. Not so many years ago, Casper was a cow town. Now it is a great industrial center. Its population has jumped from five thousand to over twenty thousand within the past five years. Oil is the golden magic that has worked the transformation. True, the picturesqueness and romantic elements associated with the life of the cowboy are gone, or else relegated to the back country where a great deal of cattle and sheep raising is still carried on.

Adjoining Casper on the west are gigantic oil refineries, where the crude product of the fields is rendered fit for the market. The Standard Oil Company of Indiana has large holdings hereabouts. Its refinery ranks as one of the largest and most important in the country, and it seeks to make permanent homes for its employees by putting up modern houses and selling them on the monthly payment plan. Many persons write to me about seeing the oil fields, so I suppose that phase of life appeals to them, and the great Salt Creek oil fields, a little way out from Casper, will, no doubt, prove worth a visit.

Of far greater interest to the man seeking an outlet for his activities under healthful conditions is the field that the country around Casper, in Natrona County, holds for the agriculturist. This great industrial activity means a large number of mouths to be fed, and naturally the men who can produce the necessary supplies of food close to the market will have a great advantage over those who must ship from a distance. At present the country around Casper is semiarid, only the land adjoining the rivers and creeks being suitable for agricultural purposes; and this land, as may

be readily inferred, is already occupied. The other land is chiefly given up to grazing cattle and sheep. The business men and commercial organizations of Casper are now working to secure approval for a vast irrigation project that will bring 125,000 acres of land around Casper under irrigation and solve the city's problem of a near-by food supply for its constantly growing industrial population. The site for a diversion dam has been chosen; it is situated in a cañon on the Platte River, about thirty-four miles southwest of Casper.

From a sight-seeing viewpoint, the feature of this part of Wyoming is the place known as Hell's Half Acre. Efforts are being made by the local chamber of commerce to have this tract set aside as a national monument, or at least as a State or county park. This remarkable natural curiosity resembles a giant bowl or depression in the earth, covering about three hundred and twenty acres. Its walls and pinnacles show variegated colorings and fantastic carvings, the latter as a result of erosion and the action of the winds. Many Indian arrowheads have been found in the bowl, thus giving rise to the theory that, in the early days, the Indians used the place as a corral into which they drove great herds of buffalo for slaughter. This theory is not generally accepted, the presence of the arrowheads being explained by the probability that they were used in hunting prairie chicken and sage hen.

There are immense caverns and grottoes extending into the walls of Hell's Half Acre, and it is easy for an inexperienced visitor to get lost. This was the adventure that befell two young men tourists from Brooklyn last summer. It took two hours to find them. Although attempts have been made to change the name of this spot to something more euphonious and ladylike, such as "Enchanted Lands," or "The Flaming Bowl," the inhabitants of the region stand firmly by the old title, and to them it will always be Hell's Half Acre.

A CHANCE TO HOMESTEAD

DEAR MR. NORTH: I was born in the West —Montana—and came to Wyoming three years ago to take charge of Elk Mountain Cattle Company. I am now deputy sheriff of Albany County, but expect soon to go up south of Yellowstone Park and take me up a homestead in God's country. I am wondering if, among your readers, there is not one or two who would like to go up with me. I savvy the country.

If they will write to me, I will be glad to tell them all about the country. There is lots of elk, bear, and deer in the locality I intend to settle in, lots of mountain trout and small game. One should not try to homestead without some means to go on, or some means of making a living. The reason I am writing this is that so many have asked about homesteading through W. S. M. Where I am to locate, you can get three hundred and twenty acres, with a nice creek on it; plenty of timber and free range handy; lots of good coal for home use, free for the digging; located in a valley with mountains on all sides; fir and pine timber in abundance. There are only a few claims, and they would be gone if they were not so far from a railroad. There is a little town of three hundred inhabitants sixteen miles away; we are only six miles from the forest reserve and forty miles from the closest oil fields. If you will publish this letter soon, I will try to help a few desirous of getting a good home in the West.

F. E. GORMAN.
709 South Tenth Street, Laramie, Wyo.

This proposition of Brother Gorman sounds attractive and worthy of looking into by any one who is seriously interested in homesteading, and who will bear in mind my previous warnings on the subject.

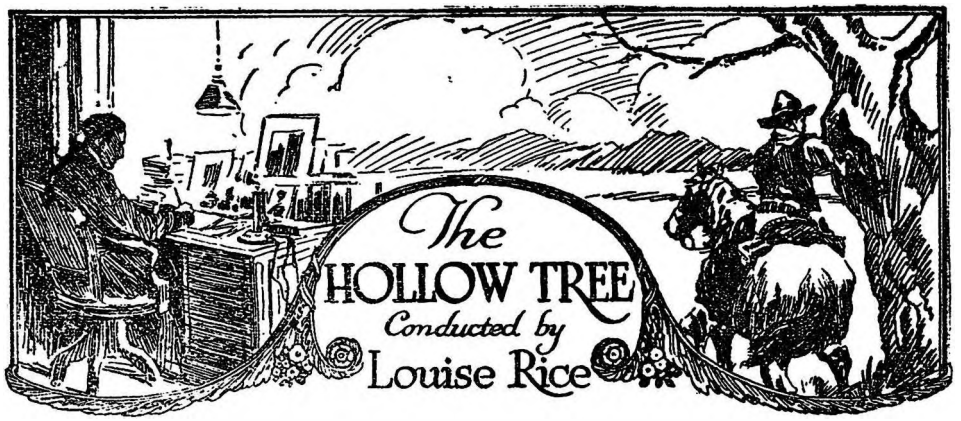
A CALL FROM "OLD SILVER

FRIEND NORTH: I am a lone wolf, known as "Old Silver," from the old Mexican line to northern Canada. From 1884 till 1899 I followed the trap line north of the Peace River, and, since coming back to the States, I followed the trap line till two years ago. I should like to get in touch with any of the old boys that care to send their call to me here. I sure will answer the call. Also, if any of the boys wish to hit the trap line

this fall, they may write to me, and I can help them some in answering questions as to what they need. ED. PRITCHARD.

703 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Ariz.

Here's a chance, you fellows who want to be trappers, to get some tips from an old hand who knows the game from A to Z. Don't ask him too many questions at once, though, and be sure to send a stamped, addressed envelope for reply. Thanks for the call, Friend Ed.



Miss Louise Rice, who needs no introduction to the fiction-reading public, will, in conducting this department, see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rice will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree. Please write your name and address plainly. This service is free. Come one, come all.

DON'T forget, folks, that the Gangsters ought, each and every one, to wear a Hollow Tree button. There are so many opportunities for those who do wear the little insignia of good will and fellowship to help others. The button must be worn, though, only by those who are pledged to do right and to "be kind," which is the whole obligation. But, my goodness, if we all did that, the troubles of this old world would be lessened by half!

Now for the letters. Here's one, right off, from the wearer of a pin:

DEAR MISS RICE: I have been a faithful reader of the magazine for two years, and I think that there is none like it. The stories ring true, and I am sure that they must faithfully depict many phases of Western life. I am a country girl of nineteen, and I like all kinds of sports, especially horseback riding, swimming, and skating.

I would give anything if only I could find a real girl pal through The Tree. I am sure that there are wonderful girls in The Gang, and I hope that I shall be lucky enough to hear from some of them. I do not receive many letters, and to have some one that I know would write to me for sure, every once in a while, would be a great pleasure.

Dear Miss Rice, I do hope that you will print my letter, even though it is such a simple little one; also, that I shall soon have some nice chums. And I am inclosing twenty-five cents for The Hollow Tree pin that is for us girls. EDWINA SIMMONS.

R. F. D. No. 1, Woonsocket, R. I.

Right across the country, now, to another good Hollow Tree Gangster's home.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I just have to tell what I think of the fine magazine that I find you in. I think that there is none better, and I have read magazines all of my life, when I wasn't traveling around. I will tell you of one of my trips.

We lived in Los Angeles, and my husband had been working in the movies a little; so, when we got a chance to go on a three-hundred-and-twenty-acre ranch up in the Mojave Desert, we lost no time in going. Then my husband got steady work in the movies, and I thought that I would go, anyway, and leave him to pull down the iron men. I had two little girls for company and was to drive in a hack, with my pinto ponies. They were named "Velvet" and "Sweetheart," and had not been driven for a while and were feeling kinda frisky, so we had some

fun at starting. It was a sort o' ticklish moment, but I had no serious mishap.

I was pretty tired the first night and made camp in a small town. The people were very kind to us, and one family had me camp in their yard, which I did; made my bed down on the ground and soon discovered that I was on an ant's nest. The little rascals certainly had a good time at my expense. You can believe me that I got an early start the following morning.

The next day I didn't find a place to buy hay until after dark, and I made my bunk by a pasture fence. I piled in early, figuring to get a good sleep, but right around there they had some kind of varmint that they called "mosquitoes." I say they seemed as big as humming birds. I made a smudge to drive them away, and was so tired that I dropped off while it was burning and woke up to find my bed on fire.

I made the ranch the next day, but not until one line broke and went flopping around Sweetheart's heels. Great excitement followed. It was a fortunate thing that I was on a good road, because I had to go out on the tongue before I could get the line. And for a minute or two I had a sort of feeling that maybe I wouldn't reach that ranch—at least, not entire.

Well, now we have bought some land here, and believe that we have settled. I would be glad to answer any inquiries from any of The Gang as to this part of the country.

(Mrs.) Iva Garber.

Dos Palmos, Cal.

Dear Miss Rice: I suppose it is nonsense for me to say again what we all seem to feel—that the W. S. M. is a necessary part of our lives, or that I think that The Hollow Tree was one of the niftiest ideas ever got up for a magazine. Well, I do!

I think that all The Gang are lovers of the out of doors, and I am no exception, I am sure. Every possible minute I am out in the open. Often *mon père* says that he does not see why he should pay rent for a house when there is usually no one in it, and I have told him repeatedly that a tent would suit me to a "t," but he can't seem to see it that way at all. I love to hike, and to a limited extent I have some knowledge of woodcraft, trailing, and so on; most of it I have obtained from my work as a scout.

When I was a child, I lived in Utah, and I still distinctly remember the wonderful scenery. Hope, one of these days, to see some of those wonders again.

I am very anxious to have some of the sisters of The Tree write to me.

Eleanor Thomas.

485 Buttlis Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

Brother Julius Wood, of No. 43 Hubbard Street, Buffalo, New York, wants us to answer a question and at the same time settle an argument. The question is: While Miss Rice refuses to forward letters from one sex to the other, is it to be understood that the persons who read The Tree shall not write to members of the opposite sex? The answer is that The Tree considers that writing of a member of, say, the male sex to a lady is a direct violation of the rules of this department; and, not only that, but it is a breach of good faith, since in publishing the addresses we are trusting to the honor of the public. Any one with refinement of heart can readily see why this rule is necessary. In The Gang there are wonderfully fine men and boys who would write to strange girls and women with the best of motives, but for them to do so would lay the way open for others who would not have the same standard of conduct. See, Julius?

Dear Miss Rice: Hello, everybody! How are all The Tree folks stackin' up, anyhow? Fine, I hope. Before I go any further, I had better say that my name is as per signed to this letter, but I answer to the handle of "Shorty" a heap better, since I fit that, being five feet three high from the bottoms of my boots to the top of my hat with a combination of sandy hair and blue eyes and twenty-two years of age.

I am a cow-puncher and bronk fighter and sure would like to hear from anybody that is interested. I ramble around a good deal, but, whenever I get where there's some W. S. M.'s loose, I sling my rope. Sure and pronto. I like The Tree a heap and will be proud to have my name in The Gang.

Well, folks, get busy and drop a few lines to a happy-go-lucky little cow-puncher that's been riding straight up and kickin' every jump, who will be down by The Tree a-lookin' for him soon. Harry Crosley.

Ideal, South Dak.

There, Shorty, we put it in, just as you wrote it; but, oh, my, you won't

be without "a few lines" long. Two guesses as to what we mean!

Every once in a while the postmistress of The Tree receives a letter that she can't read out because there are reasons why the writer of it does not want it done; but there are times when it seems a pity that the other members of The Gang cannot know what beautiful things are accomplished in the circle of The Tree. We have recently found out that one of The Gang has helped at least a dozen others with advice, practical help, long and intimate letters, and with that which is priceless—real love and affection; and that, through these efforts, those who so sorely needed help were brought into the better conditions of life toward which they were striving. We are not allowed to say who this is, but we know that all of you will unite in sending a message of loving fellowship toward the one who has shown so much of the spirit of The Tree.

DEAR MISS RICE: I believe that the W. S. M. is the only magazine which has the honor of being read from the back frontward; but, then, none of the others has a "Hollow Tree." My chum and I want to join the good old Gang. We are both Eastern girls. Both are seventeen. With best wishes for all, I am, yours very sincerely,

"JERRY" REEDER

7424 Broadway, Kansas City, Mo.

Some of you lads who have the "go" fever ought to write to the brother whose letter we will now read out:

DEAR MISS RICE: I am writing you a letter in regard to the following: I am planning a trip around the world, on which I want to work my way, and would like to make it a party of four fellows between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four. I would also like to hear from some fellows who have tried working their way through any part of the world and could say what they think about it. Any one who has been to South America or Africa would oblige me by writing. DONALD BAKER.

353 South James Street, Carthage, N. Y.

DEAR MISS RICE: I have lived in central Kansas all of my life. At the time from which I first remember it, there were several large ranches around here, and droves and droves of cattle; but all is changed now, as everything is wheat.

We farm nine hundred acres. We have a spring crop, but nearly all is planted to wheat in the fall. We use a large forty-to-eighty tractor. We have made some money, but we have come to the conclusion that we will return to the cattle business. My father is a cattleman and has bought and shipped stock for twenty years. My husband was a cowboy for a number of years, so that our determination to do this is not the result of mere infatuation with something that we know nothing about.

We are going to lease a cattle ranch for a time until we see just how things are coming out, and we would like to hear from any of The Gang that think they have something in a modest way that we would be able to swing with the capital that we have. We will explain all that to any one of The Gang. I do so want to take my youngsters to a place where the influences of the community will be good—where the outside as well as the inside influences will help to make them honest and upright children and, as they grow up, the right sort of citizens. Therefore, we would want to hear as much about the character of the country as about the possibilities of making money.

(MRS.) R. S. WELCH.

Attica, Kan.

DEAR MISS RICE: I have read the W. S. M. for a long time, but must confess that it was not until lately that I discovered The Tree. You may be sure now that I always look for it.

I want to get in touch with some good correspondents and also want to hear from any one of The Gangsters who live near Oneonta, New York, or Springfield, Missouri. I used to live on a farm near Oneonta and afterward went to Springfield, where I lived eight years. Then I came here. I like it here, but I am lonesome. I am just a boy nineteen years old, but have traveled around a lot. CHARLES MEADOWS.

Box 524, East Las Vegas, N. Mex.

You say that you want to be a Gangster, Charles? Well, we hereby give you the hand of fellowship and hope that you will be wearing our little Gang button when next you write.

Here is one of the real dyed-in-the-wool members of the Gang:

DEAR MISS RICE: I've been a rambler and a lone wolf since the tender age of ten,

and it seems that I have worked at everything under the sun—a mule skinner, a puncher, and a sailor and soldier in the last war. I have seen nearly all of the U. S. A., a good part of Europe and Canada, a lot of South America and old Mexico, also a bit of Alaska and Australia. I know that sooner or later I have to settle down, but she sure is tough to do. I find it real lonesome at times on account of wandering here and there and not making any permanent friends. I have been in many of the cities of this country and Europe and don't like them. I love the out of doors because she's nearer the One who made us and all; she's clean and fine and pure.

Here I go a-raving, sister. You will have to excuse me, for I sure am locoed when I get to talking about the out of doors. Just the same, I am a little lonely for a pal or two, and I do wish, Miss Rice, that you would get me in touch with some fellows who feel like I do, and who would be glad to write me and to hear from me.

JAMES RAY.

In care of The Tree.

We are always glad, of course, to hear that we have done well in helping some Gangster. Here's a letter about that.

DEAR MISS RICE: Thanks for the kind interest in caring for my mail. I made a satisfactory deal through The Tree, but, what was better, I made a good friend, too. Tell all the girls and boys of The Tree that I say "Howdy!"

DIAMOND JACK. (J. WALTER SPRINGMAN.)

DEAR MISS RICE: I have been reading with a great deal of interest the letters in The Hollow Tree, and to my mind this department is perfectly splendid. This is the way that we can all make new and often worthwhile friends. I would like very much to correspond with some young women, preferably of Wyoming, though I will be glad to hear from anywhere. I hardly count myself much of a letter writer, but I will do my best to answer all who write me. Would like to exchange views of home towns and surrounding country. Some years ago I had the pleasure of seeing California, and, as I had a great many stop-offs, I had a good chance to judge some Westerners. They surely treated me fine. With best wishes to The Hollow Tree, I am, fraternally yours,

PEGGY.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I would like to hear from fellows who are interested in art, illustrating, painting, and music. I will answer all letters, no matter how many they are. I want to exchange views and ideas, and to sharpen my wits by writing to those who have the same ambition that I have.

JAMES C. PETTIGREW.

Evans City, Butler County, Pa.

Facts for Outdoor Adventurers

Conducted by Raymond S. Spears

"Outfitting for Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Camping, and Inland Water-cruising."

Any of you who wish to discover the happy land of your dreams, write Raymond S. Spears. He will tell you how to realize your hopes; what to wear, what to eat; trapping, hunting, and fishing conditions; how to build your shack, etc. What would you like to do most? What pleasure would you like most to take?

QUESTIONS: 1. I would like to know a place where one can build himself a cabin and pasture a horse or two, somewhere in the foothills of the Rockies. 2. Where would the hunting and trapping be good, and the weather not too severe? 3. How much would it cost to live in such a region for a year? 4. What is the law on guns and pistols in this region?

Texas. GLENN R. RATLIFF.

Answers: 1. The Rockies offer you many such places. Starting out of Trinidad, Colorado, say, toward the westward, or in northern New Mexico, or almost anywhere in that range, you could put up a cabin, subject to the national forest laws and State game laws. The exact location would have to be searched for by the one desiring to build. You could locate public lands through the Public Lands Office. It wouldn't do to build on ranch lands without permission.

2. In Colorado, State game has been badly shot off, and stringent laws prevail. Here and there these laws are enforced. Where they aren't enforced, natives kill off the game. Probably the hardest thing to find is good game and fur country. But, of course, a man who knows the outdoors can find it by prospecting back into the hills. But no one knows where the fur country is till he has found it himself.

3. Food, clothes, outfit. When one has himself equipped, it costs about five dollars a week to camp out these days. Many experienced campers are able to get by for much less than this by cutting down to fundamentals, as corn, beans, flour, salt, et cetera, with bacon.

4. Hunters must have hunting licenses; many regions now require fishing licenses, too; trapping sometimes go with hunting licenses, nonresidents being obliged to pay up to fifty dollars for big-game permits; much game is forbidden to any one, as mountain sheep, beaver, et cetera. Pistols and revolvers are subject to State and municipal regulations.

Questions: 1. I live at Tia Juana, but at present reside at Pasadena, California. I want to take a horseback trip from Tia Juana

to Texas. What conditions would one encounter on this trip? 2. What should I carry, wear, and eat? A. R. M.
California.

Answers: 1. You would cross the Sierra Madre Mountains, which is fine country, rough and wild, with a good highway and reasonably frequent water. There is a dry stretch past Coyote Wells, but through Imperial Valley you would make fair way. Eastward, then, lies a desert hard to cross. You must carry water for yourself and beasts. Through Yuma, you would most likely follow up the Gila River; the border route is long, arid, and dangerous; it is a desert land all the way eastward, with occasional irrigated gardens and available water; it would be a wonderful trip, but must be made in winter, and you are a good horseman if you can take your animals through.

2. Carry water, food, and a good rifle. Probably you would need two pack horses. One would pack four five-gallon cans of water, for example. Take blanket, tarp—waterproof canvas—meal, flour, bacon, salt, and compact foods of kinds you know best how to prepare. You will need regular cowboy or prospector's clothes, ready for hot, dry weather or bitter mountain-ridge cold, including chance of a blizzard. I rolled the route from Yuma to Tia Juana in a car, and I'd suggest an automobile rather than a horse outfit, unless you are planning to leave the highways in which case you'll have a real adventure.

Question: Our shooting here is open country—squirrels, quail, rabbits, et cetera. What shotgun and length of barrel should I buy?
Connecticut. CHARLES PEPION.

Answer: Sportsmen are buying smaller-gauge guns now than formerly. My own choice would be twenty-gauge, twenty-six-inch barrel—the best length. The twenty-eight-gauge gun is growing popular and is used even for wild fowl. The sixteen-gauge piece has much to commend it. The twelve-gauge gun is the standard choice of hunters.

BETWEEN A BEAR AND A MULE

RECENT forest fires in northern British Columbia are said to have caused strange antics in some of the wild animals of the woods. A fight between a fire-crazed bear and a mule, in which the bear failed to get the better of the mule, occurred at L. Mason's ranch near Bednesti, B. C. The bear had been routed from its lair by the forest fire, and in its mad dash from the flames into the open country it collided with a mule. A double tattoo from the capable hind hoofs of the jack mule promptly stretched the bruin out on the ground, and the mule calmly resumed its interrupted grazing.

Picking itself up, the thoroughly angered bear now decided to make a cautious approach upon the mule from a new angle. A resounding thwack of the huge paw caught the mule on the ribs. Unfortunately for the bear, the mule at once maneuvered for a fresh position. When the hoofs were again brought into play, the fight was off so far as the bear was concerned. In the meantime, Mr. Mason, who had been a spectator of the unusual encounter, had gone to the house to get a rifle to finish the bear. When he returned to the scene of the encounter, he saw the bruin groggily getting to its feet and beating a retreat to the less dangerous environment of the forest fire.

MISSING

This department, conducted in duplicate in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

HINSON, GEORGE C.—He was born in Clench County, Georgia, about forty years ago, and is the son of King and Susie Hinson. He is supposed to be somewhere in the West. Information about him will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Mrs. J. E. Welch, 909 West Adams Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

ANDERSON, NILS FREDERICK.—He left his family in Christiana, Norway, and came to the United States, where he was last heard of in San Francisco. His son is anxiously seeking news of him, and will greatly appreciate any assistance in finding him. Nils Frederick Anderson, 7 Miller Place, Woburn, Massachusetts.

CURRAN, PATRICK.—He left Limerick, Ireland, about twenty-five years ago for New York City, and was last heard of in the Klondyke. Any information that will help to find him will be appreciated. Frank Collins, 312 East Forty-second Street, New York City.

O'ALKINS, TERRY and MABEL.—They were last heard from in Winnipeg, Canada, but gave no street address, and letters sent to them there have been returned. Any information as to their present address will be gladly welcomed. Mrs. J. L. Jordan, R. F. D. 1, Box 33, Selah, Washington.

BROWN, MRS. JOHNNIE.—She left her home at Pleasant Grove, Texas, to go to Eastland to have her teeth attended to on March 11, 1920, and has not been seen or heard of by her family since. Her children want her to write to them, or come home, and will be grateful for any information that will help them to communicate with her. Brown, care of this magazine.

DOWNS, ROY T.—Your wife is very anxious to hear from you, and wants you to forgive all and come home as soon as possible. She is always waiting for you, and hopes to see you, or hear from you very soon. H. D.

FISH, JOSEPH WARREN.—He disappeared from his home in Portchester, New York, on November 3, 1920. He is thirty-three years old, five feet six inches tall, broad-shouldered, with brown hair and eyes, and wears glasses. His wife will be grateful for any information that will help her to find him and bring him back to his two babies. Mrs. Estella Fish, care of this magazine.

EPLER, SHERMAN H.—He is an entertainer and gives illustrations in chalk. His address is wanted by Miss Carrie E. Myer, R. R. E. Box 202, Terre Haute, Indiana.

FOLLIETT, LEE ROY.—He was last heard of in San Francisco in October, 1919. He is twenty-two years of age, six feet three inches tall, and has dark-brown hair and eyes. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his parents. Mrs. F. L. Folliett, 4611 South Thirty-fifth Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

BUCHERT, WARREN B.—He is now about fifty years old, and has been missing for thirty years. He limps slightly. His brother's name is Josiah. His nephew would like to hear from him, and will greatly appreciate any information that would help to find him. Warren H. Buchert, R. F. D. 5, Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

TENNEY, ELLIOTT EVANS.—Dear brother, please let us hear from you. Mother and father are longing to see you again. Dorrice is married, and all of us, including Oliver, are hoping that you will return some day. Louise.

BARGER, MRS., formerly of White Plains, New York, and **ED. C. JORDAN**, of Chicago and St. Paul, please write to V. M. Kelly, care of this magazine.

ANDERSON, WALLACE.—He is a logger, and is known in the woods as "Highball Anderson." He is twenty-six years old, over six feet tall, and has dark hair and eyes. A friend will be grateful for any information as to his present address. V. W., care of this magazine.

MORRISON, LEE and COLLIN.—Please write to your sister Bee, who has very important news for you. Mrs. Charles Obelisk, 306 South Maple Street, Kellogg, Idaho.

FLOY.—It is nearly two years since I heard from you. Please write to auntie at the ranch. She will send your letter to me wherever I may be. Remember that mother will always love you and stick to you, no matter what others may do. Just let me hear from you. Your mother.

ATTENTION!—Any orphan girl, born on January 23, 1904, or about that date, or any girl left in an orphan asylum, or adopted from one, who does not know her right name, or where she was born, is asked to communicate with M. L. H., care of this magazine.

WELCH, JOHNNIE E.—He was born in Glens Falls, New York, May 24, 1859-60. His father's name was Robert, and his mother's maiden name was Norah O'Brien. Both were from Waterford, County Cork, Ireland. There were eleven sisters. Any one who can give information about these sisters, or any of their relatives, will do a great favor by writing to W. B. Welch, 909 West Adams Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

OTT, WALTER.—He is twenty-five years old, short and rather stout. He left home last March, and was last heard of in Vermillion, Ohio, and was going to leave there for Cleveland, but has not been heard from since. His mother is worrying herself sick about him, as she fears that something may have happened to him, and she is very anxious that he should come home or write to her and let her know that he is all right. His name is tattooed on his right arm. Any information about him will be gladly received by his distressed mother, Mrs. Louise Ott, care of this magazine.

TAYLOR, LILLIE ARDELLA E., the daughter of Claire and Elias Taylor, colored, was born in Stokes County, North Carolina, and is now about thirty-nine years old, mulatto, with straight brown hair and large brown eyes. There is a small scar on the right side of her face. She left Winston Salem in September, 1900, and was last heard of at Newport News, Virginia. Her sister would be very happy to hear from her, or from any one who can give information about her. Mrs. Harriette Bond, care of this magazine.

BUFFINGTON, NANNIE M.—She was adopted over twenty years ago by Fred Klines and his wife in Dallas, Texas, and is now twenty-five years old. They moved to St. Louis in 1902-03. Nannie's sister, who is her only living relative, would be very happy if she could find her, and will greatly appreciate any helpful information. Mrs. Amanda Duncan, Box 308, Burbank, Oklahoma.

MURRAY, JOHN L.—Please write to your wife, who is very anxious to hear from you, and wants you to come back to her. She is at home in Selma, and will be more than happy to get a letter from you.

CONOVER, WILLIAM.—His home is in Brooklyn, New York. He was in a newspaper office in London, England, at the outbreak of the World War. Then he returned to the United States, and when last heard from, in 1916, was on his way to Boston. Any information that will help to find him will be greatly appreciated by his old friend, Albert Hoffman, 616 Leigh Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

HISSIE.—I have been sick in hospital, but am well now, and am thinking of you and the rest all the time. Give my love to mother, and if you love me write to me in care of this magazine. Piney.

WILSON, WILLIAM, and his family, who left Belfast, Ireland, in June, 1916, and landed in New York, where they lived with their son William. Mr. Wilson, Sr., was an iron molder by trade. A friend would be glad to know where these people are and will greatly appreciate any information that will help her to communicate with them. Mrs. L. Tomlinson, care of this magazine.

CARMELL, PEARL.—He was last heard of during the war at Fort Greble, Rhode Island. He is requested to write to his uncle, as there have been several deaths in the family since last year. J. H. Carmell, Marlin, Texas.

WEEKS, HARVEY O.—He is asked to write to Floyd H. King, who is very anxious to hear from him, and will be grateful for any news of him. He hopes he will see this and write to him in care of this magazine.

SMITH or SMYTHE.—I was born on Governor's Island in 1868, where my father was a private soldier, and my mother was matron of the hospital. They both died in 1871. There were three children, Mamie, Catherine, and Thomas. The two girls were sent to the Catholic Protectory in Westchester County, New York, and Thomas, who was an infant, was placed in the Foundling Asylum in New York City. Mamie died in 1882, and I, Catherine, am seeking my brother, who may have been adopted, and is probably known by another name. If he is alive I hope he will see this and write to me. Mrs. C. McLaughlin, care of this magazine.

STOREY, DAN.—He was last heard of in 1918 in Carlton, Minnesota. An old friend would be very glad to hear from him, and has good news for him. L. P., care of this magazine.

SCOFIELD, RALPH.—He is six feet tall with blue eyes and fair complexion, and was last heard from in Chattanooga, Tennessee, about twelve years ago. His half sister would be glad to hear from him, or from any one who can give her news of him. Frances, care of this magazine.

YOUNG, MRS. THERESA E.—She was born in Auburn, New York, and has been missing for about three years. She has brown hair and blue-gray eyes. She has a daughter about nine years old. Her brother has important news for her and is anxious to find her as soon as possible. He will be most grateful for any helpful information. James E. A. Coyle, 721½ Almond Street, Syracuse, New York.

GALANTE, GIOVANNI ANTONIO.—When last heard of in November, 1918, he was serving a sentence in jail near Philadelphia. His brother is very anxious to hear from him and to know how he is getting along, and will be grateful to any one who can tell where he is, so that he may write to him. Orazio Galante, care of this magazine.

ARNESON, MARTIN.—He was a newspaper editor in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1880. His wife, Bertha, died in 1891, and his son, who was then two years old, was placed in a home. The father was never heard from after that, nor any of the other children, a boy and two girls. He would be glad to hear from them, or from any relatives of his family, and would be most grateful for any information that would help him to communicate with them. Melvin Arnold Arneson, care of this magazine.

BONNEY, MRS. LOTTIE, maiden name Jackson, forty-seven years old, and her daughter, Maud Bonney, about fourteen years old. They were last heard of in 1912, when they were in Seattle, but were traveling about and had only post-office addresses. It is believed that they are now in Canada. Mrs. Bonney's daughter, Honor, is very anxious to get news of her mother and sister, and will be deeply grateful to any one who can give her information about them. Honor Bonney, care of this magazine.

COVER, CHARLES FRAZIER.—He was last heard of in 1913, when he was in Chicago. He is about forty-seven years old, five feet eight inches tall, and has light-brown hair and blue eyes. His son, **EARL HARRISON COVER,** set out to look for his father, and was last heard from in Cleveland, Ohio. He is about twenty-five years old. They are both from Pittsburgh. Charles F. was a master plumber. His niece would be grateful for any information that would help her to communicate with her relatives, and hopes, if they see this, that they will write to her. Mrs. S. J. Jones, 1902 First Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

MAGSON, ALBERT.—He was born in London, England, and is about thirty years of age. He left England about nine or ten years ago, and when last heard of was living with his sister in Montreal, Canada. His mother is very anxious to get news of him and will be glad to hear from any one who has known him, or who can tell her anything about him. Please write to his brother, William L. Magson, 513 Meade Street, Watertown, New York.

EMERSON, MAE.—When you see this get in touch with me at once. Register to "Jo" at Cassidy's, Philadelphia. Your husband, Rae.

HALEY, ROSALIND MAE, who lived at 14 Dominick Street, New York City, when she worked for "State Theater," is asked to write to her old friend. She disappeared on June 20th last, and no word has been received from her. C. S., care of this magazine.

LEN T.—Please write mother at "The Hollies," or me, care of this magazine. D. G.

HOUSTON, JEANNE.—If you want assistance of any kind, please let me help. In any case, write in care of this magazine, or at my home address. Dave.

NORRIS, JAMES.—He left his home in Champaign County, Illinois, in 1905, and has not been seen or heard of since. He was twenty-four years old at that time, six feet tall, and had red hair. Any news of him will be greatly appreciated by his son, Cecil Norris, R. R. 4, Champaign, Illinois.

KINNEY, MILAN.—He lived in Rising City, Nebraska, and would be now about sixty or sixty-five years old. He had a sister or niece named Mary Kinney, who married Ardeno Griffith. They had a son, Clark Sylvestus Kinney, and a girl named Roby, born at Rising City. They moved to St. Elmo, Illinois, where two more girls, Floy and Bessie, were born. The father was killed in a train wreck and the mother died soon after. It is believed that there are still some relatives on both sides of the family living at Rising City, and any news of them would be very highly appreciated. Bessie, care of this magazine.

RYAN, CHARLES C.—He was last heard of in Fort Wayne in 1920-21, where he was in the restaurant business. He is about forty years old, with brown curly hair and hazel eyes, is five feet ten inches tall, and was married to a girl named Laura M. Gulling. He was formerly a railroad conductor on the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad at Franklin Park, Illinois. His mother's estate is about to be settled, and his sister is anxious to know his present whereabouts. Any information that will help her to communicate with him will be gratefully received. Anna J. Ryan, care of this magazine.

KERNS, or KEARNS, GEORGE.—His daughter Nellie was placed with her sister Annie, in St. Ann's Home, at East Ninetieth Street, New York City, in 1888-89, by her father, after the death of her mother. She has never heard of her father since that time, and would be grateful for any information about him. Mrs. Nellie Anderson, care of this magazine.

LOVELL, EARL, sometimes known as Earl Elliot. He was last seen in Chicago in June, 1919. He is twenty-six years old, about five feet eleven inches tall, with blue eyes, dark hair, and ruddy complexion. He was in the service in 1918. It is believed that he has some relatives named Skippon. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be gratefully appreciated by P. M. Edgerton, 2908 Reading Road, Cincinnati, Ohio.

JUSTICE, MILLIGAN, ARTHUR, and GORDON.—They were last heard of when they left Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, for the West, in the fall of 1904. Milligan is now about forty-seven years of age, heavy set, with dark hair and eyes. Gordon has light curly hair and blue eyes. Any information as to their whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by their sister, Mrs. Hazel Neighborgall, R. R. 2 Bristol Road, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

KUCHAR, BESSIE.—She was last heard of in New York City, where she was a stenographer, and was sometimes known by the name of Betty Bessie Paul. She has brown hair and gray eyes. Any information that will lead to communication with her will be greatly appreciated by her mother, Mrs. Justina Kuchar, care of this magazine.

LANDON, JESSE.—When last heard from he was in Guthrie, Oklahoma. A friend would like to hear from him or from any one who knows his address. A. B. Adkins, General Delivery, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

BYRNE, JIM W.—He is a union baker, and was last heard from in Kansas City, Missouri. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a favor by writing to O. Pierce, care of this magazine.

STANLEY, BRUCE T.—He was last heard from when he was discharged from the army at Camp Grant, Illinois, July 29, 1921, and said that he was going to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to join a former army pal. He is five feet eight inches tall, rather heavily built, with black hair and dark eyes, and is an auto mechanic by trade. His mother and sister are very anxious to hear from him, and he will make them happy if he will write to them. Any information that will help to learn his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his mother, Mrs. D. T. Stanley, Dalworth Park, Texas.

DOUGLASS, EDWARD V.—He disappeared from New Braunfels, Texas, twelve years ago. He is five feet six inches in height, forty-five years old, with brown hair and dark-brown eyes. Any one who can give information about him will do a very great favor by writing to his wife, Mrs. E. V. Douglass, care of this magazine.

ROGERS, MRS. J. H., whose maiden name was Sarah Ann Dawson, and who lived in Cleveland, Ohio, twenty-two years ago. She is now forty-eight years old and had dark-brown hair and eyes. Her only sister is anxiously seeking her and will be deeply grateful for any information that will help her to know where she is. Mrs. E. Roberts, care of this magazine.

SMITH, LEE or BUD, sometimes called "Denver Red," a pool player and painter, five feet eleven inches tall, with red curly hair, gray-blue eyes, and about forty-three years old. Also relatives of **JOHN HENRY GAHBREY** or **GABBERY.** He died twenty-nine years ago, and his wife, whose maiden name was Alice Smith, died twenty-six years ago. There were three children, two girls and a boy. Any news of them will be gladly received by a relative. S. Goodman, Box 555, Fellows, California.

PALM, MRS. MARY LEE.—When last heard of she was in Marshall, Texas. Any information regarding her will be greatly appreciated by D. Empsey Palm, 2624 Trinidad Street, Dallas, Texas.

STANLEY, HUBBELL.—Buster, write to Daddy at once. Much worried. F. A. Bellwood, 826 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, New York.

McCORD, JOHN.—He left home seven years ago, and when last heard from was in Webster City, Iowa. He was then nineteen years old. His mother would be very grateful for any news of him, and hopes he will see this and write to her. Mrs. N. Payne, 601 Prospect Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

GALLAGHER, HUGH CHARLES.—He and his wife separated shortly after the birth of their son, who was born in Oelwein, Iowa, May 6, 1902. His son would be glad to hear from him, and hopes that some friend of his, or he himself, may see this notice, and write to him, or tell his father to write. He will be glad to hear from any one who can help him to get in touch with his father. George W. Gallagher, 3315 Twenty-fourth Avenue South, Seattle, Washington.

HOLLEY, or PARKER, CLEO, whose home is in Walla Walla, Washington, and who was last heard of in Eureka and Kalispell, Montana. Her old chum "Merle" would like to hear from her, and will appreciate any information that will help her to communicate with her. Mrs. L. V. La May, Route 12, Box 220-F, Los Angeles, California.

ROLLINS, EMMETT.—He was last heard from in Terre Haute, Indiana. He is about forty-two years old, five feet two inches in height, with black hair and brown eyes. The third finger of his right hand is crooked. Any information about him will be greatly appreciated by his son, Keith Rollins, Mounds, Illinois.

FUQUAY, MARIA.—Please write and let me know where you are. I am worried about you. E. M. Stevens, Hollyrood Hotel, Riverside, California.

CHASE, HELEN R.—Please send your address to this magazine or write to your anxious daughter, who is grieving about you. Address 515 Jersey Avenue, Spring Lake, New Jersey.

LEWIS, D. R.—He has been missing for four years, and is now twenty-four years old. His dear old father would be very glad to hear from him, and hopes he will write to him very soon. T. S. Lewis, Box 404, Hartselle, Alabama.

MILLER, MARGARET or MARJORIE.—She used to live around Fifty-first Street and Eighth Avenue, New York City, and is believed to be engaged in some chorus. Any one who knows her whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to G. G., care of this magazine.

TUCKER, MARGARET, generally known as Peggy.—She left Logansport, Indiana, in 1919, and was last heard of in California. Any information as to her whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by her old friend Walter Stults, 1116 Graff Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana.

MYRES, ROSE, or GRACE MILLER.—Please write to J. B. at once, as there is something very important to tell you. J. B., care of this magazine.

HOWARD.—Please let me hear from you. I have had no rest or happiness since you left. I want to come to you, so please write to me at home. Your wife, Ruby.

CARPENTER, W. L., sometimes known as W. L. Richardson. He left Corning in May, 1920, with the Robinson Circus, and was last heard of in December, 1921, at Blackhawk Ranch, Danville, California. His brother will gratefully appreciate any information that will help to find him. Arthur B. Carpenter, 131 Myrtle Street, Corning, New York.

GLOSEK, MARION, also known as Marion Wood. Any one who knows his whereabouts is asked to be kind enough to write to M. G., care of this magazine.

POTTER, VIOLA E.—Any one who knows her address will do a great favor by sending it to A. A. M., care of this magazine.

MENHART, CARL.—Please write to your old pal, Dutch. A. E. Williams, care of Bell Telephone Company, Greenberg, Pennsylvania.

WELLS, MRS. GEORGE, who formerly resided at 467 Superior Street, Victoria, B. C., is being sought by her brother, Thomas Saunders, 469 Gilmour Street, Peterboro, Canada.

BAKER, FAY.—Remember the marine guard of the old U. S. S. "Brooklyn." They are all scattered now, and I shipped over. Please write to me. E. E. Richard, care of this magazine.

PENNYPACKER, ANNA.—Her sister, who has her three orphan children, would like to hear from her. The children want their mother. Miss Mary Leonard, 2505 North Fourth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

TOUGH, JAMES.—He was last heard of in 1915, when he was living on Rhode Island. His nephew, who was in the army at that time, would like to hear from him. James Milne, 19½ Western Avenue, Waterville, Maine.

MELTON, RICHIE and FLOYD CONDAL.—They were placed in the Soldiers' State Orphans' Home at Atchison, Kansas. Any information in regard to their whereabouts would be thankfully received by their mother, Mary Melton, R. R. 5, Box 5, Winchester, Kentucky.

WHIPKEY, RALSTON R., who lived at Casselmain, Pennsylvania, attended the Ohio Military Institute, 1913-14, is asked to write to his old pal. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a great favor by sending his address to E. A. R., Box 534, Winslow, Arizona.

LARSON, JONAS.—He was last heard of five years ago when he was working in Brooklyn, New York. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his cousin, Algat Stendahl, 77 Sigourney Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

SUTHERLAND, CARL B.—He served in the army during the World War in the first division. He has not been heard from since July, 1921. He is twenty-four years of age, five feet seven inches tall, has light-brown hair and blue eyes, and weighs about one hundred and thirty pounds. He also has a large brown birthmark spot on his left cheek. The last letter received from him came from Freedmount, Idaho. His mother and sister are very anxious about him and will greatly appreciate any information that will help them to know where he is. Mrs. Eva Sutherland, Beaver Bay, Minnesota.

MILLER, ROBERT and DANIEL.—They are twelve and fourteen years old, and have been missing for eight years. Their mother would like to hear from them, and will be most grateful for any information about them. Mrs. Dora Miller, care of this magazine.

CAMP, MAE VAUGHAN.—She was last heard of at Fort Worth, Texas, Christmas, 1921. Any one who knows her present address will do a favor by sending it to an old friend, who hopes she will see this and write herself. C. B. J., care of this magazine.

McGINNIS, ELLA, who worked in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1892-93. A friend is anxious to communicate with her relatives, who lived at one time in Detroit, Michigan. Any one who knows them will do a favor by writing to A. Briggs, 1015 Summit, Kansas City, Missouri.

WILKERSON, from Jackson, Mississippi, who was on the U. S. S. "St. Louis" in 1920, and got transferred to the "Pittsburgh" at Sheerness, England, on October 1, 1920. He was a fireman, third class, and was in the molders' shanty on the "Pittsburgh" under "Doc." He is asked to write to his pal and shipmate, W. R., care of this magazine.

JOSEPHSON, WILLIAM.—He left England about twenty years ago, and made his home in Chicago. He disappeared about ten years ago, and nothing has been heard about him by his family since that time. His relatives will greatly appreciate any information that would help to find him, and hope he will see this notice and write to J. Sidney, care of this magazine.

SCOTT, MRS. ALMA SEFRONIA.—She was last heard of at Vancouver, Washington. She married when she was sixteen years old, on the 15th of October, 1920. Any information that would help to know her present whereabouts, or would give any news of her or her husband, Charley Scott, would be gladly received by her mother, Mrs. Josie Miller, Box 512, Hermiston, Oregon.

CRAMER, JACK.—Please write to your pal for old times' sake. Helen-Frenchy, care of this magazine.

SPALDING, WARREN S.—He left Dallas, Texas, about eighteen years ago, and was last heard from at Seattle. Later it was heard that he was in Helena, Montana. When he went away he left a wife and two children, a boy and a girl. His daughter would like very much to hear from him, and to know him, and hopes that some one will help her to find him. Ruth Spalding, care of this magazine.

DAVIDSON, WILLIAM EDWARD, of Canyon, Texas. Please write to your friend. Everything is O. K.

WILSON, WALTER and MOLLIE.—They were last heard from at Bonita, Louisiana, in September, 1914. Also **ALMA HAGAN,** who was last seen at Lillie, same State, in 1902-03. Any information about them will be greatly appreciated by Mrs. E. L. Johnston, Crossett, Arkansas.

McKAY, JOHN, last heard from in Vancouver, B. C. Write to your friend Parker at Ottawa. Itoyw.

JONES.—I was born on March 17, 1903. My parents were Anna Butler and Isaac Wegley Jones. My brothers are Fred Hampton, Carl and Harley. My parents separated when I was nine years old, and the other children were put in an orphan asylum in St. Louis, Missouri, but I stayed with my father for a short time, and then he went away and I have never seen him since. When I last heard of my mother she was in Oklahoma, but I have been unable to trace her, or any of my relatives. I would be very grateful to any one who can help me to find my people. Sylvester Jones, care of this magazine.

MOORE, GEORGE WILLIAM.—He has been missing since February 10, 1910. He is six feet tall, with brown hair, gray eyes, and fair complexion. He was twenty-four years old when he left home. When last heard of he was in Denver, Colorado. Any information that would help to find him will be gratefully appreciated by his father, W. S. Moore, care of this magazine.

GOODWIN, ROBERT GRAHAM.—He was born in 1875, in Kendall, England, and was last heard of in Sudbury, Ontario, in July, 1921. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be thankfully received by his wife, Mrs. Thomasina Goodwin, care of this magazine.

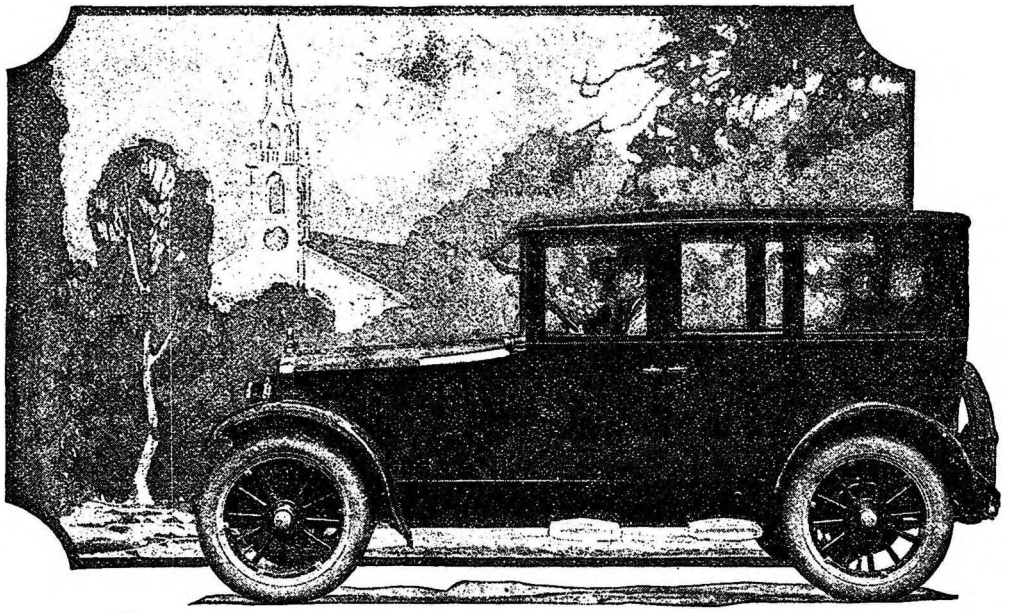
HURD, R. A.—Your father has been sick for some time and wants you to come home. Your mother has a broken arm, and wants you to send her an address so that she can write to you, and please write to her at once. E. M. Hurd, 6537 Dibble Avenue, Seattle, Washington.

DODD, CHARLES GEORGE.—He is a salesman, and has not been heard from for nine years. His wife died ten years ago, leaving a small son, who is now eleven years old, and is with his grandmother, who is a widow, and would be glad to have her son-in-law help to support his boy. Any information that will help to find him will be gladly received. Mrs. E. M. Green, 1435 West Fifty-fourth Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

WELTY, EDWARD.—He was last heard from in Cleveland, Ohio, in April last. His wife would like to hear from him, and hopes he will write to her soon, in care of this magazine.

CLEVELAND SIX

THE WONDER CAR OF THE YEAR



Appeals Alike To Pride And Purse

THIS new Cleveland Six Sedan meets most completely both the thrift ideal and the demand for fine quality which are foremost in the minds of thinking Americans today.

Smart style, luxurious comfort, generous, responsive power are combined with strength and durability in this car. It is the lowest priced six cylinder sedan that has a Fisher-built body.

Today's Best Buy In Closed Cars.

Touring Car . . .	$1095
Roadster	$1085
Five Passenger Sport	$1260
Coupe	$1495

All Prices F. O. B. Cleveland

SEDAN $1585

CLEVELAND AUTOMOBILE CO., CLEVELAND

Export Dept: 1819 Broadway, New York City Cable Address, "*Cleveauto*"

The Lady With the Lamp

SHE was the kindest thing—
that war-stricken men had ever known.

She always made the last nightly round of the wards herself. The bitterly wounded soldiers who watched for the light that shed its halo about her gave her the loving title: *"The Lady With the Lamp."*
"The Lady" was Florence Nightingale.

From the far-off day—
of the Crimea—down through the years—her beautiful spirit has shone undimmed. It was the light that illumined the way for the first training school for nurses. It was in the glow of her inspiration that the Red Cross was founded.

And it is to Florence Nightingale—
that the world owes the knowledge that in terms of national power, prestige and wealth it pays to nurse men in times of war. But even with that knowledge it was not fully realized until a few years ago that it would pay to nurse men, women and children in times of peace.

Then came the Great Light—
what the world needed was to make health, instead of disease, *catching.* The Light pointed the way—the visiting nurse.

The Lady With the Lamp

For who could take health into the home as she could? Who could come into such sympathetic relations with the family? Who else could so completely gain a mother's confidence? Who could win such love and respect that big men obeyed her as little children? Who could bring such a sense of security as this self-reliant woman in her trim uniform—a badge of service that even the lowest criminal respects?

And in whom else could be found the tenderness of a woman and the courage of a man? Often in rural districts where the doctor is miles away—she fights alone through the long night. In the slums of the city she hurries through darkened streets and up foreboding stairways on her errands of mercy.

10,000 Public Health Nurses—

are at work today, in towns, cities and in rural districts. Still there are not enough to go round, for there are few business, educational, civic or religious bodies that do not *now* recognize that it pays to nurse people—few that do not recognize the need for extending the service.

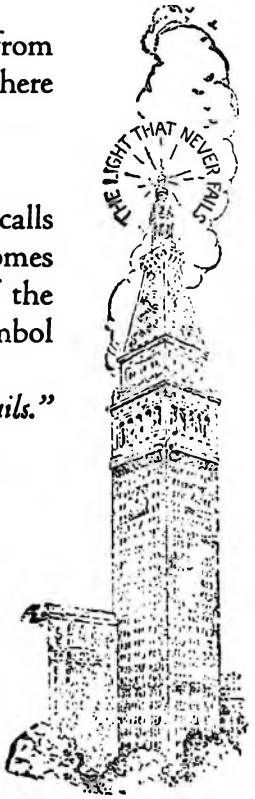
And the Home Cry for Help—

comes from every quarter. From the lonely mountain cabin, from the factory settlement, from the crowded tenement; wherever there is sickness—they are calling for the visiting nurse.

"Angels"—

the president of the world's greatest life insurance company calls these nurses. And angels they are in thousands of troubled homes—ministering angels whose work has come about because of the example set by "The Lady With the Lamp." The Lamp's symbol today is the great lantern atop the Metropolitan Tower—

"The Light That Never Fails."



The Metropolitan began active efforts to prolong human life many years ago.

The mass of evidence piled up by Metropolitan agents unmistakably proved the *need* for nursing, while carefully conducted surveys indicated that if wisely managed it could be made to pay Metropolitan policy holders.

As proof rolled in, nursing service was established and rapidly expanded. Today it covers 3,500 towns.

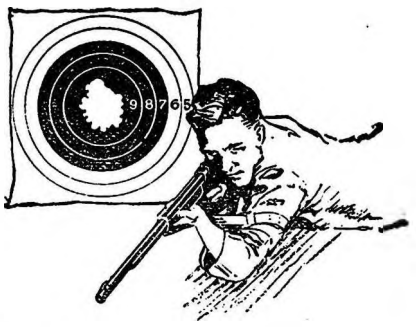
Last year nurses made 2,116,875 free visits to Metropolitan policy holders; in eleven years they have made 14,000,000. Their reports are carefully compiled.

They show many instances where lives have been saved by timely calls of visiting nurses and cases without number where their instruction should prevent recurrences of disease in the future. A request will bring to you, without charge, our booklet entitled:—"The Lady With the Lamp."

HALEY FISKE, *President*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK



You economize three ways on a Stevens

Accuracy Shotgun or rifle—a Stevens firearm is accurate. When a Stevens barrel is bored or drilled, the final reaming cuts away *less than one-half of a thousandth of an inch.*

For rifling, Stevens uses a special process, slow scraping system removing *less than the thirtieth part of a thousandth of an inch* with each pass of the rifling cutter.

A slow method—but when finished a Stevens barrel is *accurate.*

Endurance And a Stevens will continue to shoot true. Stevens guns are fitted so they can't shoot loose.

Take a Stevens double-barrel shotgun—each barrel and its lug are of one piece—solid steel. Take a Stevens single-barrel shotgun—the fore-end exerts a pressure which prevents the barrel from loosening on the hinge-joint. Those guns will *never* shoot loose.

Price Remember this: when you buy a Stevens you get the last word in accuracy; you get a gun that will last a lifetime; and you get a gun at an exceptionally low price. You economize three ways on a Stevens.

Ask at your dealer's or write for the interesting catalog describing in detail our complete line. Address:

J. STEVENS ARMS COMPANY
Dept. C-126, Chicopee Falls, Mass.
Owned and operated by the Savage Arms Corporation; Executive and Export Offices: 50 Church Street, New York

Stevens

Model 520 Stevens repeating shotgun — Stevens made the first hammerless repeaters. Price, inc. tax, $43.50

WHITING-ADAMS BRUSHES

ALWAYS SUIT — NEVER FAIL
ALL KINDS
FOR SALE EVERYWHERE

Paint Brushes
Varnish Brushes
Toilet Brushes
Artists' Brushes
Household Brushes
Railroad Brushes

VULCAN
Rubber Cemented
Brushes

Send for Illustrated Literature
JOHN L. WHITING-J. J. ADAMS CO.
BOSTON, U. S. A.
Brush Manufacturers for Over 113 Years and the Largest in the World

Look Prosperous!

WEAR DIAMONDS

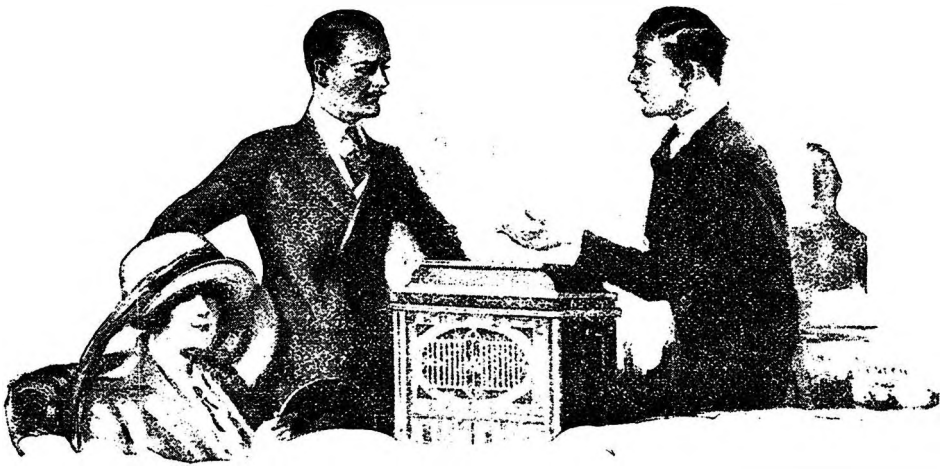
FOR A FEW CENTS A DAY

NO MONEY DOWN

Don't send a single penny. Ten days **Free Trial.** When the ring comes, examine it—if you are not convinced it is the **Greatest Bargain in America,** send it back at our expense. Only if pleased, send $1.50 weekly—at the rate of a few cents a day. These Bargain Cluster Rings with 7 Blue-White Perfect Cut Diamonds can be yours. No Red Tape. No Risk. 8% Yearly Dividends Guaranteed. Also 5% Bonus.

Million Dollar Bargain Book FREE Send for it today. It pictures thousands of Bargains. Address Dept. 1927.

J.M.LYON & CO.
2-4 Maiden Lane N.Y.
In Business Nearly 100 years



The Soprano High "C" and Piano Tone Tests

Which instantly reveal the musical value of a phonograph

How to make them

This is to urge you to make a simple tone test, before purchasing a phonograph.

Ask to hear a soprano record played. Then a piano record.

This is why:

The two most difficult tones to reproduce are high soprano and piano notes. Musicians, critics and teachers all will tell you this.

Note how most instruments vibrate when the higher notes are reached. Mark how "metallic" a piano record sounds on an ordinary instrument.

Then hear the same records on a Brunswick. And you will know why foremost musical authorities, both in Europe and America, have chosen The Brunswick for their own homes.

And you will know, too, why such famed artists as Richard Strauss, Leopold Godowsky, Claire Dux, Huberman, Ney and a score of other great concert and operatic stars of the New Hall of Fame have chosen Brunswick for which to record, exclusively.

Plays all records

The Brunswick Phonograph plays *all* makes of records. Hence all artists, no matter for which make of records they record, come into the home where there is a Brunswick. And Brunswick Records play on any phonograph.

Hear. Compare. Your nearest Brunswick dealer will gladly give a demonstration.

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER CO.

Manufacturers—Established 1845

CHICAGO NEW YORK CINCINNATI TORONTO

BRUNSWICK

PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS

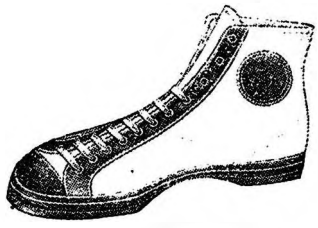
Two new basketball shoes with the famous Hood Cushion Outsole feature
The Hyscore and The Centre

Grips firmly Releases instantly
Plays a fast, sure game

Modern Basketball has needed just these shoes. It is a game where speed and accuracy in footwear count large. Some shoes, designed to grip firmly, release with just enough tardiness to slow down a fast game. Other shoes which release quickly do not provide quite the confidence in the grip. The specially constructed Hood outsole will grip firmly and release instantly—the two requirements for super-footwork in basketball. The Hyscore is built and reinforced to stand up under a long hard schedule. The Centre is lighter in construction, which to many is a point in its favor, and will stand up under the ordinary schedule. The Centre is also a splendid all-round gym shoe.

Hyscore

The Bayside Baysides are today, and have been for years, the most popular, low priced *shoe* for school calisthenics, light gymnasium and track work. A satisfactory shoe, giving splendid value. Baysides are also used extensively in women's classes in schools and gymnasiums. Made in the oxford or high pattern, and in black, brown and white.



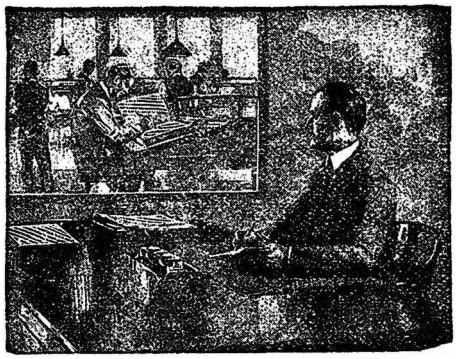
Centre

HOOD RUBBER PRODUCTS CO., INC.
Watertown, Mass.

CANVAS HOOD FOOTWEAR

HOOD

Send for Special Athletic Bulletin 'A'



Says Goodbye to "$22 a Week"

—At 27 Earns $4,500 a Year

"Three years ago," writes A. J. Klick, "I was just an average young man of 24, possessing a fair education, liking a good time, occupying a bookkeeper's high stool and receiving $1,100 per year.

"A crisis in my affairs woke me up and I began the serious study of Higher Accountancy.

"Before the year was over, I was making progress financially. Interested in my work, advancing steadily, by the time I had finished the course I had an executive position and $3,000 a year.

"This year I accepted a position as comptroller of a good sized corporation, with broader responsibilities and an initial salary of $4,500. The future years are full of promise."

Unusual Opportunities in Accounting

Klick is *right*. His future years *are* full of promise!

Letter after letter in the files of LaSalle Extension University tells the same thrilling story of swift promotion thru home-study training. If the men now in low-pay jobs could see those actual letters, literally thousands of them, reporting advancement to positions paying $3,000, $5,000, and up to $10,000 a year, they would never rest until they had mastered the specialized training that they absolutely need to win success.

Send today for our book, "Success Reports;" also particulars of our *convenient-payment plan* and your copy of that inspiring book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One." "Get this book," said a prominent Chicago executive, "even if you have to pay five dollars for it." We will send it *free*. Mark—Sign—Mail the Coupon—NOW.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
The Largest Business Training Institution in the World
Dept. 1065-HR **Chicago, Illinois**

Please send me catalog and full information regarding the course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One."

☐ ***Higher Accountancy***
Training for position as Auditor, Comptroller, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc.

Other LaSalle Training Courses
LaSalle is the largest business training institution in the world. It offers training for every important business need. If more interested in any of these courses, check here:

☐ Business Management
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Railway Accounting and Station Management
☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
☐ Commercial Law
☐ Industrial Management Efficiency
☐ Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
☐ Banking and Finance
☐ Modern Foremanship and Production Methods
☐ Personnel and Employment Management
☐ Expert Bookkeeping
☐ Business English
☐ Commercial Spanish
☐ Effective Speaking
☐ C. P. A. Coaching

Name.....

Present Position .....

Address .....

Aspirin

Say "Bayer" and Insist!

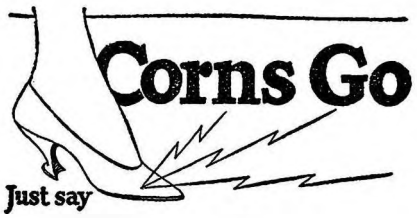
BAYER

Genuine

Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting the genuine Bayer product prescribed by physicians over twenty-two years and proved safe by millions for

Colds	Headache
Toothache	Lumbago
Earache	Rheumatism
Neuralgia	Pain, Pain

Accept "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" only. Each unbroken package contains proper directions. Handy boxes of twelve tablets cost few cents. Druggists also sell bottles of 24 and 100. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid.



Blue-jay

to your druggist

The simplest way to end a corn is Blue-jay. A touch stops the pain instantly. Then the corn loosens and comes out. Made in a colorless clear liquid (one drop does it!) and in extra thin plasters. The action is the same.

Pain Stops Instantly

Click! The teeth are locked!

AN EVERTITE purse closes like an alligator's jaw. And there's not a chance in the world of the purse opening accidentally or spilling out even the tiniest object among its contents!

And it's just as convenient as it is safe. To open it, all you have to do is to draw the catch to the left; to close, draw it to the right.

An Evertite purse means absolute security and unequalled convenience.

Your dealer will be glad to show you Evertite purses. If, however, he can't supply you, send us his name and $1.00, and we will send you the purse illustrated above, postpaid. Made in black, brown and tan, size 3 x 4.

Also Evertite Bags, Collar Bags, Collectors' Cases and Novelty Hand Bags.

Dept. A

E. J. Wilkins Co.

Gloversville, N. Y.

WILKINS

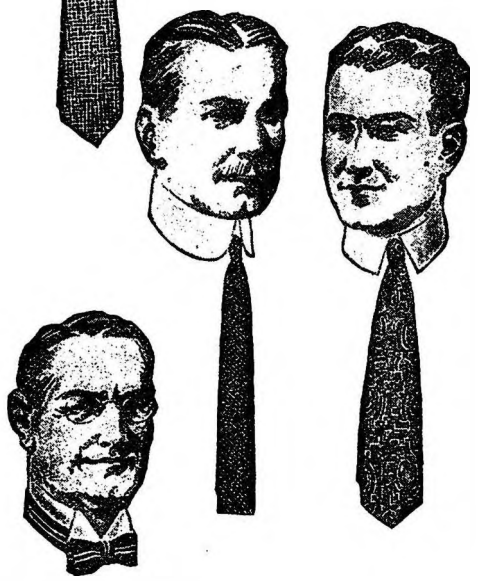
Evertite

BAGS AND PURSES

The Tie to make you look your best

At your haberdasher's in wonderful variety — Bengalines, ondulé crêpes and crêpe failles in designs that truly sparkle and show neither wrinkles nor pinholes, tubulars that wear for seasons, four-in-hands and bow ties, smart in both cut and pattern.

Choose the tie that helps you look your best.



And if you wish a positive assurance not only of real wearing qualities but up-to-date colorings, patterns and cut in the neckwear you buy, look for the name CHENEY on the neckband. Sewn throughout with silk thread.

CHENEY BROTHERS, NEW YORK

Makers of Chency Silks

CHENEY CRAVATS

Your dealer will gladly help you choose correctly

Classified Advertising

Agents and Help Wanted

MEN—Age 17 to 55. Experience unnecessary. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women $30 to $100 weekly operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS, $60 to $200 a Week. Free Samples. Gold Sign Letters for Store and Office Windows. Any one can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431T N. Clark St., Chicago.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR! $110 to $250 monthly, expenses paid after 3 months' spare-time study. Splendid opportunities. Position guaranteed or money refunded. Write for Free Booklet CN-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

$75.00 to $150.00 WEEKLY. Free samples. Lowest priced gold window letters for stores, offices and autos. Anybody can do it. Large demand. Exclusive territory. Acme Letter Co., 2S00 Z, Congress, Chicago.

GOV'T RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS start $133 month; expenses paid. Specimen examination questions free. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.

AGENTS—200% profit. Wonderful little article; something new; sells like wildfire; carry in pocket; write at once for Free Sample. Albert Mills, Gen. Mgr., 7749 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

WANTED:—Men over 17, $135-$195 month. Railway Mail Clerks: List positions free. Franklin Institute, Dept. H2, Rochester, N. Y.

SHIRT manufacturer wants agents; sell advertised brand men's shirts direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

BECOME A RAILWAY MAIL CLERK. $133 to $192 a month. Examination soon. Write today for free catalog. Patterson Civil Service School, Desk C-9310, Rochester, N. Y.

Help Wanted—Female

$6—$18 a dozen decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 LaGrange, Ind.

Farm Lands

GOOD FARM LANDS! 20, 40, 80 acre tracts near hustling city in Lower Michigan. $10 to $50 down. Balance on long time. Investigate this opportunity. Write today for Free booklet. Swigart Land Co., X-1265 First National Bank Building, Chicago.

Shorthand

SHORTHAND. Best practical system. Learn surprisingly easy, few hours; speed through pleasant practice. Proof lessons and brochure free. King Institute, EC-26, Station F, New York.

Patents and Lawyers

INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Highest references. Rates reasonable. Best results. Promptness assured. Booklet free. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for Record of Invention Blank and free guide book. Send model or sketch and description for free opinion of its patentable nature. Highest references. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS: Trademark, Copyright. Instructive pamphlet free. Correspondence solicited. Results procured. Charges reasonable. Metzger, Dept. C, Washington.

INVENTIONS WANTED. Cash or royalty for ideas. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENTS SECURED. Submit sketch or model of your invention for examination. Write for Record of Invention blank and valuable book, free. J. L. Jackson & Co., 305 Ouray Building, Washington, D. C.

Automobiles

AUTOMOBILE Mechanics, Owners, Garagemen, Repairmen, send for free copy America's Popular Motor Magazine. Contains helpful instructive information on overhauling, ignition wiring, carburetors, batteries, etc. Automobile Digest, 530 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

Short Stories and Photoplays

WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright Book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate (406), St. Louis, Mo.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS: $25—$300 paid any one for suitable ideas. Experience unnecessary; complete outline Free. Producers League, 439 St. Louis.

FREE to writers—A wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie writing. Absolutely Free. Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 89, Auburn, N. Y.

WRITERS! Stories, Poems, Plays, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, 175, Hannibal, Mo.

BIG MONEY IN WRITING photoplays, stories, poems, songs. Send today for free copy America's leading writer's magazine, full of helpful advice on writing and selling. Writer's Digest, 605 Butler Building, Cincinnati.

PHOTOPLAYS AND STORIES WANTED, accepted any form. Typed, revised, criticised, marketed. Authors' Service Bureau, 780 Charleston, S. C.

PHOTOPLAYS FOR CALIFORNIA PRODUCERS; also stories for publication. To Beginners, Plot Chart and details free. Harvard Company, 560, San Francisco.

AUTHORS: FREE BOOK on Photoplay writing and marketing. Successful Photoplays, Box 43, Des Moines, Ia.

Songs, Poems, etc.

SONGWRITERS! Learn of the public's demand for songs suitable for dancing and the opportunities greatly changed conditions offer new writers, obtainable only in our "Songwriters Manual & Guide" sent free. Submit your ideas for songs at once for free criticism and advice. We revise poems, compose music, secure copyright and facilitate free publication or outright sale of songs. Knickerbocker Studios, 304 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

WONDERFUL PROPOSITION for song poem or melody writers. Ray Hibbeler, D-102, 4040 Dickens Ave., Chicago.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. New York Melody Corp., 402 Fitzgerald Bldg., New York.

YOU write the words for a song. We'll compose the music free and publish same. Send song-poem to-day. B. Lenox Co., 271 W. 125th St., New York.

WRITE A SONG POEM—any subject and send today. Famous musician will compose the music. Marvin Morley, 105 N. Clark St., Dept. 626, Chicago.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Home Employment Evenings

START little Mail Order business anywhere. Home employment evenings. Stamp brings instruction. Albert Pier, 72 Cortlandt Street, New York.

Typewriters

TYPEWRITERS. All Makes. Save one-half. Thoroughly rebuilt in our factory by the famous "Young Process." Fully guaranteed. Free trial. We handle all standard makes. Cash or easy terms. Write for catalog. Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 403, Chicago, Ill.

Vaudeville

GET ON THE STAGE. I tell you how! Send stamp for Instructive Stage Book and particulars. K. La Delle, Box 557, Los Angeles, Cal.

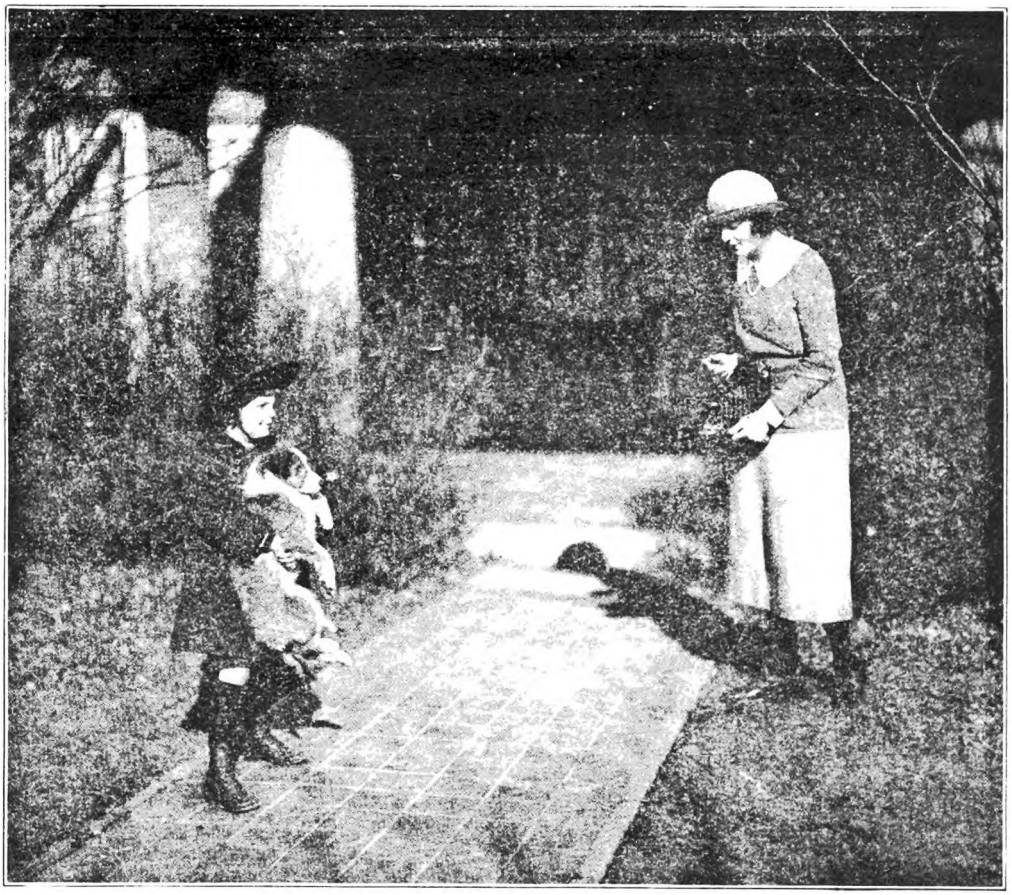
Astrology

BE WISE! BE CHEERFUL! BE PROSPEROUS! New way plan brings wonderful results. Valuable pointers and your personality revealed for 10 cents and birthdate. Thomson-Heywood, Dept. 300, Chronicle Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

FUTURE, YOURS FORETOLD: Send dime, birthdate and stamp for convincing, truthful and reliable trial reading. Erwing, Box 1120, Station C, Los Angeles, Cal.

Printing

YOUR name and address fashionably printed on 200 note sheets and 100 envelopes $1.00; 100 calling cards 50 cents. Prepaid. A. Kraus, 310 Kraus Building, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Keep a Kodak Story of the children

Autographic Kodaks *$0.50 up*

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*

Peter Piper picked a pack of Pep-O-Mints.
A piquant pack of Pep-O-Mints Peter Piper picked:
Pete was piqued at pickles,
Said he, "I'll spend my nickels
For the candy mint that tickles."

Pep-O-mint
Wint-O-green
Lic-O-rice
Cl-O-ve
Cinn-O-mon