

# WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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## YOUNG WILD WEST AND NEBRASKA NICK; OR, THE CATTLE THIEVES OF THE PLATTE. *By AN OLD SCOUT.* AND OTHER STORIES



"Whoop her up, boys! This is a sight you seldom see. Let yourselves jingle, but don't scare the steer." The boys fairly roared with merriment, and let all sorts of missiles go at Nebraska Nick and his pal.



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## Young Wild West and "Nebraska Nick"

—OR—

### THE CATTLE THIEVES OF THE PLATTE

By AN OLD SCOUT

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE "HOT SHOT TAVERN" AT "SHUFFLE OFF."

Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot of the West, was seated before a cheerful fire in the sitting-room of the Hot Shot Tavern in the little mining town of Shuffle Off, which was located in the northeastern corner of the State of Colorado.

With him were his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, the Misses Arictta Murdock and Eloise Gardner, Cheyenne Charlie's wife, Anna, and Hop Wah, their Chinese servant.

It was a cold day in midwinter, and the grateful warmth that came from the blazing logs on the old-fashioned hearth put an air of cheerfulness on the scene, in spite of the fact that snow was falling outside and the wind whistled a mournful tune down the chimney that was constructed of mud and sticks.

For the benefit of those who are not acquainted with Young Wild West and his friends we will give a brief description of them.

Young Wild West and Jim Dart were really nothing more than boys, since neither of them had reached a voting age, and both had been born and reared in the wilds of the West during the troublous times when it was almost worth a traveler's life to ride across the plains or follow a mountain trail.

Wild, as our hero was called by those acquainted with him, was surely one of the best known and most daring, dashing characters of the great West.

A dead shot, active and powerful, cool at all stages of the game and with a fixed determination to always do right, no matter what the consequences might be, he was one to be admired and emulated.

Like a great many of the natives of that part of the country, he wore his hair long, and his chestnut locks hanging over his shoulders, set off his handsome face to great advantage.

A buckskin hunting-suit that was elaborately trimmed with scarlet fringe was invariably his costume, though sometimes he went without the coat and then showed up in a blue silk shirt.

In addition to his being the recognized Champion Deadshot of the West, he bore the nickname of the Prince of the Saddle.

This was because he had always tamed every horse he tackled, no matter how wild or vicious it might be, and rode with such an ease and grace that he almost seemed to be a part of the horse.

Jim Dart did not wear his hair long, but he had all the

locks of a boy who was used to all phases of life on the plains and mountains, and was rather good-looking.

Cheyenne Charlie, who had served several years with the army in the capacity of a scout, was slightly over six feet in height, straight as an arrow, and with his bronzed face, iron hair and mustache, he showed up as a true man of the border, who did not know what danger was.

Like our hero, his two partners were attired in buckskin hunting-suits.

Arictta Murdock was a very pretty blonde of eighteen. She was as brave as a girl could be, was used to all sorts of danger and could ride a horse and shoot with a rifle or revolver with the skill of the average cowboy.

She was the sweetheart of Young Wild West, and she was proud for it to be known.

Eloise Gardner was Jim Dart's sweetheart. She was about the same age as Arictta, but her beauty was in direct contrast, since she was a brunette.

Eloise could ride and shoot, too, but she had only been taught to do so in the past two or three years, and therefore was not as accomplished as the charming sweetheart of Young Wild West.

Anna, the wife of the scout, was probably twenty-five years of age. She was inclined to be a little stout and was very good-looking, and as she had not been reared in the wild West, she could not face the perils that were sometimes encountered by them with the cool and fearless way that Arictta had.

The Chinese servant was known as Hop Wah, and, though he had one or two bad habits, he was a faithful fellow and a sort of fixture to the party.

With this brief description of our friends we will go on with our story.

Young Wild West and his friends would not have been found as far north in the dead of winter if it had not been that the dashing young deadshot had come up from New Mexico to transact some important business with a party he was to meet at Shuffle Off.

Being the owner of several mining properties and two ranches, our hero always had money at his command, and as his two partners were interested in many of his business ventures they, too, could take things easy.

They spent nearly all their time in traveling about the wildest parts of the West—and at the time of which we write there were more of them than any other kind—searching for excitement and adventure, and, incidentally, an occasional pocket of gold.

There was never a week that rolled over their heads in which something worth recording did not happen to them, but when they got settled in the sitting-room of the Hot Shot

Tavern and saw the snow flicking against the small windows they made up their minds that they were in for a slow time of it for a few days.

Wild got up from the fire and walked over to the window.

"I don't like this much," he observed, shaking his head. "It looks as though we are going to be shut in for a few days, and the man who keeps the tavern told me a little while ago that things are rather dull around here. They have not had a lynching in over six weeks, and there hasn't been a bad man here since a tenderfoot shot one by mistake a week ago, so he says. What do you think of that, Charlie?"

"Putty slow, I reckon," answered the scout, shaking his head.

"The girls laughed merrily at this, for they could tell that Charlie meant just what he said.

"I guess we can stand it for a few days, though," spoke up Jim Dart, as he came over by the window. "I don't believe this snow is going to amount to a great deal, anyhow, and when that is gone we can ride over to the Platte and have a look at the ranch."

"I hope you are right, Jim," answered Wild. "I am quite anxious to have a look at the ranch, for, from what I have heard of it, I am sure I will feel satisfied to make the trade. Roaring Ranch is all right, but it is a little out of the way, and if we find that Champion Ranch is pretty near up to it in buildings and stock the deal will be made right away."

"Even if you lose a little by the bargain, eh, Wild?" said Arlett.

"Yes, Eh," was the reply. "John Roller wants to get over in Wyoming, and I am tired of the snow over there, because every time there is anything wrong I am sent for, and it is way out of the way to get there. I'll make the deal all right."

"If Roller expects for meet us to-day, as he wrote he would, he will have to be showing up pretty soon," remarked Jim Dart, as he looked at his watch. "It is four o'clock now."

"I reckon this flurry of snow won't stop him from coming over," the scout answered.

The snow had been coming down about an hour now and the ground was covered to a depth of a couple of inches.

But the flakes were getting larger and it was moderating, so that meant that rain would be the next thing on the programme.

They all took their seats before the fire again.

It so happened that when our friends arrived at the tavern just before noon there were no other guests there, and that gave them the sole use of the sitting-room, which was just across the hall from the bar-room.

Their horses had been comfortably stalled in the barn, so, after they ate their dinner, our friends cleaned their weapons and looked after their clothing and fixed up their saddles and bridles.

It was after all this had been attended to that we find them in the sitting-room.

The proprietor's wife came in a few minutes later, so, rising to his feet, our hero suggested that they go out in the bar-room and see what was going on.

Charlie and Jim were glad to accompany him, now that the girl had some one to talk to, so they promptly put on their hats and followed him.

Hop Wab, the Chinaman, took occasion to sneak off to the kitchen at the same time.

There was a colored girl there, and he had noticed a short time before that a man's voice could be heard, too.

Hop was not only curious, but ambitious, as well, as will be found out later on.

He liked to make money—and make it fast.

Nothing at all slow was there about Hop.

But of him later.

Young Wild West and his partners went into the bar-room and found but few men gathered there.

Shuffle Off was a sort of center for the surrounding ranches, but beyond that there was nothing there to keep the town going, outside of the fact that there was a silver mine there that had once been the stand-by of almost the entire population.

But the mine had gradually given out, until now there were only about twenty-five men employed there.

The supply store did a thriving business, however, for there were plenty of outside people to do their trading there, and the tavern was a headquarters for all sorts of men when they were in town.

But on this particular day there seemed to be no one in town, to use the expression.

That is why our friends, who were used to plenty of excitement, when they struck a settlement or mining camp, found it dull there.

But when the Champion Dendob of the West entered the bar-room of the tavern he took a quick look around and soon realized that there were all the elements there to make things lively.

A couple of half-drunken cowpunchers were seated at a table drinking and playing cards, a bony-looking man of middle age, who was evidently a ranchman, was standing at the bar plying himself with whisky; a fat farmer with a chin beard sat near the shot-iron stove, chewing tobacco and trying to show how far he could spit, and two or three ordinary loungers sat with their backs against the wall looking at the row of dusty bottles on the shelf behind the bar with longing eyes.

All it needed was something to stir the crowd up and would be lively enough.

The proprietor slid from the high stool he was seated upon when his three guests entered, gaped and then nodded pleasantly.

"A putty dull day," said he. "I've been wishin' that it would stop snowin', 'cause it makes it so dreary when it snows, yer know. What kin I do for yer, gents?"

"Let us have some of the best cigars you've got," answered our hero. "Come, boys! Everybody have something."

The ordinary loungers were the first to respond.

They were on their feet in a jiffy, rubbing their hands and smiling like a basket of chips.

Then the rest moved up to the old-fashioned bar, including the ranchman.

As might be supposed, few wanted cigars.

They called for liquor, the two cowboys using the term "tanglefoot."

Our hero did not use strong drinks himself, and neither did Dart, but he did try to make other people do as he did in that line.

Cowboys and miners, as a rule, must "liquor up," as they call it, and no wise person would undertake to stop them from doing it.

They all had what they wanted, and just as they were putting the glasses on the counter a horseman rode up to the tavern, and, dismounting, burst into the bar-room, slamming the door as though he had a grudge against it.

"Who runs this shabsting?" he roared, as he shook the snow from his coat and looked around at the little gathering. "I want that nag of mine soon to right away, an' if yer galoot what does ther job don't git a move on him I'll fill him full of holes!"

Having delivered himself of this forcible remark, the newcomer removed his broad-brimmed hat and swung it around quickly, causing the snow that was upon it to fly over those standing before the bar.

Young Wild West quickly sized the man up.

He was a big, pock-marked fellow with a scraggy mustache and anything but a pleasing face.

By his general appearance he might have been anything from a mine owner to an ordinary cowpuncher.

But one thing was quite plain, and that was that he was one of the sort of men who have a strong desire to bulldoze their fellow-men and make them appear small.

In other words, he was what is termed a "bad man."

Our hero knew this right away.

Though some of the melted snow had struck him in the face, Wild did not appear to notice it.

He did not want to start a row in the place.

The proprietor whose name was Higgins, quickly called a man and sent him out to take care of the stranger's horse.

"Git a move on yer!" yelled the stranger, jerking a big six-shooter from the holster that hung halfway to his boot-tops; "move lively, or I'll singe your whiskers with hot lead!"

The hostler moved a little faster, but just as he opened the door the pock-marked man fired.

The bullet certainly did singe the fellow's whiskers, and it did more, for all in the room plainly saw a tuft of them fly off and fall to the floor.

With a yell on his lips, the hostler sprang outside and slammed the door.

"I want yer ter understand that I'm somethin'" said the stranger, as he turned and looked at the party in the bar-

room, holding the smoking revolver in his hand and nodding with an air of importance. "I'm Nebraska Nick, an' I has a way of always doin' as I please, no matter where I go. If there's any one here what don't like their way I act just let him say so, an' we'll open up ther prelude ter a funeral right away."

No one said a word, and that was just what the man evidently thought would be the case, for he nodded and let out a laugh.

"Just push us out a bottle of rattlesnake oil," he went on, swinging the revolver around so it pointed at the landlord. "If I ain't got ther money ter pay yer now I'll pay some other time."

Then, to show that he was simply fooling, he threw a roll of bills on the counter.

"Everybody take what they like," he added. "The majority of ther inmates now looked upon him with more favor than they had been inclined to do at first.

Our friends took cigars and the rest drank to the health of Nebraska Ned, as he had introduced himself.

When he had finished his glass he turned around, and, facing Wild, who happened to be the nearest to him, exclaimed:

"Hold up your hat, young fellow; I wanter put an air-hole in ther crown fur yer. Don't be afraid; I won't hit your head!"

"I guess I don't want any airholes in my hat, Nebraska Nick," his brow retorted, smiling and shaking his head.

## CHAPTER II.

### WILD TAKES THE BAD MAN AND SHOWS HOW HE CAN SHOOT.

Nebraska Nick looked very much surprised when Young Wild West spoke so coolly, declining to hold up his hat to have an airhole shot through it.

"Hold up your hat, I say!" he exclaimed; "if you don't do it in a hurry I'll git mad, an' then somethin' awful will happen."

"See here," said Wild, stepping right up close to him, "I don't want a hole shot through my hat, and I don't want any trouble with you. You just take my advice and behave yourself."

"What!" roared the man, looking around at those in the tavern. "Did you goloats hear that? That young st-pp'n' ter advise me ter behave myself! Wow! Sartin' wild-cats! I've got ter shake his teeth loose, just ter keep up my good name! Look out, young feller! I hate ter hurt yer, but I've got ter!"

He slipped his shooter back in the holster and came for the boy with outstretched hands.

What he intended to do will never exactly be known, for the first thing he knew a hard fist landed squarely on his nose and he staggered back with a countless number of stars dancing before his eyes.

Young Wild West had landed on him good and hard, and some of the conceit and bluster went out when the blow landed.

"I told you I did not want any trouble with you, Nebraska Nick, but you are bound to have it, I see. Now, if you are not satisfied, come on! I'll guarantee to give you more than you want in less than one minute by the clock!"

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart smiled, while the rest of the spectators looked amazed.

They had not thought that the boy would act that way.

But they did not know the dashing young Prince of the Saddle.

No matter how big or strong a man was, he was not afraid of him, for he relied on his skill and quickness.

And he could strike a blow that would fell the best of them, too.

The big bad man who had introduced himself as Nebraska Nick amid so much bluster caught hold of the bar to steady himself and stood looking at the boy in a dazed sort of way, the blood trickling from his nostrils in a crimson stream.

Higgins, the keeper of the tavern, quickly wet a towel and handed it over to him.

Like a great many of his kind, the bluffer fellow did not feel like resuming the fight while his nose was bleeding.

He took the towel and applied it to the injured member

and acted very much as a whipped schoolboy might have done.

"Not until he had stopped the flow of blood did he utter a word.

Then handing back the towel, he looked at Wild and said: "That's ther first time my nose has bleed in twenty years, young feller. You sartinly hit me good an' hard, you did! But yer kin just make up your mind that you've got ter die fur it! Git out of range of ther rest of ther goloats in ther shebang an' git ready ter shoot! I'm goin' ter give yer a fair show."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when Wild stepped over to a corner that was unoccupied, his hand on the butt of a six-shooter.

Nebraska Nick moved out to the center of the room and the rest of the tavern guests drew back toward the end of the counter, where a door opened into the cardroom.

The bad man had his hand on his revolver, too, and there was a look in his eyes that told plainly that he meant business.

"I sarter hate ter do it," he said, in his hesitating way. "but ther young goloat has brought it all on himself. Look out! Here's where yer git your medicine, young feller!"

His revolver was jerked from the holster in a twinkling and its muzzle went up preparatory to being jerked down once a line with our hero's breast.

Crack!

As the sharp report sounded in the tavern Nebraska Nick's revolver flew from his hand and dropped to the floor. Young Wild West stood before him, calm as a summer morning, the smoke curling upward from the six-shooter he had in his hand.

No one but his two partners and himself knew how he had fired so quickly, and a low murmur of surprise and admiration went up from the inmates of the room.

The bullet must have hit the weapon just as he was bringing it on a line with our hero, for the fingers of the bad man were intact and there was no mark to be seen on his hand.

"Pick that shooter up!"

The command rang in his ears before Nebraska Nick, heavily realized what had happened.

He stooped and obeyed in what appeared to be a mechanical way.

Crack!

He had just lifted it from the floor when our hero's revolver spoke again.

The weapon was knocked from the rascally bad man's hand again.

"Pick it up, I say!"

The man hesitated.

"Go on and pick it up. I am going to show you how straight I can shoot this time."

"Says," said Nick, hesitatingly; "I reckon I've landed up ther wrong tree. Who are yer, young feller?"

"I don't make any difference who I am. You just do exactly as I tell you to, or I'll mark our my initials on your coat with bullets!"

"He's Young Wild West, you big idiot!" exclaimed the holster, as he entered the room from the rear door. "Ain't I told ter see yer mittin' sent out of your own medicine!"

The man who had been sent out to care for the bad man's horse, in such a hurry had come in just in time to see the shooter shot out of his tormentor's hand the second time, and he was delighted.

"What! Young Wild West, ther Champion President of ther West?" gasped Nebraska Nick, his face turning a shade paler. "Yer don't say that you're him, young f-ler?"

"I guess he hit the nail right on the head when he said that," answered Wild. "But never mind; you just pick up your revolver; I want to show you somethin'."

"Oh, I cave, Young Wild West! I didn't know I was buglin' arlin a feller with ther reputation you've got. I'm a bad man, but I reckon that there's times when a bad man has got ter 'knowledge ther corn. Jest let up on me, wou'd yer? It's all off."

"Pick up that shooter!"

There was no mistaking the ring in the boy's voice; he meant business.

Nebraska Nick obeyed, taking hold of the weapon by the muzzle; he doubt to show that he did not mean to continue the fight.

Cheyenne Charlie broke into a laugh at his sign of sur-

"You're one of the sickest bad men I ever met!" he cried, mockingly. "There ain't enough ammo in you to scratch a silver buckle!"

The big man made no reply, but stood in the center of the room, holding the revolver in his hand as though waiting for further orders.

"Is the hammer of your gun on a cartridge now?" our hero asked, coolly.

"I—I don't know," answered Nebraska Nick, in a puzzled way.

"Just raise it, so you are sure the hammer is on a cartridge."

"Who—what for?"

"Do as I say!"

Without any more hesitancy he obeyed.

"Do you see that nail in the corner over there?" went on our hero in his cool and easy way.

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, it is a pretty good-sized nail, judging from the big head it has got. Do you think you can hit it?"

"Yes," answered the bad man, "I'm a pretty fair shot."

"Take good aim at it, then, but keep your finger off the trigger."

Our hero stepped around a little as he spoke.

Nebraska Nick was more puzzled than ever, but he slowly raised his shooter and aimed at the nail.

"You feel sure that you could hit the nail-head if you fired now, do you?" asked our hero.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Well, keep your finger away from the trigger and keep the nail covered."

"All right."

Wild now raised his revolver and took a quick aim at the trigger of Nebraska Nick's revolver.

Cra-ack!

Two reports blended into one and a bullet struck the wall within an inch of the nail-head.

But it was the bullet from the bad man's revolver; the one from our hero's had hit the trigger of the weapon and caused it to go off.

"You did not have it covered," observed the boy, calmly.

"I guess we had better try it again."

"I didn't exactly know what yer was up ter," answered the man, apologetically, while the landlord and the other inmates of the room gaped with astonishment.

It was the most wonderful shooting they had ever witnessed.

"Grest haystack!" cried the fat farmer, jumping to his feet.

"That's what I call some shootin'," said one of the cow-punchers.

"We will try it again," remarked Wild, quietly. "Get the hammer on a live cartridge, Nebraska Nick, and aim straight this time."

"All right," was the reply; "there she is!"

He knew just what to do, and he was perfectly willing to do it, too, for the starch had been taken out of him.

When Young Wild West thought he was ready he fired again.

The double report sounded in one as before, and this time the nail was driven into the wall to the head.

"Hoorsay!" yelled Higgins, the proprietor; "that's the wonderfullest shootin' that was ever done in no place! Boys, jest give three cheers for Young Wild West an' then I'll set 'em up for all hands!"

The cheers were given with a will and the rafters fairly quivered.

Though the last bullet from Wild's revolver had hit the hammer of Nebraska Nick's weapon, and, glancing off, went through the stovepipe, Higgins was just as ready to propose the cheer.

He put out the drinks for all hands, too, and one of the first to drink was Nebraska Nick.

The bad man had been completely crushed, though it would not have taken much of a judge of character to tell that he was one of the vengeful sort, who are willing to bide their time until a chance comes for them to get square.

Wild was certain of this, and so were Charlie and Jim.

It was still snowing outside, though not so hard as it had been doing, and that meant that it was probably going to let up.

Our friends remained in the bar-room watching the man

playing cards until the landlord was compelled to light the lamps.

Then they were just going back to the sitting-room to keep the company of the girls, when there was another arrival at the tavern.

It proved to be John Roller, the man they had come there to meet.

Though they had never met before, the ranchman at once picked out our hero and said:

"You're Young Wild West, I reckon?"

"That's just who I am," was the reply. "You are John Roller, I suppose?"

"Right yer are! Jest shake hands, will yer?"

"Certainly."

"Now, when I get warmed up a little, we'll talk business, Mr. West. I've been out ter see Roarin' Ranch, an' I'm realy ter make ther trade."

"Oh right," answered Wild, with a smile.

Higgins seemed to be well known to all in the room, and Nebraska Nick.

He shook hands with them all but the bad man, and then looked at him astutely.

"What's ther matter with your nose, my friend?" he asked, as he stood with his back to the stove, a grin on his honest countenance.

If it had not been that he had received his medicine from Young Wild West it is likely that the man would have resented the remark by pulling his gun, but as it was he merely smiled and retorted:

"Oh, it sorter bucked ag'in ther fist of Young Wild West, that's all."

Then Roller wanted to know all about it, so one of the cow-punchers related what had happened to live things up during the afternoon that had started in so dull.

Nebraska Nick made a feeble attempt to hunch it off, and when the ranchman had got warm and started in to talk about trading ranches with Young Wild West he grew deeply interested.

"I reckon I'll be somewhere around when Young Wild West goes over to Charmpen Ranch," he muttered under his breath, as he walked over to the bar and ordered a drink all by himself. "If ther boy takes charge of ther ranch he'll find out how easy I'll git square on him!"

## CHAPTER III.

HOP WAH AS FORTUNE-TELLER AND POKER PLAYER.

Hop Wah, the Chinaman, had managed to get pretty well acquainted with the colored woman who acted in the capacity of cook for the hotel, and also with the colored man of all work, who bore the name of Mose, by the way.

That Mose was rather sweet on the cook Hop could easily tell, so he decided to help him along in his courtship.

The cook, having nothing to do just then, had invited Mose to indulge in a game of dominoes, and when the Chinaman came into the kitchen and introduced himself he took a seat and watched the game.

He talked pleasantly to them and complimented them so much that they finally invited him to play with them.

Hop knew how to play dominoes all right.

There were few games that he did not know how to play, in fact.

But he always played for money, as a rule, for he had a mania for gambling.

Being gifted with the ability to perform sleight-of-hand tricks, he could win whenever he felt like it, providing the person he was playing with allowed the game to continue.

He could handle the cards in such a manner that he could get any sort of a hand he wanted, and do it so slick that he would not be detected.

It was really his idea to get in a game when there was some money at stake when he sat down to play dominoes with the colored couple.

"Miser Mose makee un velly nicee husband for un lady," Hop ventured, as he sat down and started to play "muggins" with them.

Mose grinned and looked pleased, while Nancy, as her name happened to be, would have blushed had her color allowed it.

The fact was that Nancy had never encouraged Moss a great deal, though he was a pretty ardent sort of a wooer.

Hop knew he had made a good hit with the ducky, and he was the one he was after, anyhow.

He played the game through and managed it so that the girl won, and then he nodded, and with a smile that was "child-like and bland," remarked:

"Missy Nancy will be velly muchee happy with um Mister Moss for her husband; she be allee samee happy likee angel whatee me hear 'boutee in um Sunday school in 'Flisco."

"Ah, go 'way wid youse foolin', Mister Chinee. I done wouldnt marry Moss, 'cause he don't make money enough to buy me fine dresses."

"He makee plenty money himoby patty soomee; I allee samee fortune teller; me makee no mistakee."

Both shakies looked at him in surprise at this.

"Yo' done say you in de same in a fortune teller—is dat right, Mister Hop Wah?" Moss asked.

Hop nodded and looked at the ceiling with half-closed eyes as though he was trying to fathom something that was mysterious.

"Me velly muchee goodee fortune teller," he observed a moment later; "me tellee 'ortune for Mister Moss and Miss Nancy, and me no chargee renter."

"Oh," cried the colored girl, rolling her eyes, until only the whites showed.

"Puttee hands on um table; me tellee lightee 'way."

Then he calmly took a pack of playing cards from one of his many pockets and began looking them over carefully.

"Does yo' tell de fortune by de cards?" Moss asked.

"Yes, me tellee by cards. Cards no samee likee M'Lean man's cards, though," and he threw them on the table, faces up.

"Why, they look de same," Nancy declared.

"They were de same, too, but Hop would not let on that such was the case.

He picked them up and shuffled them, and after they had placed their hands on the table, so their fingers touched, began to rutter in Chinese.

The ducky couple looked expectant, but did not venture to say a word, for fear of breaking the spell they thought he was working.

"Me—ah!" Hop exclaimed, suddenly; "now me tellee um fortune."

The eyes of the two were bigger than ever now, and they waited breathlessly.

"Mister Moss, he never been muchee good," the Chinaman began, as he studied the back of clubs closely; "but he velly fine um and get plenty of money patty soomee. He makee biggee lot of gold in less han two week; then he feel likee blarney babies; he be velly good husband and makee wifee velly happy."

"Dat sounds patty good," observed Moss, as the Colonial put the card in the pack and began to shuffle them in a dainty sort of way.

Then Hop drew the queen of diamonds from the pack, and when he saw what it was he gave a start.

"Missy Nancy will wear um diamonds allee samee tich man's girlee in Denver," he said, looking at her and pointing to the card; "me see lat she be velly muchee happy; she really bluckee man, who findee muchee gold inside two weeks. She been muchee goodee girlee allee time, and she be velly muchee happy and wear diamonds after she really bluckee man namee Moss. Dat velly goodee fortune, and um bound to come true."

The two colored people looked at each other with bulging eyes for a minute.

Then the faces of both suddenly became wreathed in smiles.

"Dat's patty good, ain't it, chile?" queried Moss.

"If it um true it are," was the reply.

"Me never samee mistakee when me tellee fortune," spoke up Hop; "me bettee fifty doller!"

"Have yer got as much as fifty dollars?" Moss asked.

"Yes, me always havee plenty money," and the Chinaman pulled out a handful of gold and bills that faintly dazzled the eyes of the two.

It so happened that the ducky would almost rather grumble than eat.

"I done rot ninee dollary left from my month's wages," he said. "I don't s'pose yo' ever play poker, Mister Hop Wah?"

He up shook his head.

"Me never likee play muchee; me no know how velly goodee; losee um money."

At this juncture the mistress of the house came in and set the cook to work.

She saw the ducky and the Chinaman sitting at the table, and as they were not in the way, she did not disturb them.

Hop now sat down and looked at Moss with an air of innocent expectancy.

"S'pose 'e play um lillie game of poker?" he remarked; "me no care; if me losee four, fivee doller."

This was just what the ducky was desiring for.

"I done play with yo' best to pass de time away. I ain't got to do nothin' till jes' af'or dark, anyhow," he answered.

So, while Nancy cooked, hummed a southern melody and worked away, the two started up a game of draw poker.

It was agreed that they should play a twenty-five cent ante game, with a dollar limit.

"Yo' care for deal and Moss won."

The ducky was quite an expert in the game, and he figured on getting some of the innocent Chinaman's money in short order.

But what a mistake he was making!

Many others had tried to win from that innocent-looking Chinaman, but they had all failed.

The cards were dealt out and both picked up their hands.

Hop looked at his as though he was puzzled.

"How many yo' want, Mister Hop?" asked the ducky.

"Me takee four," was the retort, after a slight pause; "me no cottee two alikee."

"All right; here yo' is," and the four cards were dealt to him. "I done takee three."

Moss had put a quarter on the table as they started, and he now looked at Hop.

"Whatee me do?" was the innocent query.

"Be 'if yo' feel like it," was the answer, with a broad grin spread over the ducky countenance.

"Allee light; me bestee doller."

Moss felt like laughing outright.

He had dealt himself four jacks and was certain that he had the winning hand.

He never dreamed of such a thing as the Chinaman having four aces up his sleeve.

Hop had been careful to extract the aces from the pack before they were dealt.

And it was easy for him to change four of those he had drawn for them.

The ducky met the bet of a dollar and raised it the same.

Hop pondered a while and then gave it a boost for the same amount.

It was quite interesting now.

"What's best um three of a kind?" the Colonial asked, as Moss gave another raise of the limit.

"A full hand will beat three of a kind," was the answer.

"Action full hand?"

"Three of one kind and two of another, Mister Hop."

"Yo' no cottee full hand?" and Hop looked so though he was ready to quit betting.

"No I ain't got no full hand, Mister Hop."

"Allee light; me meetee bet and raise doller."

"An' I'd done jump her up another dollar, jos' to make it interestin'."

Moss only had nine dollars, so he had stated, and it soon hammered that he had all on the table against a like amount of the Chinaman's.

"Oh have ter eat 'er," he said, with a grin, "but if I had de money I'd jes' sit here an' keep on raisin' it till de money come in."

"Yo' no cottee um full hand?" Hop asked, innocently.

"No, but I've done got fo' jacks, Mister Hop. I didn't lie ter yo'; poker is poker, yo' know."

"Yes, poker is poker," the Chinaman answered; "me gettee um four aces!"

"Who—what am dat?" cried the ducky, his eyes bulging from their sockets.

"Four aces hentee um four jacks," was the smiling reply.

"Um—ah! Yes, but how do dat?"

Moss could not understand it.

"No winner yet," piped Hop, and he calmly raked in the money.

Moss sat still for a moment, his eyes blinking like those of an owl in the sunlight.

"What am de matter, Moss?" asked Nancy, as she came over from the stove; "yo' done look like yo' have took pills."

"Four aces makee allee samee sickoo," said Hop, smiling and putting the cards back in his pocket.

"Ah, done lose my nine dollars, Nancy," said the darkey sorrowfully.

"It sevens yo' right, yo' fool nigger!" was the retort. "Anything what makes me mad is to see a fool suggest lose his money."

"Me no know how to play um pokes," Hop spoke up blandly.

"Yes, an' dat's why I done lose," sighed Mose. "Mose!" called out the voice of the mistress just then, "you just get ther wood in for ther night. It's de' money, so you kin sweep ther snow away from the fro' of de house after you do that. It'll be dark in a few minutes, so hurry up."

Hop went out and helped him with his work. He made nine dollars, and no doubt he felt that he ought to give the darkey something for it is money. At any other time Mose might have accepted the help, but just then he did not.

He wanted to be alone, so he could kick himself now and then for being fool enough to play poker with an innocent Chinaman.

It was after dark when the two returned to the kitchen. Hop was in a very light-hearted way, but the darkey was gloomy over his loss.

Nancy, too, fell so sore over it that she told the mistress, and she, in turn, told the girls of Young Wild West's party.

The result was that when Wild and his two partners came in for their supper they learned that Hop had lost the darkey out of all the money he had.

After the meal our hero went in the kitchen and found the Chinaman, Mose, and the cook eating supper together.

"Hop," said he, "I never see had better give back that money you won from your friend, the colored nigger. It will be reported all over the town that you set a card sharp if you don't. Of course, I know you didn't win it honest, s' I shouldn't say a word. I'll let that you had four men when you cleaned him out!"

"Dat was jes' what he done have, sah," spoke up Mose. "How you know dat?"

Hop smiled blandly and produced the nine dollars he had won without raising the least objection.

He was used to being made to pony on on such occasions. Now, then, if you play cards with him again you will do so at your own risk," said Wild, looking at the darkey.

"Mebbe he won't have four men de next time," said Mose, who evidently had an idea that he could beat the Chinaman in the long run.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AT CHAMPION RANCH.

There were two guests to remain over night at the livery besides Young Wild West and his friends.

They were John Roller, the ranchman, and Nebraska Nick. The bad man was very quiet during the evening and retired rather early.

No one seemed to know him, so it was more than evident that he was a stranger around Shuffie's Of.

It rained during the night, and when our friends arose the next morning the snow had disappeared.

It cleared off rather warm, which the old settlers declared, was rather unprecedented for that time of the year. But as it was a good thirty miles to Champion Ranch, over on the Platte River in Nebraska, Wild and his companions were just as well satisfied that it had not cleared off cold.

They were going to ride over that morning, and if it had been bitter cold it would have not been very pleasant for the girls.

The ranchman and Nebraska Nick ate in the same room with them at breakfast, but the latter individual was the first to get up and go out.

"Wild learned a few minutes later that he had paid his bill and rode off.

"Let ther meanly coyote go!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "I'll bet that ain't ther last we'll ever see of him ag'in, though!"

"No," spoke up Jim Durt. "that fellow is one of the venemous sort, and he will want to get square with Wild. He would like to hook 'em, and I know it."

"I know it, too, Jim," said our hero, with a laugh. "But

isn't going to give him a chance. It brought it all on himself, anyway; I am not to blame for what happened."

"Of course yer ain't, Wild," remarked the scout. "You'd have served him good an' right if you'd snuffed out his candle. Ther galoot meant ter take your life when he slipped out in the barroom an' told yer ter git ready."

"Well, I was ready, and that is the reason I did not do it, I suppose."

It was near eight o'clock when they were ready to accompany John Roller to the ranch he was so anxious to trade.

As Hop had come out with the packhorns, riding a pebbled wheel and leading one on either side of him, Mose, the darkey, now it up.

"Go 'way, yo' fool Chinese!" he exclaimed. "Yo' don't know how to play poker!"

"Gaud-trik, fader nigro!" answered the colossal, with a grin. "I telly munes squeezer; no punder!"

So a trick could not cause all who heard it to laugh, so Mose probably got back out of sight.

The landlord and his wife invited them to stop when they came that way again, and they assured her that they surely would get up at the Hot Shot Tavern if they stepped at Shuffie's Of before they went south again.

The little town was so near the Nebraska line that in a few minutes they had crossed over and were in another State.

At the time of which we write it was a pretty wild region out that way.

The ranches were few and far between, and were it not for the railroad that went through, little that was civilized would be seen.

But the wilder the country was the better Young Wild West and his partners liked it.

In a wild country there is always more or less danger, and they fairly courted danger sometimes.

The hunting-suits of the three partners and the bright colors the girls wore made a pretty picture as they rode along.

"That's a fine stallion you've got there, Young Wild West," observed John Roller, as they rode along at a smart gait.

"Yes," was the reply; "I don't think any one could offer me enough to make me think of parting with Spittie; he is all that is good and reliable in the line of horseflesh, Mr. Roller."

"I was jest thinkin' that you might want ter throw him in on ther deal, but I s'pose it ain't no use."

"You can bet it is no use! Why, I wouldn't give my horse for a dozen ranches."

"Wise! Yer must value him perty high, then."

"I do. He has carried me safely through many a tight place, and when it comes to speed there isn't a horse that I ever saw that can keep up with him."

Wild's sorrel stallion, Spittie, certainly was a noble beast. Outside his remarkable speed and endurance, he was as intelligent as one of his kind could possibly be.

And he loved his young master, too, which meant that he was well worthy of being loved in return.

The horse that Anetta rode was a cream-colored broncho that was remarkably gentle for one of his kind.

But it made little difference to the girl about the gentle part, since she could handle any kind of a horse that was fit to be ridden.

The rest all had the best horses that money could buy, too, and when the ranchman had given their mounts up he remarked that they were very well fitted out in that line.

After crossing the tracks of the Union Pacific they proceeded northeast, for the ranch was located on the Platte.

"I like the name you have given to your ranch, Mr. Roller," said Anetta, as they rode along. "Champion is a fine name for almost anything."

"Well, I didn't give it that name until last year, an' that was because I cleared more money than any one in the business within a hundred miles of me. I like ther ranch all right, but my wife's folks live out in Steuben, an' that's why we want ter git out there. I reckon Champion Ranch made more money last year than Renrin' Ranch did, but that ain't ther thing. It's ther location what's doin' it all on my part."

Their horses being fresh, they made the distance in about four hours, arriving at the ranch just in time for dinner.

Roller's wife had hardly expected that they would get there so soon, but she had provided for them, and they were treated to a good, old-fashioned ranch dinner, con-

asting of venison stev, roast fresh pork, baked beans, squash pies, Indian pudding and coffee.

As Cheyenne Charlie remarked, such a meal was good enough for anybody.

Champion Ranch was so located that the nearest town was Shuttle Off, but thirty miles was not such a great distance, so Roller declared.

The nearest other ranch was something like eight miles away, too, the neighborhood consisted principally of rolling prairie, groves of cottonwood trees and the river, with its growth of pussy-willows along the banks.

Our friends had taken notice on their arrival that the house and buildings connected with the ranch were in a pretty good state of repair.

But as Roller did not offer to talk business until after they had got away with the sumptuous dinner, they had not broached the subject, either.

Hop Wah was quite pleased when he found that there was a negro, who looked something like Mose, working on the ranch.

He thought he saw a chance to get even for the way Mose had "squealed" on him.

Of course it made no difference to Hop whether it was the same ducky or not. So long as it was a black man he got the best of he would feel satisfied.

The two ate their dinners together, and before they had finished they were pretty good friends.

The negro went by the name of Bolivar, and, like the majority of his race, he was superstitious and fond of games of chance.

Wild thought, to save trouble, he would warn the ducky not to gamble with the Chinaman, so after dinner he took a walk into the big kitchen and found the two there.

"Say!" said Wild, beckoning to the ducky, "I want to tell you something."

"What's de matter, boss? You ain't gwine ter 'scharge me if yo' takes de ranch, is you?"

"I haven't thought anything about that part of it yet. But I just want to tell you that if you have any money you had better not gamble with Hop Wah. You just steer clear of him in that line, for he will clean you out in short order. Now you hear what I say, don't you?"

"Yes, boss, I done hear you. But I never 'tought de Chinese could win a feller's money, boss. He done say not a word about it, an' he look like he never seen de dice rolled."

Hop looked as innocent as a lamb while this talk was going on.

Any one to look at him just then would have declared that such a pastime as gambling was the farthest thing from his mind.

Bolivar told our hero that he surely would not gamble with Hop, but the very minute his back was turned he started in to talking about it to the Chinaman.

"You know how to throw de dice?" he asked.

"No," and the Chinaman shook his head innocently.

"I show you if you no say anything."

"Me likee learn."

The ducky had three well-worn dice, all right.

Such things went with his stock in trade.

He got them out and proceeded to teach Hop.

But the fact was that the celestial did not want to gamble with him, after what his young boss had said.

However, Bolivar insisted so hard that at length they began rolling the dice for small stakes.

The result was that in less than ten minutes the ducky had lost all the money he had, for Hop could not help cheating, it seemed.

But the amount was not so very large, even if it was all the ducky had.

It worried him, nevertheless, and he was not long in finding Wild and telling him about it.

"Get out of here!" our hero exclaimed, when he had listened to his story. "It serves you right! I've a notion to make the Chinaman give you a thrashing for being such a fob, after you had been duly warned, too!"

Bolivar got out of the way in short order.

He made straight for the kitchen, too; and, thinking there might be some fun ahead, Wild called Charlie and Jim and followed him.

It happened that Hop was shining up his revolver and knife as the ducky entered, and that made Bolivar change his mind if he had been thinking of forcing the Chinaman to give his money back.

"Whattée mattée?" asked Hop, looking as innocent as a babe, as the ducky came in.

"Nufin's de matter," was the reply; "only you is a cheat, dat's all!"

"Man callee me, cheated in Denver and me fillee fullee holes!"

As he said this he pushed the muzzle of the revolver he held in his hand around so it pointed directly at Bolivar.

Wild and his partners stood in the doorway, but Hop could not see them from where he sat by the kitchen stove.

"Maybe yo' don't cheat, but you win all my money," said Bolivar, writing considerably. "Yo' boss done say yo' cheat me."

"How much you lose?" asked Hop suddenly.

"Two dollas an sixty cents."

"Allee light; me givee money back. Blackee man standee in corner and holdes mouthe open."

"What fur?" queried the ducky.

"Me thlowee money; you catchee in my mouth."

"All right. I done de dat if yo' mean business."

"Me meeneo business allee light; me thlow um money staight and you catchee."

Our friends felt certain that something funny was going to happen now.

But they remained right where they were and waited. The ducky quickly took up his position and opened wide his mouth.

It was such a wide opening that Hop could hardly miss if he threw the coins anywhere toward the corner.

But Hop was an expert at that sort of business. The first coin he selected to throw was a quarter.

He flipped it over and Bolivar caught it in his mouth with surprising skill.

"Loo, boss," nodded Hop, grinning approvingly. "Now here come um silver doller. You no catchee, no haven."

"Let her come, Mister Chinese! It won't be yo' fault if yo' done don't catch him."

Hop let it go.

It went straight and very swift.

The heavy coin struck Bolivar's teeth so hard that a couple of them were loosened and he let out a yell of pain as the dollar dropped to the floor with a ring.

"You no catchee," said Hop, hastening to pick the money up.

"Yo' throw him too hard," replied the ducky, as he wiped the blood from his mouth that was caused by the teeth becoming loosened.

"You loose one doller; now me thlow some more; velly easy, yo' be his tree."

He did throw it easy and Bolivar caught it.

"Let velly gooder; now me thlow quarter," said Hop.

He let the coin go and it was promptly caught.

Bolivar had a dollar and a half of his money back, and that was all he was going to get, though he thought he might get it all.

"Now gettee leady for um other doller," said Hop, showing the coin.

The ducky got his mouth in shape.

Then the Chinaman let something go straight for his mouth.

It was not the dollar, though.

A piece of soap had deftly been substituted for the coin. Bolivar shut his teeth to in order to hold it as it landed in his mouth.

"Hip hi!" piped Hop, dancing about on one foot; "nig-goo man foot allee smee likee spittee!"

He was right.

Bolivar never felt so much like spitting in his life as he did just then.

And he did it, too.

He fairly frothed at the mouth, not because he was in a fit of rage, but because the soap simply made him do it.

Wild and his partners burst into a laugh and the two turned and saw them.

Hop ceased his dancing about and Bolivar ran to get some water to rinse the soap from his mouth.

"Now, then," said our hero, speaking in a stern tone of voice, as soon as he could stop laughing, "if you fellows go to fighting over what has happened I'll run you both off the ranch!"

"I ain't mad, boss," declared the ducky, as he spat out a mouthful of water from the kitchen door. "I knowed what he was raisin' ter throw; I allus cleans my teeth with soap, 'deed I does."

"Nigger man lie allice samee horse thief!" exclaimed Hop; "he no know."

"I guess you are right, you usually heathen! But just trust me now and make it all right with him. We don't want any trouble here between you two."

"Allice light, Mister Wild, we give nice nigger man um count."

Bolivar did not like to be called a "nigger man," but he did want the cigar, so he promptly took it.

"Light it," said Jim Bert; "it will take the taste of the camp out of your mouth, perhaps."

He struck a match and politely handed it to the darky. Our friends turned to go, since they heard Roller in the next room asking where they were.

But just then there came a sudden flash, followed by a quick report, and the cigar Bolivar had lighted flew into a hundred pieces.

The darky was so frightened that he dropped upon the floor and rolled around as though in the agonies of death.

"What have you done, Hop?" Wild demanded.

"Nigger man no hurtee, um cigar have lillic powder in, fat all," was the reply.

The ranchman came hurrying into the kitchen just then.

"What's her matter?" he cried, looking at the darky on the floor in surprise.

"Oh, your colored man and our Chairman have been playing circus, that's all," answered our hero.

Then he told him what had happened and Roller laughed in a hearty fashion.

"I reckon we'll have ter let 'em light a duel if they can't agree," he said.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE TRAIL OF THE CATTLE THIEVES.

Bolivar concluded that they go out and look around the ranch, so Wild and his two partners put on their hats and went with him.

They looked the barns over and found them to be all right and well stocked with hay and grain.

Then they went to the sheds and stables, and lastly to the big corral where the branding and counting of stock place.

"I reckon everything is about as good as what you've got over on Roarin' Ranch," remarked the ranchman, after they had spent an hour in looking around.

"Yes, I am satisfied to make the trade," answered our hero. "Now all we have got to do is to count up the cattle and see how near they come to what there is over at Roarin' Ranch."

"Well, I'll give yer a guarantee of how many I've got right now."

He gave the number and then told how many cows and calves there were, as well as both.

"Consider the deal made," said Wild. "I'll take your word for that part of it."

The fact was that the dashing young cowboy knew he had the best of the bargain, providing there were as many cattle on the ranch as Roller claimed there was, and he was willing to allow for a falling off.

The papers were already made out, since Roller had gone to that trouble, but it required the signature of Aleck Spofford, the man who had charge of the ranch in Wyoming, to sign them, as well as our hero, since he was not of age.

Roller had also taken the precaution to bring a man from the county seat with him when he returned from Wyoming who was empowered to take the acknowledgments of contracting parties, and he did not hesitate to deed his property to Cheyenne Charlie, who, in a legal way, would hold it in trust till Wild became of age.

"There!" he exclaimed; "I've turned my hand over ter yer; now all you've got ter do is ter write a letter ter Spofford an' tell him ter sign this other deed an' it'll be settled so's you kin take charge right away."

"I'll do that right away," retorted our hero.

He soon had it done, and when Roller took the letter from him that was all there was to the deal, as far as he was concerned.

"Now," said the ranchman, addressing his wife, "Kary, yer kin git ready ter go up ter Steuben an' see your father in' mother an' ter rest as soon as you're a mind ter."

The good woman was overjoyed now that the deal had

been made, and it was evident that she was more than glad that she was going to leave Nebraska.

The couple left the very next day, and then it was that Young Wild West found himself in full charge of Champion Ranch.

By the time night fell on the second day after the departure of the former owner and his wife, Wild and his partners had become pretty well acquainted with those employed on the ranch.

They were all pretty honest men, so our hero concluded, so he saw no reason just then why a chance should be made.

The following morning the foreman, whose name was Bud Gregory, and whose wife acted in the capacity of housekeeper for the ranch, came to Wild with a troubled look on his face.

"I've got bad news fur yer, Mr. West," he said.

"Well, don't mister me, Bud," answered the boy; "just call me Wild be, unless. Now what is the bad news you have got to tell me?"

"Cattle thieves has run off about fifty head of their best an' fattest of their steers," answered Bud.

"What!" cried Wild; "so soon? It seems that I am bound to strike in a rut of bad luck now and then. Just give me the particulars, Bud."

"Well, these leader of their gang, what done it is a feller what knows you own their ranch, all right. Here's a note he left pinned for their big cottonwood a mile up their river. One of them men found it just after their cattle was missed."

Wild took the crumpled piece of paper he handed over and unfolded it.

Then in a scrawled hand he read the following:

"Young Wild West, I want you to know that it was me what has just got away with fifty of their fattest cattle on your ranch. There is more ways than one of killing a cat!"

"NEBRASKA NICK."

"That is what I call pretty good," our hero said, as he turned the note over to Arietta. "Just read it out so everybody can hear it, Bt."

The girl did so.

"Great guns!" cried Cheyenne Charlie; "so Nebraska Nick is a cattle thief, eh? Well, I reckoned he was no runnin' first time I set eyes on that galoot. We'll make him their nextest cattle thief what ever was, though, afore many hours, won't we, Wild?"

"You can bet your last dollar that we will!" was the reply. Jim Dart nodded.

They had not yet eaten breakfast, and our hero could hardly wait to swallow his food.

He was eager to get on the trail of the cattle thieves and bring them to account.

And Charlie and Jim were just as eager.

"I reckon you'll let me go with yer, won't yer?" asked the foreman.

"Yes, Bud, and you get just three of the best lightweights you can find among the boys to go, too. We are going to push this thing through in a hurry. I don't care so much about getting the cattle back as I do to get hold of Nebraska Nick. I will make an example out of him when I do get him, too."

Bud Gregory hastened away and soon came back to the house mounted and with three men, who looked as though they would just as leave light cattle thieves as cat.

They were young men, too, and each carried a Winchester rifle in addition to the brace of revolvers their holsters contained.

Wild looked them over quickly and nodded in a satisfied way.

"You'll do," he said. "I hope it doesn't come to a fight, but if it does I guess we'll manage to hold our own. I don't know how many of them there are, but if there are twenty we won't stop until we've got them."

The cowboys gave a cheer and then they rode off, our hero leading on his splendid horse.

Just what time the theft had been committed no one seemed to know, but it was some time during the night.

That the cattle thieves were experts was evident, since they had been able to take the pick of the big herd that was grazing along the river.

The herd had not been stampeded, either. The fifty cattle had simply been brought together and hustled away.

The big cottonwood to which the note had been pinned



Down through an opening of some sort Wild was hurriedly dragged; when he heard the faint noise made by the gentle dropping of a door he realized that he had been taken down under the building.

Once here he was quickly disarmed and bound and gagged so tightly that he could scarcely breathe.

This done and he was lifted up and carried somewhere in a very damp place.

Then a voice hissed in his ear:

"I reckon I'm gittin' square more'n ever now, Young Wild West!"

There was no mistaking the voice.

It was no other than Nebraska Nick who was speaking to him.

The boy could not reply, of course, so the scoundrel went on:

"I've got your cattle, an' now I've got you! But I ain't satisfied yet, an' I won't be till I have got 'em out of their ways! You made me look like a fool over in Sumfleff Off the other day, an' I wouldn't have had that happen fur a whole lot of money. It was ther first time I was ever got ther best of in that way, fur I'm a petty good fighter an' a mighty quick shot. You're ther only galoot livin' what kin say that he ever mached Nebraska Nick in ther nose with his fist, an' then shot a shooter out of his hand! Yer kin be proud ter think that you are ther only one. If yer want ter, but that's all ther good it will do yer. Yer are a goner, just as soon as I git ready ter say ther word. Ther galoots will look fur yer, but they won't never come down here, 'cause they won't be able ter find ther way. I chucked your hat in ther creek, an' when they've looked around fur a while they'll see it there, an' then they'll think you tumbled in accidentally an' got crowded. I'm mighty glad I was up in ther top of ther old shanty an' sees yer start ter come in here. You don't know what a bad man I are, Young Wild West! Why, I don't think no more of finishin' a galoot what I don't like than I do of takin' a chew of tobacco!"

Wild heard all this, though it was spoken in a very slow tone of voice.

It was a voice that was full of meaning, though, and he felt a cold shiver run down his spinal column, in spite of himself.

There was no question but that Nebraska Nick was a very bad man, and a cruel one, too.

Bound so that he could hardly move, our hero lay on the ground, for he could tell that it was the ground by the dampness that came from it.

After what seemed to be a long time, though it was really but a few minutes, Wild heard just the faintest sounds of footsteps somewhere above him.

But they were so muffled and uncertain in sound that it seemed as though he was far away from them.

"There go ther galoots a-lookin' around fur ther boy, cap," said a man in a whisper.

"That's right," was the reply. "But I reckon they'll never find ther way ter come down here. If they do we'll pick 'em off afore they git all ther way down."

"They won't never think of lookin' fur a trap-door," said another man, and then Wild knew there were at least three of them.

But when he heard a fourth speak he easily understood why it that he had been captured so easily.

The four villains had been concealed behind the piles of boards and debris, waiting for him to walk right among them.

And he had fallen right into the trap which had been prepared for him in such a hasty manner.

The men conversed in low tones, Wild lay listening.

The sounds of footsteps could be heard off and on for ten minutes, and then it was he heard his name being shouted by Cheyenne Charlie.

How he would have liked to answer!

But he could make nothing more than the faintest kind of gurgle, and he did not even try that.

Though Nebraska Nick had said he meant to kill him, Wild felt that he would not attempt anything like that—not very soon, anyhow.

By and by the sounds above died away entirely.

"They've gone, boys," said Nebraska Nick, in a tone of relief. "I'm glad they didn't find ther way down here, though if they had ther friends would never have knowed what had become of 'em. This is too good a hidin'-place ter run ther risk of bein' kicked out of it, I reckon."

"You bet!" retorted his three companions, all speaking at the same time.

"I reckon we'll let ther young galoot see what a nice place he's in, an' we'll hear what he has ter say, too."

The next minute a stout cord was untied and the bag removed from the captive's head.

Wild breathed a sigh of relief, for he had been very uncomfortable while the bag was wound about his head and neck.

Nebraska Nick laughed heartily when he heard the sigh that came from the boy's lips.

"Yer feel better, I s'pose?" he said with a chuckle.

"Yes," answered Wild, as coolly as if there was not a particle of danger surrounding him.

"Yer do, hey? Well, I'm glad ter hear it. But you won't feel any better by an' by."

"Oh, yes, I will. I will feel a great deal better when I get away from you fellows," was the boy's cool reply.

"He's a cool sort of a galoot, if he is only a boy," observed one of the men.

"That's right," the villainous leader of the cattle thieves answered, "but only a boy, but a cool one! He's got ther coolest of a dozen men all ther same. Young Wild West is ther greatest deadbeat in ther West, too. It are a wonder that you never heard of him."

"They will know all about me before they are done with me," Wild spoke; "you can bet your last dollar on that, Nebraska Nick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The villain laughed sarcastically.

"If it does yer any good ter think that way, jest go ahead," he said. "But I'm goin' ter tell yer right here that you ain't goin' ter ever git out of this pit alive!"

The tone of the man's voice showed that he meant it.

Wild felt a chill shoot over him, but he did not let the scoundrels know that he was the least bit worried.

"It might be that I will never get out of here alive," he said, after a slight pause, "but how about you fellows? Do you think you will all get out of here alive? If you do think that way you are making a big mistake. My friends will never leave this place until I am found, dead or alive. And when they do find me what chance will you have? You had better let me go right away before it is too late."

Nebraska Nick laughed, but it was forced this time.

It was evident that the boy's words had some effect on him.

His three companions said not a word.

"Unless you have a way to get out of here that leads underground for a good long distance you will never dare to go out," went on Wild, carrying up the advantage he had gained. "You will either be caught or shot the instant you show yourselves."

"Oh, I reckon we kin git out when it gits dark," observed Nebraska Nick. "If them galoots what was with yer stay out there ter keep a watch on ther old mill it is all ther better fur them what's drivin' off ther cattle. You'll never git ther cattle. Young Wild West!"

"I'll get you, though, Nebraska Nick! Just mark my words!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This time the laugh was genuine.

It probably seemed so absurd to the villain that he could not help from laughing.

A funny way for a prisoner to talk to his captor, no doubt.

Wild now looked around the place they were in.

A dim light that came from a candle was all ther there to allow him to look around, but that was sufficient for him to see that it was a pit about ten feet square that the four villains had brought him to.

What such a deep pit could have been used for Wild had no idea.

About two feet over the heads of the men there was a flooring of heavy planks and a ladder ran up on one side, evidently to a trap-door, which Wild was unable to see in the dim light that pervaded the place.

One side of the pit had a solid wall of rock and the other three consisted of built-up stones roughly done.

It was quite warm down there, but there was a moisture to be seen on the stones in some places.

Our hero studied it over and came to the conclusion that he had been brought down two stories below the floor of the old mill that he had entered upon.

That was why the footsteps of his searching companions had not sounded very plain.

It was anything but pleasant to stay in the dark and noiseless place, but our hero felt that he could stand it if the four men could.

He took a philosophical view of it.

Wild knew that what he had said about his friends staying about the old building until they found him dead or alive had worked to a charr upon the villains.

They were afraid to even venture far enough to look out to find out how the land lay.

He began to think that he held the key to the situation.

The four conversed in such low tones for ten or fifteen minutes that the boy could only catch a word now and then, and not enough to understand what their conversation was about.

He thought it about time to jog them up a bit, so he said: "How long are you going to keep me here, Nebraska Nick?"

"You'll stay here forever, I reckon!" was the remark.

"I had no idea that you wanted to remain here that long."

"Do remain here!"

"Yes, if you keep me here you will have to stay, too. Let me see you go out—I dare you to go on to the spot where you caught me! You are afraid to do it!"

"I ain't got no errand up there 'est now, you galoot! But when I get ready ter go out of here I'll go, an' don't yer fergit it!"

"Well, I hope you'll get ready pretty soon, 'ere, for, to tell the truth, I don't like this damn place much."

"That's their difference between you an' us."

"It is, eh? Well, all right. But you'll find that I can stand it about as long as you can."

Just then a crashing noise sounded above them.

The four villains looked at each other in alarm.

"Now I guess you will be glad to let me go," said Wild calmly. "My friends have started in to tear the old building down!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### WILD IS FOUND, BUT THE CATTLE THIEVES GET AWAY.

Chowenoe Charlie, Jim Dart and the cowboys waited a few minutes, and then, not hearing or seeing anything of Wild, began to wonder what had become of him.

None of them were close enough together to talk in low tones, so Charlie mentioned to Jim that he was going in among the ruins to see how Wild was making out.

Dart nodded and the scout started to carry out his intention.

He got in the place and began walking softly about, looking behind the piles of rubbish and heaps of broken lumber.

There were no signs of the boy on the lower floor, so he concluded that he must have gone to the upper story.

Charlie moved over to the broken flight of steps.

"Wild!" he called in a low tone.

There was no answer.

Everything was as still as though there never had been a human being in the place.

The scout now began to grow very uneasy, for he felt that something had surely happened to the dashing young Prince of the Saddle.

He had not seen anything that looked like a man peering the window, but Wild declared that he had, and Chowenoe now began to think there must have been somebody in the building when the boy came in, and that they had managed to take him by surprise and capture him.

Up the steps the scout made his way, softly and on the alert for something to happen.

But as his head came above the level of the floor of the second story, or what was left of it rather, he quickly saw that there was no one there.

There was nothing up there that a cat could hide behind, much less a full-grown human being.

Charlie went downstairs.

He walked over to an opening, from where he could see Jim, and beckoned for him to come in.

"What is the trouble?" Dart asked anxiously, as he reached the side of the scout.

"Wild came in here, didn't he?" was the reply.

"He certainly did."

"Well, he ain't here now."

"That is queer."

"I should reckon so."

While they stood there talking in low tones over the strange disappearance of Wild, Bud Gregory came hurrying to the spot.

He had Wild's hat in his hand and it was dripping with water!

"Great gimlets!" gasped the scout; "where did yer git that?"

"One of the boys just found it floating down the creek," was the reply. "He fished it out and brought it to me in a hurry."

The face of Jim turned pale.

"Wild was right when he said there was some one in here," he declared, "and they have caught him, too!"

"Do looks that way," Charlie admitted.

"Do yer think ther galoots could have knifed him or' then clucked him in ther creek?" Bud asked, looking very much alarmed.

"No! Yer couldn't make me believe that Wild was dead unless I seen his body with my own eyes!" the scout declared.

Go out and fetch one of the men in with you and tell the other two to keep a sharp watch that no one leaves the building," said Jim to Bud.

"All right," was the reply, and he quickly obeyed.

His own came back with one of the cowboys, and then, holding their revolvers ready for business, the four began making a thorough search of the ruins.

They looked carefully over the first floor, turning everything over that could possibly conceal a person, and then went up to what was left of the upper floor.

But not a trace could they find of Wild or any one else.

In the search they had unconsciously thrown lumber upon the trap-door that led to the pit below, so it would have been difficult for the cattle thieves to get out, even if they had tried it.

Charlie now began calling the name of Wild in a loud voice.

But no answer came.

"Do yer think it could have been Nebraska Nick an' his gang what was in here?" Bud Gregory asked.

"If it was anybody it was them," Charlie answered.

"Well, they have done away with Wild, then."

"As sure as you've been there they have!" echoed the cowboy who had found our hero's hat.

"Wild ain't dead, an' yer kin bet on it!" cried the scout, who would not have it that way, no matter how much the indications related to it.

"No," spoke up Jim; "we'll find him alive, see if we don't."

After quite a long talk over, it they decided to tear out the end where the most debris lay in a heap.

It might be that there was a hiding-place there that they had been unable to find.

Having settled upon a plan of action, they went to work without delay.

Jim climbed up and tied his lariat to a beam, and then they all surged upon it till the whole end of the building fell with a crash.

Sure enough there was a portion of the lower floor exposed that they had been unable to reach before.

But there was nothing but dirt, dust and cobwebs there.

"This one what I call a mystery," Charlie declared, looking at Dart helplessly.

"You are right, Charlie. But something tells me that Wild is in this old building somewhere."

They all went outside now and crossed the creek by means of a big plank.

There were plenty of trees and shrubbery on the other side, so they made a search of it.

But it did no good.

Back they went to the old building.

"Wild! Hey, Wild!" shouted the scout.

"Hello, Charlie! I am down here!" came faintly from somewhere almost directly beneath them.

Our friends gave a start and looked at each other in amazement.

The answer was so unexpected that they could scarcely believe their senses.

But it was the voice of Young Wild West they had heard! Both the scout and Dart were sure of that.

"He is under the building somewhere!" cried Jim. "Come! We must find him!"

"He's under here, sure enough," said Bud Gregory; "but where? That's ther question."

They began flinging the old boards and debris aside now, and in less than five minutes they discovered the trap-door.

"This opening right over their water, I reckon," said Bud, as he took hold of the ring that was in it and pulled it up. But he was surprised to see that it did not.

Down a short ladder Charlie went before his companions hastily saw him make a move.

As his foot landed on a floor of loose planks he cried out: "Hello, Wild!"

"Here I am, right below you, Charlie," came the response quite plainly now. "Let somebody be on the lookout for Nebraska Nick and his gang! They have got out of here through a hole in the stone wall."

All loudly heard it, so Bud and the cowboy hurriedly ran out of the building.

Jim quickly descended the ladder.

He struck a match so he could see what he was doing, and then it was that his eyes caught sight of the end of a ladder sticking up between two planks.

"The stout saw it at the same time, and with a quick jerk he tore aside one of the planks.

"Great gimlets," he exclaimed, as he looked down into the pit. "It's a regular cellar under here! Where are yer, Wild?"

"Light down here," was the reply; "but I am tied so I can't reach more than now."

"Well, yer wasn't be long that way, yer kin bet your life!" Charlie threw aside another of the planks.

Then he went down the ladder, two rungs at a time.

"Through a hole in the side of the pit that was just about large enough to admit a man to get through came the daylight.

Out the thick trees along the creek and the building itself made it so gloomy there that the light was not very strong.

However, it was quite strong enough for the seat to discern the form of the helpless boy in a corner.

He was at side side in no time, and a couple of quick strokes of his hunting-knife and Young Wild West was free.

"Thank you, Charlie," said Wild, as he grasped the hand of his faithful partner; "I know you would not leave until you found me, either dead or alive. I told the scoundrels so, and that's why they did not kill me, I guess. Where are you, Jim?"

"Right here, Wild," was the reply, and he looked up and saw the boy peering down at him.

The daring young deadshot was stiff from the lack of circulation, and he began swinging his arms and leaping about the narrow confines of the pit-like place.

Charlie was taking a peep through the hole the four villains had escaped from, but he could not see anything of them.

That Nebraska Nick and his men had all the weapons they wanted to carry with them was evident, for they had left those belonging to our hero lying in the pit where they had been deposited when they brought the boy down.

Wild picked them up and then coolly told Jim to look out for he was coming up.

"Come on," was the reply.

Up the ladder went the boy, just as though nothing had happened.

Bud seized him and gave him a hug, so delighted was he to see him alive and all right.

The scout came up a minute later, declaring that it was strange that they had not thought of looking for a trap-door before.

When Wild was able to breathe the cold, fresh air once more he felt like a new being.

Jim called for the cowboys to come over as they walked to their horses.

They got there in a hurry and were more than glad to see the new owner of Champion Ranch alive and well.

Then Wild told them how he came to be captured and what Nebraska Nick had said to him.

"I scared them when I told them that you would never leave until you had found me, dead or alive," he went on to say, "and when the big crash came they got so scared that Nebraska Nick started in to picking the mortar from between the stones in an effort to break through the wall. It crumbled easily, and in two minutes' time they had one of the stones out. Then it was an easy matter for the four scoundrels to enlarge the hole. They finally crawled through, one at a time, Nebraska Nick going first, which showed that he was a coward. Not one of them had a word to say to me, and I felt just as well over it, for they might have taken a notion to put a knife in me, just for the fun

of it. They must have horses somewhere about, and they had probably gone on. But we must catch them, boy! Nebraska Nick must be caught!"

"Whoopoo!" yelled Choyenne Charlie, taking off his hat and swinging it in the air; "hooray for Young Wild West, boys!"

The cheers were given with a will, regardless of the fact that the cattle thieves might hear them and become aware that Young Wild West was free.

Our hero now mounted his horse and the rest followed suit.

The chase after the cattle thieves was to be resumed.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHERE THE CATTLE THIEVES WEST.

Nebraska Nick had really been pretty badly frightened when he heard the crash of the falling end of the building.

He came to the conclusion that it would only be the question of a very short time before the pit would be discovered.

As he had seen how many there were of our friends, he knew that they would stand little show with them if it came to a fight, so that was how he came to try to make a hole through the stone wall.

Nebraska Nick had fallen in with the three men who were with him soon after he had left Shuffle Off, and it had not taken him very long to find out that they were of about the same caliber as himself.

As he rode with them along the trail that led to the Platte he told them that he was one of the sort of men who care nothing for law and order and live on what other people made.

Then it was that he gradually gleaned from them that they had been discharged from a ranch up in Dakota for being complicated in a cattle-thieving game, and that they had been stopping at an old mill for the past few days, living on the game they could shoot and what they had managed to steal in the way of provisions from a neighboring ranch.

That was how it was that Nebraska Nick had found the old mill and discovered that there was a pit under it.

They rode over to Shuffle Off the first night after they met, and there found a man ready to take all the cattle they could turn over to him, no matter how or where they got them.

It was arranged that the man was to take fifty cattle from the thieves, providing they got them to a certain spot at a certain time.

The place was ten miles north of the old mill, and the time midnight on the night before our friends started on the chase after the cattle thieves.

Nebraska Nick was so sore against our hero that he meant to steal the cattle from his ranch, as a matter of course.

And he wanted the young deadshot to know he had taken them, too, so he wrote the note and pinned it to the cotton-wood tree.

This was a rather risky thing to do, so his companions declared, but he told them that he had been in the business long enough not to be caught.

They had delivered the stolen cattle to the man and received the money for them, and then they came back to the old mill to wait for those whom they expected might come in pursuit, and capture Young Wild West.

Though the three men he had leagued with were not quite bad enough to murder a person in cold blood, they did not care what their leader did, and it is quite likely that they would not have lifted a hand to save him if Nebraska Nick had offered to kill Young Wild West.

They had heard him say that he was a very dangerous customer, and that he had done the villain a great wrong, and that was all they knew or cared about it.

The three men went by the names of Tom, Wilbur and Jockey, and they were just the sort to sink as deep into crime as anyone could lead them.

Ignorant and cruel, they knew very little of what being good was.

They figured that there was a living in the world for everybody, and he who made it at the expense of others was the better off.

When the four passed through the hole in the side of the

pit and stepped, one at a time, in the shallow water that happened to be there they felt that they were running into danger.

That made them all the more cautious, and they waded across the creek with the cold water almost even with their waists with chattering teeth.

They had left their horses at an old haystack that was the other side of the strip of woods, and once under the cover of the trees, they made for them with all possible speed.

"We've got ter git somewhere so's we kin git some whisky, or we'll catch our death of cold," said the fellow called Jockey. "I don't like this kind of business very much. If we'd just let them galoots go on they'd never have found their cattle, nor us, either."

"An' if Nick hadn't gone an' wrote ther note an' pinned it ter ther tree it would have been better," added Wilbur. "The worst of all, though, is our ketchin' Young Wild West," chimed in Tom.

Nebraska Nick laughed, for he was quite bold again, now that he had reached their horses. "You fellers are putty squeamish, ain't yer?" he said. "Now, jest leave it ter me. Yer voted ter let me be ther captian, an' under my lead you've each made a little mercy, so I reckon yer kin put trust in me. There ain't no sheriff as ever lived what kin run down me, much less any one like Young Wild West."

"But yer said he was a regular terror, cordin' ter what yer heard an' seen about him," insisted Tom.

"As shootin' an' fightin' he is. But when it comes ter anything else, I reckon he wouldn't be nowhere. Jest take it easy. How far are we from ther nearest ranch?"

"The nearest ranch on this side of ther river is about ten miles away, I reckon," answered Jockey. "I took notice of things as I come along pretty well."

"That place ain't a ranch," sneaked up Wilbur; "it's nothing more than a farm, with a little shack of a house. I'll bet there ain't more'n two men on ther place, if there's that."

"That's just ther place we want ter make fur, then," said Nick. "We'll tell 'em that we're from Dwight's Ranch, what we took ther flatboat from, an' we'll say that we're lookin' for some lost cattle. Ha, ha, ha!"

His three followers looked approval.

They had mounted by this time and were making across the open prairie, with the timber between them and the old mill, so they could not be seen from the tumble-down structure.

They did not take to the right fork of the trail until they had covered something like four miles, and then they took out upon it and looked back to see if there were any signs of pursuit.

But there were none, as far as they could see, so they rode off at a gallop, and, without meeting a soul, finally came to the wagon trail that led to the little ranch, or farm, the men had spoken of.

Wilbur was right when he declared that there were no more than two men on the place.

There happened to be really only one man just then, and that an old fellow.

The strapping son who lived with him was away with a team to get provisions at the nearest town.

The old man, his wife and daughter-in-law, with two small children, were the only inmates of the shanty when the long rode in.

So when Nebraska Nick told them that they were from Dwight's Ranch, and that they had been out since midnight looking for cattle thieves, they received a warm welcome.

The women found something for them to put on while they dried their wet clothing, and Nebraska Nick felt that they had run in luck, after all.

"I don't s'pose you've got any liquor in ther house?" he asked of the old man.

"No, but we'll have some as soon as my son gets back, which oughter be between now an' noon, since he went yesterday mornin'," was the reply.

Nick looked at the old-fashioned clock on the shelf and saw that it lacked but half an hour before twelve.

"I'll soon be noon now," he remarked. "We'll pay yer fur what we let us have."

Then they talked a lot and found out that the family bore the name of Biggs, and that they had lived on the prairies for a number of years.

All of the four villains could be very pleasant and polite when the occasion required it, and the way they got into the good graces of the family was really remarkable.

It was just noon when the son showed up with the team and a wagon that was pretty well loaded.

He had gone to make a lot of calls for provisions that they needed, so the old man explained, and when he saw the loaded wagon coming he gave a nod of approval.

Jockey was so obliging that he got up and went out with the old man to assist in unloading the horses away.

"We've got company, like," the old fellow said, and then he introduced the four as men from Dwight's Ranch, who were out looking for cattle thieves.

"Cattle thieves, eh?" the son asked. "Well, that's too bad! I reckon there ain't many of ther ranchmen who'd kin afford ter lose ther cattle that way. Did yer lose any?"

"Jest about fifty of 'em, fattest ones on ther range," Nebraska Nick answered.

"Would yer know 'em if yer was ter see 'em?"

"Yes," answered the villain, as a sudden thought popped into his head. "Two of 'em weren't nothin' more than boys, so we've got jest enough idee of 'em ter tell 'em at a good distance off! I'd jest like ter get a glimpse of ther galoots!"

Then he proceeded to give a description of Young Wild West and Jim Dart, declaring that they were two of the cattle thieves.

They all helped unload the wagon after the horses were put away and then the whisky was opened.

There was a two-gallon jug of it, and the four cattle thieves were simply delighted.

They insisted on paying for what they had, too, and that made them in high favor with the Biggs family, since it was very little money they ever had, they getting almost everything they used through the trading of skins.

Ho, the son, appeared to be much interested in the cattle thieves, and he declared that he would give them a lift in hunting them down, if they wanted him to.

"We've decided they won't wait till to-morrow mornin' as we look n'er father's," Nick said, as he filled his glass from the jug for the third time. "We had a putty tough time of it last night an' this mornin', an' we want ter git good an' rested."

The old woman and the daughter-in-law were now busy getting the dinner ready.

"There's a nice lot of moon," said the wife, as she showed the five-dollar bill. "I do hope they'll find the men who stole their cattle."

"So do I," was the reply.

Dinner was soon ready, and then the guests were invited to sit down, and they had no time in accepting.

They had just started in to eat the substantial meal that had been placed before them, when the son gave a cry and insisted on all of the windows.

"Here comes ther galoots what stole our cattle, I'll bet!" he exclaimed. "There's two of 'em what looks ter be nothin' more than boys, an' ther rest is men!"

The four scoundrels jumped up and crowded to the window.

They beheld Young Wild West and his friends riding straight for the house.

"That's them, ain't it, boys?" said Nebraska Nick. "I'll bet anythin' that they're comin' here ter clean these good people out!"

At this the father and son took their rifles from the wall. "I reckon there ain't no cattle thieves gon' ter git in here!" cried the old man.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BIGGS FAMILY ARE HARD TO BE CONVINCED.

Sure enough, Wild and his companions had found the trail of the four villains and they were now riding up to the house occupied by the Biggs family.

One of the horses ridden by the cattle thieves had lost a shoe, and that made it quite easy for them to follow the trail.

The ground was soft, since it had rained lately, so the least sign of a print would show in places. The friends rode right up to the door and dismounted, never dreaming that they were going to meet with a cool reception.

As Wild approached the door old man Biggs came out with a double-barrel shotgun in his hand.

"What do you want?" he demanded sternly.

"Have you seen anything of four men, one of whom is

peck-marked?" our hero asked, thinking he had run across some eccentric old fellow who was afraid to trust a stranger.

"If you galoots don't git away from here in a hurry you'll think somebody has run across you!" the old fellow retorted menacingly.

"I reckon there's old galoot belongs ter Nebraska Nick's gang, Wild," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, bringing his rifle around so the muzzle covered Biggs. "Git ready ter shoot, boys!"

At this juncture the daughter-in-law appeared at the door. "Go way!" she cried excitedly; "we don't want any cattle thieves around here! Go way before there is trouble."

"Madam, we are looking for four cattle thieves," answered our hero. "We have tracked them here, and if they are in that house we want them. Calm yourself, for we don't mean to harm a hair of your head."

"Go away! Go away!" shrieked the woman. "You can't deceive us! Go away, or there will be trouble!"

Wild got a little bit nettled at this sort of treatment.

He now believed that the villains were in the house, and that they were with friends who knew what they were.

Since the scout had covered the old man he stood like a statue, not daring to move, for he surely thought the party were cattle thieves.

"Do you know these people, Bud?" Wild asked the foreman.

"No," was the reply. "I've heard about this little ranch farm, though. Their name is Biggs. John Keller knows 'em, 'cause I heard him speak about 'em once. He sold a couple of calves ter 'em last fall an' took pay in skins."

"Is that right, Mr. Biggs?" our hero asked, looking at the old man.

"Yes, I reckon that's right," was the reply. "But that don't say that you ain't cattle thieves. I've worked hard fer what little I've got, an' I don't intend ter let you fellows steal it from me."

"Well, you need not fear that we will steal anything from you. But I want to tell you one thing! If you have got four men in that house and are hiding them there you are as bad as they are, and you will be punished as well as they. I demand that you turn them over to us! If you don't we will take them, and you with them, that's all!"

At this there came a shot from the window and a bullet whizzed past the head of our hero.

"That came from Nebraska Nick. I'll bet!" he cried. "Watch your chance to drop the secondals, but don't hit the old man or the woman, for I am inclined to think that they are innocent, by the way they talk and act."

Jim and the cowboys were ready to shoot now, and they presented a formidable appearance.

The wife of young Biggs ran screaming into the house, dragging the old man after her.

Then the door was slammed to and our friends could hear it being barred on the inside.

"This is what I call a peculiar state of affairs," said Wild. "To make sure that the rascals are here, though, one of you had better go to the barn and see if there is a horse there that has lost a shoe. Jim, you go."

All right," answered Dart, and he ran quickly for the barn.

The rest drew back a little, so they could see if any one went out from the rear door or any of the windows.

Jim soon came back, reporting that the horse was there, so that satisfied Wild that Nebraska Nick and his three men were really in the house.

But what was to be done?

He did not want to break in the door, on account of the woman he had seen, and he did not want to destroy any of the property, anyhow.

After waiting a few minutes he tied his handkerchief to the muzzle of his rifle and held it up, signaling that he wanted to talk with some one in the house.

The door opened presently, and out came the younger Biggs.

"You appear to be a bright, sensible fellow," said our hero, nodding to him; "will you listen to reason?"

"Go ahead an' let's hear what you've got ter say," was the reply.

"Well, I am the new owner of Champion Ranch, up the river, and this is my foreman," pointing to Bud Gregory. "We had fifty cattle stolen last night, and the men who worked the game are in your house. They have either de-

ceived you, or you are in league with them. Now, which is it?"

"I reckon you're the ones that stole their cattle last night," was the reply. "You can't fool us by that kind of talk. We've got four men in here, I'll admit, but they're honest men, from Dwight's Ranch. You fellows ain't satisfied with runnin' off their cattle, but yer want ter git at 'em an' put 'em out of their way. You ain't goin' ter come any of your games on us, I kin tell yer!"

"You talk like a blamed fool!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "If yer only knowed what a mistake you're makin' you wouldn't have them galoots near yer more'n five minutes. Why, they had Young Wild West here under their old mill down by the river, an' they was goin' ter kill him in cold blood. If we hadn't started ter tear down their buildin' they'd have most likely done it. Their leader of their cattle thieves is Nebraska Nick, an' I reckon he's one of their worst galoots in their State."

"Young Wild West, you say?" queried the young man. "Which one of yer is Young Wild West?"

"That is who I happen to be," answered our hero.

"By jingo! I believe you do look like him, from what I've heard of him. I heard in town last night that Young Wild West had bought Champion Ranch, too. If yer kin prove ter me that you're Young Wild West you kin go ahead an' take their four men what's inside, an' I'll 'poliarize'."

Some one said something inside just then and the young man's wife came out and tried to pull him in the house. But he was just interested enough not to go.

"Just wait," he said. "If that is Young Wild West he kin soon prove it, for he's the Champion Doodad of their West, so they say. An' he's called their Prince of their Saddle, 'cause he kin outside any galoot what ever straddled a broncho. He's— Great Scott! if that scoundrel ain't just like the one I heard Young Wild West ride! He is Young Wild West, as sure as my guns!"

"I'm glad you are coming to your senses," said our hero, smiling at him. "Do you want me to show you how I can shoot in order to convince you?"

"Yes, go ahead."

"Hold up your knife," said Wild, taking his revolver from the holster.

Young Biggs hesitated.

"Go on," said Wild, nodding in a reassuring way. "I want to hurt you, I always hit what I shoot at, an' if I draw head on the blade of your knife you can bet all you are worth that I'll hit it. Just hold it up so the edge is directly toward me and I will split the bullet. You can easily tell whether I hit it or not, for you will feel the shock. The marks of the lead will be on it, too."

"Hanged if I don't!" was the reply. "I like ter see good shootin'. I'm a putty fair shot myself, but I ain't anything like a champion."

He hesitated no longer, but held up the knife just as Wild had told him to.

He was not more than twenty feet from our hero, so that was an easy shot for him.

Taking a quick aim, Wild pulled the trigger of his revolver.

Crack!

As the report rang out Ike dropped the knife, for he had been holding it loosely.

"Great snakes!" he cried, as he picked it up and looked at the blade; "if you didn't hit it jest as yer said yer would I'm a sneakin' skunk! You're Young Wild West, all right! I'm awful sorry I doubted your word!"

The young man ran over and put out his hand. Wild shook it smilingly.

"It took an awful lot to convince you that you were making a big mistake, didn't it?" he observed. "But let me introduce you to my partners and the foreman and three of our cowboys."

Ike Biggs did not stop until he had shaken hands with all of them.

"Now, then," said Wild, addressing Ike, "I'll tell you all about it in a few words."

He did tell him, starting from the time he had first met Nebraska Nick.

During the recital of the story our friends had not been as watchful as they should have been, and the first thing they knew they saw four horsemen riding away from the barn.

"Ha, ha!" yelled the old man, putting his head out of

the door; if you're a fool, Ike, I ain't! I've let their men get out of their back door an' they're off!"

Cra-ang!  
Nebraska Nick fired from the middle just then and the bullet flew over our hero's shoulder and out a lock of hair from the old man's head.

Charlie's rifle was to his shoulder in a twinkling.  
"Don't shoot, Charlie," said Wild. "We want Nebraska Nick alive."  
Cra-ang!

The villain called Tom first and the bullet went through the crowd of the scout's hat.

Angered at it, Charlie drove a bullet on him and fired. His bullet found the mark, for the scuffle thief threw up his hands and tumbled from the saddle.

"I didn't kill him," said the scout, smiling grimly; "I just grazed his shoulder enough to make him drop."  
"Mount and after them, boys!" cried Wild. "We must not let them get away! Biggs will look after the wounded fellow."

They were off like a shot.  
Then he went into the house and got on his hat and coat. "If ever there was a fool it's you!" snapped his wife.

"Keep still, Kate," spoke up her mother-in-law. "Maybe them men deceived us. If they was so anxious to catch their cattle thieves as they said they was, why didn't they come out an' try ter git 'em, instead of sneakin' away like that?"

The old man shook his head in a doubtful way at this remark.

Meanwhile, Ike was hurrying over to where the wounded man was sitting on the ground.

It was only a flesh-wound that he had received, but he acted as though he had not long to live.

However, he allowed the young man to help him to the house, and there his wound was dressed by the old woman.

"Now, see here!" explained Kate, shaking her finger at him; "I want yer to tell the truth! Are you a cattle thief, or ain't yer?"

"Yes, I'm one of Nebraska Nick's men," was the reply. "I might as well own up ter it, for it will come out, anyhow. Young Wild West is bound ter catch their rest of 'em pretty soon. I was a fool ter ever go in with such a lunk-head as Nebraska Nick is! He made a bungle of it right from their start."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CHASE CONTINUES.

"This is what I call a little hard luck, boys," said Nebraska Nick, as they rode swiftly away after the bullet from Cheyenne Charlie's rifle had dropped the man called Tom.

The villain was plainly much worried, and he did not try to conceal it from his two companions.

"They're after us!" exclaimed Wilbur. "Just look at that gaffer cousin, will yer! Talkin' about a railroad train! Where us ain't got a chance, I reckon."

"We'll swing around an' reach their woods, an' then make fur their river," answered Nebraska Nick. "I've made up my mind to call our gang their Cattle Thieves of their Plate, so we'll make our headquarters somewhere along their river. It's too bad that their old mill ain't got a place in it where horses could be kept without bein' seen by any one passin' by."

They had a good quarter of a mile the start when they set out, but the distance had gradually lessened to almost half the distance.

However, the apart they were making now caused them to hold their own for the next mile.

Then Young Wild West and his friends began to gradually gain.

Our friends were sure now that they would run the villains down unless something entirely unexpected happened.

"We'll try and make them empty their rifles and shooters, boys," he said, "and then we'll swoop down on them and rope them in."

"Suppose I send a bullet skimmin' along pretty close to 'em?" Bud Gregory suggested.

"All right," our hero answered. "You go ahead and shoot, and then if any of them tries to answer it I will knock the rifle from his hands. All I will have to do is to hit it, and

he'll drop it as though a bee had stung him. Let her go, Bud!"

The foreman raised his rifle to his shoulder and sent a bullet whizzing over the heads of the fleeing trio.

Nebraska Nick turned in the saddle instantly.

But as he was in the act of swinging his rifle around the report of our hero's Winchester sounded.

He had been ready for just such a move, and the bullet hit the weapon's stock and sent it flying from the villain's grasp.

Nebraska Nick uttered an oath as the rifle dropped from his hand.

"Are yer hit?" asked Wilbur.

"No, but I thought I was. I reckon ther young galeot jest shot my rifle on purpose."

"I wonder if he could knock mine out of my hand?" said Jockey, who was in a reckless and indifferent sort of mind.

"Try him an' see," was Wilbur's reply.

"I will, by jingo!"

These his two companions knew what he was up to, Jockey let out a yell of defiance, and then seizing his rifle by the barrel, held the stock high over his head.

Cra-ang!  
Young Wild West had accepted the chance and the weapon dropped from the villain's grasp almost before he was aware of it.

"You didn't have ter drop that!" roared Nebraska Nick; "I believe yer done it on purpose."

"Never mind if I did," was the reply. "Why don't yer stop an' pick it up?"

"I'll pick you up afore long!"

"Whenever yer git ready jest let me know."

"Shet up!" commanded Wilbur, who was certainly the coolest of the three. "I want ter git out of this scrape with a whole skin, if there's any chance."

"You're talkin' sense," replied the leader. "You're——"  
Cra-ang!

Young Wild West fired again.

The bullet struck the stock of Wilbur's rifle squarely, but the strap happened to be looped around his arm and he did not drop it.

"He, ha, ha!" laughed Jockey; "come mighty near losin' it, didn't yer, Wilbur?"

"That boy is a regular fiend with a gun!" was the reply.

"What show do we stand with sich people as he is?"

"Not a ghost of a show," answered Jockey, laughing again.

As the three villains reached the cover of the woods a shout of defiance went up from Nebraska Nick and Wilbur.

But Jockey only laughed.

The woods ran all the way to the river now, so the villains thought they had a chance of eluding their pursuers.

It was a vain hope, however, for they could not cover their trail so Young Wild West could not follow it.

On, on dashed pursued and pursuers.

The three cattle thieves had not proceeded far into the woods before they struck a gulch that had a small stream of water running through it.

It was really the head of the creek that ran to the mill, but they did not know it, nor would they have cared if they had.

A hope arose in the breast of Nebraska Nick.

"Into ther brook with ye, boys!" he exclaimed; "we'll fool them galeots by doublin' on 'em. This way!"

Into the brook his horse went, and then he turned and rode up to it in almost the direction they had come from.

Wilbur followed him, but Jockey did not. He kept right on down the gulch.

The two rode up the creek, or brook, for a few yards and then came to a cave that had an entrance that was large enough for them to ride into and which was almost covered by hanging vines.

"Here we are, Cap!" said Wilbur. "I reckon we'll stand some show now. Jockey has gone on, ther fool!"

"So much ther better," answered Nebraska Nick, with a chuckle. "They'll foller him now."

The move certainly did result in the favor of the two who had taken to the cave.

Young Wild West and his companions soon reached the brook, and, not noticing anything but the hoofprints that led straight ahead, they kept right on.

Two minutes later they reached a swampy place and saw Jockey crouching in the mire.

He had dismounted and his horse was floundering about in danger of going down in the quicksands.

"I surrender!" the man cried out. "Don't shoot me!"  
"All right," answered Wild, as he quickly dismounted, "Turn the horse's head this way if you want to save him."  
By a great effort the animal reached the solid ground, Jockey leading him out and looking resigned.

"Where's the other two galts?" queried Cheyenne Charlie.

"They took to the brook an' turned up, I reckon. I didn't stop ter see where they went. I didn't feel like keenin' in their company of Nebraska Nick any more, so I wouldn't go where he said ter come."

One of the cowboys dismounted and relieved Jockey of his weapons.

Another stopped with him to tie the villain on the back of his horse and the rest turned back to hunt for the other two cattle thieves.

Wild soon reached the point where they had taken to the brook.

Along the bank of the stream they rode and soon came to the cave.

There were the prints of the horses' hoofs, showing plainly where the villains had gone.

He dismounted and the rest followed suit.

They moved around so they could not be shot at from the cave without the man who did it showing himself.

Then one hero called out:

"Hello, there! You may as well surrender, for we'll have you, anyhow."

"If yer want us, come in an' get us," was the retort.

It was Nebraska Nick who answered; Wild knew his voice only too well by this time.

"We will come in, all right, but we are in no particular hurry. We are going to take you alive, Nebraska Nick, and before you go to prison we are going to make you ride one of the cattle you stole through the streets of Shuff:

Off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the cave.

"Jim," said our hero, turning to Dart, "you and Bud and the others start on the trail of the cattle right away. Charlie and I will take care of these fellows. You ought to overtake the drove, or learn something that will tell you where they are by night."

"All right," was the reply, and then the five rode off.

We will follow Jim and the cowboys and see how they make out.

Bud Gregory knew just where the trail lay, so he turned in that direction.

In a few minutes they were out of the wood and riding back in the direction of the Biggs place.

They kept along at a good gallop, and in due time they came to the house.

The whole Biggs family came out to meet them, including the children.

"Hoony!" cried Ike; "did yer catch the rest of they cattle thieves, boys?"

"We've got one of them," replied Jim. "Say! do you know anything about the cattle we lost?"

"I sorter think that I do, now that I've had a good talk with their galoot we've got inside."

Our friends quickly dismounted and accepted the invitation to go in the house.

The villain Tom was leaning back in a chair, evidently suffering considerable pain from the wound he had received.

A look of uneasiness came over his face when they entered.

"What are yer boys' ter do with me?" he asked, in a whining tone of voice.

"I reckon you'll know what'll happen fer yer when they sheriff hits hold of yer," answered Bud Gregory, with a grin. "The only chance you've got is ter turn state's evidence."

"I'll tell all I know," was the quick retort, while a hopeful gleam shot from his eyes.

"Well, where are the cattle you helped to steal, then?" asked Jim.

"They are over ter a place called Millerville by this time."

"What is the name of the man who bought them of you, or didn't you see them?"

"A ranchman named Spikes bought 'em," was the answer.

"That's it!" exclaimed the Biggs. "I seen Spikes up at Millerville when I left early this mornin'. He was worried 'cause he couldn't git no cars ter load his cattle in till

night. They do say that Spikes sells more cattle than any number around these diggins, though he don't assay ter have as many grades as some of 'em do."

"You kin catch him easy enough afore he gits 'em loaded in their cars, then," said Tom, the cattle thief. "I'm mighty glad you've got 'em, I am! I'll tell all I know when it comes ter court. I s'pose their rest has been caught?"

"One of 'em has," answered Gregory. "There was two in a cave when they can't git out of very well, unless they come out of their own accord, or are dragged out dead. But Young Wild West an' Cheyenne Charlie will have 'em!"

"Well, it is all Nebraska Nick's fault, this thing is. He coaxed their rest of us in their game. I hope he gits sent up fur about twenty years."

Our friends got all the information they wanted and then started for Millerville, which was about twenty-five miles distant.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOP AMUSES THOSE AT THE RANCH.

Things went on pretty smoothly at Champion Ranch while Young Wild West was on the trail of the cattle thieves that morning.

Hop Wah and Bolivar, the darkey, soon made up and became friends after the incident of the exploding cigar.

But it was not until after dinner on the day Wild and his partners went away that they talked about gambling again.

After the remains of the noontide meal had been cleared away the two sat in the kitchen, and, as if by a prearranged plan, they sat down at a table.

Then Bolivar took the volition from his pocket and began flipping it up and catching it.

"Velly nice money," commented Hop.

"Yo' is right when yo' say dat. Mister Roller done give me dat when he went away."

"Chuckee dice?" said the Chinaman, coming right down to business.

"No; I play cards for a dollar a game, dough."

"Whuttee kind of game?"

"De game dey call euchre, Hop."

The Chinaman shook his head as though he did not mean to try any such a game as euchre.

"Then Bolivar began to laugh and lose him.

"Yo' is 'raid to play euchre an' does give me a chance to be de money I lose de white-day," he said.

"No no dead, me s'ist!" exclaimed Hop, just as though he was being driven to it.

He had a clever deck out of his pocket so quick that the crowd eyes opened in wonder.

Bolivar took the cards and counted them and found that the remainder number was there.

Then he shined them on the table and Hop picked them up in his innocent way.

He shuffled them in what appeared to be a very bunglesome way, but really he was "fixing" them.

After a while he laid the deck on the table and told the darkey to cut for deal.

Hop went.

"How many points we play, Mister Bolivar?" he asked.

"S'pose we done make de game five points, den we play de games quick?"

"Aller light."

The Chinaman turned up a heart and Bolivar did not have one in his hand.

Hop had them, though, and he made two in short order.

Then Bolivar took the cards and dealt them.

Hop saw that he was fixing them so he would get the best trump, but he did not care.

He knew he would be able to score the five points first.

Bolivar succeeded in making two, and that made the game a tie.

The next deal Hop made two, and then it looked decidedly one-sided.

The face of the darkey took on a worried expression.

He manipulated the cards again so he made two, and then he felt better.

It occurred to Hop that he had better get all the money the darkey had in the one game.

So he practiced a little sleight-of-hand work and flipped the four kings in the pack-to him.

He got three of the aces himself and turned up the other for a trump.

It was the ace of clubs, and as he had the jack in his hand and also the queen, it looked as though he was pretty sure to make the single point he wanted.

Hop knew where the rest of the clubs were, or those that amounted to anything.

They were at the bottom of the pack.

Bolivar had one, the king.

"Golly!" he exclaimed, when he looked at his hand; "I just wish I was playin' poker, 'stead of euchre."

"Me bettee fiveer cent me gottee bettee hand lan you!"

Hop acted just as though he was doing it just to oblige his opponent and the race succeeded.

"I'll bet you'd be five-dollar goldpiece I've done got!" said Bolivar, grinning like a toad.

"Alice light, puttee money on my table."

Put-a-wait the goldpiece with a bang.

It was covered instantly by Hop.

"Whatt'er got?" he asked.

"Fo' I want Ho, ha, ho! Ho, ho, ho! The done git squar on de Chinese. Ho, ho, ho!"

"Me gottee four nicks," said Hop, innocently, and then he laid down the card he sensed in the stakes.

A person coming in just then would surely have thought the derby was going to die right away.

His jaw dropped and his eyes rolled, while a choking sound came from his throat.

"The done choosed out ap'n," he said, mournfully. "Hop, ye is Old Nick himself!"

"Me allow sarise more Chinaman," was the reply; "see likes me five dollar goldpieces verry mucher."

The derby did not know y' heiser to get mad or not.

He finally decided not to.

Hop was in an excellent humor just then.

He felt like doing something to amuse some one.

He went into the room where the girls were talking to the wife of Bud Gregory, and, holding politely, said:

"Me like de one nice little thick Missy Alberta."

"Certainly. Go ahead, Hop; there is the table at your disposal."

Charlie was now holding the door open slightly and looking through.

"Kin I come in, sarise?" he asked.

"If the girls don't mind havin' a nigger in here you can," was the reply.

They assured him that they did not mind in the least, so the derby came in and sat down, looking at Hop as though he did not know whether to admire or despise him.

The Chinaman put on an air of importance and proceeded to relate something about his rich relations in China.

Then he took the big yellow silk handkerchief he always carried from a pocket and held it up for them to look at.

"That is a fine handkerchief," ventured the foreman's wife; "I wouldn't mind havin' one just like it to use for a scarf."

"Velly nice han'kerchief!" remarked Hop, as he shook it out; "me likes de one P'kin."

Then he took an apple which he had removed from a barrel that stood in a corner of the kitchen and calmly deposited it on the table in the midst of all.

"Now watchee velly mucher sharp," he said, as he placed the handkerchief over it and left the middle sticking up in the form of a pyramid.

Mrs. Gregory and the darkey were very attentive in their watching.

"Me notice apple under han'kerchief," said Hop, looking at the apple and acting as though he had suddenly become sleepy; "me notice apple to big round yer in China, and him seehee look something nice for me lady."

He nodded at the mistress of the house as he spoke.

The woman looked astonished.

But just then Hop to nod to her and exclaimed:

"Alice light! You little sarise an han'kerchief!"

She stepped over to the table rather clumsily and took hold of the handkerchief she thought was so pretty.

But if she thought the yellow handkerchief was pretty, what could she have thought when she found the apple had vanished and in its place a bouquet of paper flowers that were all the colors of the rainbow!

"Mercy!" gasped the woman, starting back.

"Golly!" cried Bolivar, his eyes rolling in amazement.

The girls laughed heartily.

"And do you mean to say that the flowers are for me?" asked Mrs. Gregory, as he nodded for her to take the bouquet.

"Yes, allow sarise for you; me gittee allee way from um garden in China. Big mandarin sarise though ar allee sarise on telegraph."

"He took hold of it and held it up admiringly.

"I'll wear the flowers in my hat next summer," she declared.

"Velly nice to wear in um hotties," smiled Hop.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

Young Wild West knew that it was going to be no easy task to get the two villains out of the cave.

But he meant to have them, just the same.

"Charlie, you wait here and keep a watch on the mouth of the cave," he said to his partner. "I will climb up there and see if there is any other way to get in it."

The scout nodded, so the daring young drabhead moved over to the side of the gully and worked his way around.

He soon got directly on top of the place the villains were hiding in.

But there was no opening there, as he thought there might be.

A notion on an impulse Wild began jumping on the soil and gravel that was there.

The result was far different from what he expected, for there was a crashing noise and then down he shot from the view of the watching scout!

In spite of what had happened so quickly, our hero did not lose his presence of mind.

He had his revolver in his hand as he went down, and he did not lose his grip upon it.

Down!

He struck something that was soft and yielding and then landed squarely upon his feet on the ground.

Right into the center of the cave he landed, and before him stood Nebraska Nick and Wilbur, the picture of amazement.

Wild had struck one of the boxes as he fell, and the animal was prancing about the case in a fright.

A hole in the top of the case about the size of a barrel had been formed, and this let in sufficient light for him to see what was there.

"Hands up, you scoundrels!"

"Don't shoot!" yelled Wilbur, throwing up his hands.

Nebraska Nick, too, was frightened, and he quickly put up his hands in a token of surrender.

Wild walked up to them and took their revolvers from them.

"Great gimlets!" ejaculated Cheyenne Charlie, who had hastily climbed to the place Wild had disappeared from and found the hole.

He now stood looking down upon Wild and his captives, while Jockey sat on his horse with a broad grin of satisfaction on his countenance.

"They got yer, Nick, didn't they?" the prisoner said.

"I reckon it was you what told 'em where we was," Nebraska Nick replied, with a scowling frown.

"I reckon I didn't," was the retort, " 'cause I didn't know, if I had knowed I'd have told 'em, though, an' yer kin but on it!"

Jockey appeared to take his capture very easy.

His manner had considerable weight with Wild, too.

He thought there was some good in Jockey.

Nebraska Nick and Wilbur were commanded to mount their horses, while Charlie held them by the heads, after leading them from the cave.

They obeyed silently, no doubt knowing that it would probably mean sudden death for them if they tried to escape.

Their hands were bound behind their necks and then a rope fastened their ankles so they could not even fall off the animals if they tried ever so hard to do it.

"Which way now?" asked the scout, looking at our hero expectantly.

"We'll ride over to the Biggs house and get the other thief," was the reply.

Charlie mounted his horse and drew up on the larbit that was attached to the horses Nebraska Nick and Wilbur were sitting upon.

Then our hero swung himself in the saddle and the procession started off.

They followed the trail made by Jim and the cowboys and soon reached the regular fork that led to the house of the Biggs family.

In due time they arrived there and were given a warm welcome.

The whole family insisted on apologizing to Wild and Charlie for what had happened.

"It is all right," said our hero. "You made a little more work for us, that is all. But we have got them hard and fast now."

Then our two friends learned that Jim and the cowboys had gone to Millerville to try and get the stolen cattle, and they felt quite easy.

The horse belonging to Tom had been caught by Ike, so, after a little chat with the family, the wounded captive was placed upon it and they then set out to return to the ranch.

It had been an exciting day, and even our hero was satisfied with what had happened.

As they came in sight of the ranch, just as it was beginning to grow dark, Jockey turned to Wild and said:

"Yer don't know their name what Nebraska Nick called our gang, do yer?"

"No," answered Wild; "what was it?"

"The Cattle Thieves of their Platte! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that name does sound pretty good, don't it?" and our hero turned to the scout.

"Yes," answered Charlie.

"Say!" said Jockey, looking a bit serious, "Young Wild West, don't yer think yer could sorter let me go? I'm a putty good sort of a galoot, an' I don't feel like goin' ter prison?"

"We will see about that when the sheriff comes over," was the reply.

"I've turned state's evidence," spoke up the wounded man, "so I reckon I'll sit off."

When Wild and Charlie rode up to the ranch-house with their prisoners they found the girls waiting on the stoop for them.

"So you caught the cattle thieves, eh, Wild?" called out Arietta.

"Yes," was the reply, "we've got the Cattle Thieves of the Platte, Et. What do you think of them?"

"Not much. Any cattle thieves that try to get the best of you always land where they belong, don't they, Wild?"

"Well, they always have so far."

It was pretty cold, and our friends were glad to get in the house.

The four prisoners were placed in a small room with no windows in it and a guard of two cowboys placed over them.

It was noon the next day when Jim Dart and the cowboys showed up.

They had the cattle with them and also the sheriff and some men who had been engaged to drive the herd over.

Jim had had very little difficulty in convincing the sheriff that the man named Spikes was a receiver of stolen cattle, since another charge by a ranchman near the town had proved that some of his cattle were among those the rascal was going to send away by rail.

"Now, sheriff," said our hero, as he took the official to the room where the prisoners were, "there are really only two who should get the limit the law allows. One of them is Nebraska Nick and the other is that fellow next to him, who goes by the name of Wilbur, I believe."

"All right," was the reply, "whatever you say will go in this case. Which is ther galoot what is willin' ter turn state's evidence?"

"There he is—the one with the sore shoulder."

"Well, he'll go free after he gives in ther evidence, if you say so."

"All right, I do say so, then."

"An' ther other galoot?"

"Well, he is a happy-go-lucky fellow, and I really believe there is more good than bad in him, so I think he better be allowed to have twenty-four hours to get out of the state."

"Good enough! Yer know, we ain't got things runnin' in very good shape, as far as law an' order is concerned, yet, an' sich things is generally left ter me. Ther only thing we have tried ter stop is runnin' a galoot without givin' him a chance ter say somethin'."

The sheriff decided to go over to Shuffle Off that afternoon, as he had some business there, and then take his prisoners to Millerville the next day.

The next morning Wild went out to the cattle-pen and selected a powerful-looking steer.

"I am going to take that fellow over to Shuffle Off," he said. "I promised Nebraska Nick and Wilbur to ride them through the town, and I am going to keep my word."

The prisoners were taken over in a wagon driven by Bolivar, the darky.

The steer was led along behind the wagon, making it look like a queer procession, since Hop, on his piebald mule, insisted on bringing up the rear.

It was just before one o'clock when they arrived at Shuffle Off.

Many of the miners were just going to their work when one of the queerest turnouts they ever saw appeared on the street.

Our hero had caused Nebraska Nick and Wilbur to be tied to the back of the steer, their backs together.

Nick was facing the animal's head and his partner was looking toward its tail.

On a placard that Wild had prepared and pinned on Nick's breast was the following:

#### NEBRASKA NICK & CO.,

Expert Cattle Thieves.

Take a good look, so that you will know us next time.

Not until they had gone all through the little town did Wild let up.

Then he came back to the tavern and turned the prisoners over to the sheriff.

There is little more to add.

Suffice it to say that Nebraska Nick and Wilbur got the full penalty of the law, and that the other two cattle thieves were allowed to leave the state of Nebraska, with a warning not to come over in Colorado.

The Cattle Thieves of the Platte had not lasted any longer than to make one raid, and that proved disastrous to them.

Young Wild West and his friends left for New Mexico and were well in time to escape a severe snowstorm.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE MAGIC MINE; OR, HOW ARIETTA SOLVED A MYSTERY."

Send Postal for Our Free Catalogue.

### TAKE NOTICE!

Stories by the very best writers of fiction are appearing in MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Here is a list of a few whose names are a guarantee of the high quality of their work:

WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE  
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and many others equally as well-known. Do not fail to tell your friends about this elegant galaxy of talent. If you want good detective and mystery stories, be sure to read MYSTERY MAGAZINE.

# HELP YOUR COUNTRY!

## WOMEN ARE ENLISTED FOR CANADA'S AIR FORCES.

The Royal air forces of Canada have decided to defy strong local prejudice and to enlist women, it was announced at headquarters, Toronto, Ont. "We have to replace more of our man power and it is only right," said a staff officer, announcing that the early introduction of women as chauffeurs into the service, mainly on the motor trucks, is being arranged. A number of girls have applied.

## BRITAIN BUILDS ELECTRIC SHIP.

The first electrically-propelled ship built in England and the largest electric vessel in the world is undergoing finishing touches at a British shipyard and will start soon on its first voyage, according to the "Daily Marine Record." The vessel is designed on a system in which a combination of steam and electricity is used.

Cowboys who tackled shipbuilding at Orange, Texas, when cattle punching became unremunerative in the dry season last year have found their new work so pleasing that they have induced scores of men who formerly rode the range to join them, according to "Daily Marine Record."

More than 3,000 boys between 16 and 20 years old are being used as apprentices and helpers in the shipyards of Seattle, "The Marine News" says, and the foremen declare that in many of the essential duties the boys are fully as efficient as the best of their seniors—quicker in action and more ambitious to excel.

## LESSONS IN SAVING TO BUY THRIFT STAMPS.

The national war-savings committee authorizes the following suggestions for use in classes in the upper grades of the elementary school, in domestic science, civics, and bookkeeping classes or in general assemblies in high schools:

Why should one save? In order to help win the war, of course; but saving pays you directly, for by giving up many things you do not need now you save and secure future goods that may a few years from now mean much for your success and happiness. What will a \$5 war-savings stamp buy when it is paid back to you—or a number of such stamps? These stamps and the personal discipline secured by saving may make possible later a special course of training, or entrance into a skilled trade, or the opening of a store, or the securing of a farm; if you are a girl, war savings may help you to become a stenographer, a bookkeeper, a nurse, a teacher, instead of being poorly paid because you are an unskilled worker.

Don't forget that we must all save. If we go on

buying as we did before the war our Government will not be able to get enough material to provide clothes, ammunition, guns, ships, food, and other necessary supplies for our Army and Navy. If we go on spending as usual our Government can not have enough men working to produce the things that are necessary to win the war. Men who work for you can not work for the Government.

How much can you reasonably save and how much should you spend now? You should spend now whatever is necessary for health and for your present education, for without health and education you can not give full patriotic service later. You should certainly give some money to war relief and to other worthy causes. But can you not save for victory by spending less money for those things which are not necessary for your health or for your efficiency? Wherever you have been wasteful, whether in supplies for school work or by being careless with your clothes, or by spending for food you do not need, you can reduce your expenses and save something more.

Everyone should use the personal money plan or budget to plan ahead as to earnings and savings, and the personal account to keep a daily record of money received, saved, and spent. Such a budget and account will strengthen your will to save and the Nation's will to win.

As a patriotic service every boy and girl should learn to keep family expense accounts, so that they can help keep money records in their own families, and thus increase the family savings. Our families are already saving large sums for the Nation, but often we can save more if we keep written records of the necessary uses of money by the family, and then try to find out ways of economizing.

What are the chief expenses of a family?

First. Food, of course, meaning by that the cost of all food purchased.

Second. House expense, for the house or apartment where the family lives, whether the expense be for rent or, if the house be owned, the expense for taxes, insurance, and repairs.

Third. Housekeeping expenses, or running expenses of the home, such as heat and light; supplies, like soap and brooms; wages for household help, if any; repairs to furniture, renewal of utensils, linen and the like.

Fourth. Clothing.

Fifth. Personal expenses of the individual members of the family, such as insurance, medical care, recreation, newspapers, school expenses, carfare, lunches, etc.

Sixth. Savings, including investments, new property.

Seventh. War-saving stamps.

# LOST IN THE SAHARA DESERT

—OR—

## THE PLUCK AND LUCK OF A BOY EXPLORER

By **DICK ELLISON**

(A SERIAL STORY)

### CHAPTER IV (Continued).

The landlady made a wry face. Then she said: "That father is not always to be trusted. I wonder if she has not told thee of something she wishes me to do for her or thee, which Delbrul might oppose. Am I not right?"

"You surely are," and he straightway told her all that had happened, which the reader knows of, and of Lelia's wish that Leo and his party should be kept safely until Lelia herself sent further word, or appeared herself, as Leo more than half suspected she might.

"I doubt if she comes," commented the woman. "If her hand is being sought by Al-Siddra, who is powerful and rich, Lelia Delbrul will not trust to common means of escaping from her father and her wealthy suitor. Meanwhile, I am pleased that you told me all this."

"You think, then, she will let me hear from her?"

"Surely, my young friend. But you must be patient, and trust to me and the Half Moon, and to those who will keep a lookout for me; and keep from danger yourself, and wait until the word comes."

### CHAPTER V.

#### LEO'S FIRST CAMEL RIDE.

The fruits of the landlady's protection, and the efficacy of the token that he had brought from Lelia, began to appear almost at once.

Clancy and Leo were comfortably quartered in the upper story over the apartments of that lady herself. Bena waited on them, and one of the first things young Jerome did by her suggestion was to discharge the two servants and guides that had hindered their progress across the plains of Jefara.

Mirza, though as obsequious as ever, made a disclosure under the lash of his wife's tongue, that he might not otherwise have made.

Tom Clancy was the medium, as, knowing from previous trips something of the route to be pursued. Clancy went to Leo.

"Old Mirza came to me, and he said that cloud of dust we saw was the caravan of Al-Siddra. What d'ye think of that?"

"How does he know this?"

"The fool knows enough. He don't like to tell But his wife sent him—the blackguard! That very gentleman as we drove into his own barge on the Tripoli water front passed through here a few hours ahead of our arrival. He had your guides fixed, and he had old Mirza fixed; but when the landlady got your ring she fixed Mirza, and now he's got to keep us fixed right or take a beating every day of his sneakin', cowardly, treacherous life."

"Tell me all you know. What is Al-Siddra up to?"

"He seems to be up to a whole lot. He'll try to get hold of us out in the desert, if he can. Then he'll do his blameworthy to put an end to us, I reckon—that is, if he can."

"With us out of the way, Lelia will be more than apt to land in Ghrat either as Al-Siddra's wife, or in such shape as her brother can do but little to help her out of his way."

"Why so? Lucien ought to be able to protect his sister."

"It might be difficult for him to do so against the consent of their own father, in favor of the sheikh of that town."

Young Jerome was greatly startled.

"What in the world do you mean?"

"I mean that the Bashaw of Tripoli has made Al-Siddra the new governor or sheikh of Ghrat."

By this time young Jerome and his friends had been waiting at the Half-Moon Inn nearly a week. He had finished making his arrangements for the expedition to Ghrat, and was only waiting the tidings from Lelia Delbrul, which she had adjured him to wait for. In view of the way the landlady had responded to the girl's token he felt in honor bound to wait on these.

Another day passed, when the landlady sent for Leo. Entering her apartment, he noticed a certain sprightliness in her behavior.

"My son," said she, "dost think thou hast been here long enough?"

"I feel that way at times, for you know I came to the Sahara to seek my father, and find if he be alive or dead."

"A good lad thou art. I remember thy father well. He and old Delbrul had dealings together, and towards the last I think they fell out, but it

is time for you to start across Fezzan and Moor-zook, or you will never get to Ghrat."

"But I thought I was to wait for Lelia."

"Did she not tell thee to do whatever I told thee to?"

"I—I guess you are right, madam."

"Well, I say to thee it is time to be gone. You and yours will leave Nalu to-night."

"But we have no other guides as yet."

"These will be provided, and will meet your party a day or more's journey out, near the Erg oasis. Clancy knows the route."

"But suppose the guides should fail us? They did so before."

"Guides that I provide will not fail you. I may not explain further, but you may trust me."

While speaking, Leo was conscious of a dark-skinned, black-eyed boy dodging and giggling about a rear apartment adjoining the landlady's who continually turned her face hither, and frowned, shook her head, though in an affectionate manner. Finally she rose by the aid of a staff and hobbled to the doorway, where she scolded her women in the other room and the boy. Finally she shut the door and hobbled back.

Somewhat puzzled, yet fully confident that she knew what she was about, he listened to all she said. She said a good deal, but it was all necessary.

This was morning. During the forenoon he saw a large mehari pass on to the market place, beyond the edge of the town, probably to be sold. Before that, some well-muffled people, on horseback had left the Half Moon Inn, striking at a rapid pace into the hamada or dessert towards the south. Leo was curious, and in the afternoon asked Mirza about them.

Mirza's weazened, tricky visage wrinkled slyly, knowingly.

"Seek not to understand what it is too soon for you to know. We are a very cunning people, and she who must be obeyed hath told you enough."

During the day Leo and Clancy made all ready, and the first went in to pay the landlady's bill; but she would not take a sou.

"These things are all paid for," she confessed, and he thought she looked sad; nor could he see the dark-skinned boy who had so roused her spirits in the early morning.

"Are you sure that we will meet with our guides as you have said?"

"Sure. Have not I and mine done all for you that is necessary?"

"You have indeed been the best of friends. Nothing has been neglected, and now you will not let me pay you."

"I am already paid. But if you choose to give my servants a little present for good-will before you leave, that is all right."

"I am glad of the privilege. But my heart still aches for fear my cousin has met with misfortune. I wish I had word of her before I leave. But I must trust you still in that as in other things."

"It is best so. Lelia is well. Do thou obey all I have said. The desert is full of pitfalls and treachery. Beware of Al-Siddra, and follow the guides I have provided until you reach Ghrat. Farewell."

Once more she folded Leo in his arms, and then he gave to Mirza a generous donation for all the servants.

Having several hours yet before his party would set out, Mirza again came slyly forward.

"You are impatient. Why not go to the further market place and look at the meharis that have come in? Fine ones, indeed. If, noble sir, it was right for you to procure them here instead of further on there are some there that would please you."

For lack of something better to do he strode with Mirza in the dusk to where these meharis were tethered. After a look about, they paused in front of a very large beast, with a well-developed hump.

This was the one that had recently come in from the desert, and being very well trained, was untethered. It had a most intelligent eye and regarded them mildly as Leo, at Mirza's suggestion, climbed up on its quarter, aiding himself with Mirza's staff.

"Good sir, it is well to get used to mounting them. The owners will not care, and the caretakers will think you may yet buy."

"All kinds are here," commented Leo, looking around him. "Some are thin, with little hair; old, used-up brutes, I guess. Gee! how queer it feels up here. Mirza—suppose he tries to get up with me?"

The camel, unused to Leo's strange methods, turned its patient eyes from side to side, and groaned so discontentedly that the lad paused one arm through the rider's leather sustaining strap, at the same time he let the staff bump against the meharis' ribs.

Suddenly the intelligent beast groaned and moved. Mirza cried out in a peculiar clicking tone as of one dismayed. Then he exclaimed:

"Noble sir, he is rising. Hold tight, hold tight!"

Leo felt a terrible heaving, upward movement that made him drop everything and cling for life to the woolly tuft of hair which the dronedary has at the top of his vast hump.

He seemed to be about ten feet in the air, and sat swaying, holding on; nor did he see the tricky Mirza pass a sharp knife secretly between the beast's hind feet.

A strap that always confines the hind feet during a halt, fell to the earth, while Mirza's cries undoubtedly startled the camel.

"Stop him, Mirza—somebody! The brute is running off."

Leo shouted lustily, while Mirza, under pretense of calling for help, added further uproar. The mehari, undoubtedly taking the shouts and the dangling staff thumping his sides, as urging him to speed, rushed off towards the south and quickly disappeared in the gathering gloom.

(To be continued.)

## CURRENT NEWS

### COAL FLOWS LIKE WATER.

In a great steel works at Pittsburgh powdered coal flows like water through 1,500 feet of four-inch pipe under a pressure of forty pounds to the square inch, and flows so rapidly that four tons have been out through a 500-foot line in five minutes.

### AUSTRALIA'S TALL TREES.

The tallest of California's "big trees" is 325 feet in height, but among the great gum trees of Australia many specimens are more than 400 feet in height, and one, which was felled in southeast Australia, measured 471 feet—the tallest tree on record.

### COWS DRUNK ON APPLE PULP.

Apple pulp shipped from a cider mill in Yakima, Wash., and fed as an experiment to dairy cows on a Tieton ranch a few days ago made the animals so drunk that few of them were able to stand up and many of them staggered about like intoxicated men.

### DINE ON ALLIGATOR MEAT.

To prove statements made in recent articles written by him that reptiles are good for food, Prof. A. M. Reese of West Virginia University, gave an alligator dinner to twenty-four of his friends in Morgantown, W. Va. The dish was given the warm endorsement of his guests, among whom were several professors of the university.

### GIRL GIVES A HOSPITAL.

Mabel Dale, a seventeen-year-old Indian girl, has donated a \$60,000 hospital to Yale, Okla. Her mother is a descendant of the Creek tribe of Indians. Her father some years ago set aside an eighty-acre tract of land for the daughter. On this land was discovered a rich oil field. Miss Dale will erect the hospital from her royalties from the oil.

### PRESIDENT'S SHEEP SHORN.

President Wilson's eighteen sheep, which are pastured on the White House lawn, were shown May 11 by experts of the Bureau of Animal Husbandry. They produced an unusually heavy clip.

At the White House it was said that would-be purchasers have offered as much as \$5 a pound for the wool. It has not been decided what shall be done with it.

### ATE TOO MUCH WHEAT.

Because of the war, E. D. Zellner of Junction City, Kan., is giving up one of the most unique and profitable businesses in the city. Mr. Zellner for years has owned one of the biggest pigeon farms in the State, raising squabs for the Chicago and New York markets, where they commanded \$1 each. However,

the pigeons would thrive on nothing but wheat, and Mr. Zellner's grain bill ran from \$50 to \$150 per month. Rather than feed wheat to pigeons, when it is needed so badly for the Allies, Mr. Zellner is closing out his business and has shipped one lot of 1,000 homers to Boston by express. The cost of transportation was 5 cents per pigeon.

### MAKING THE MOST OF MINE CRATERS.

The sequel to any mine explosion is a big hole in the ground. On the fighting front in France are to be found man-made craters hundreds of feet wide and over one hundred feet deep, resulting from the discharge of tons of high explosive. Were this war not one of stationary character, were not the opposing soldiers always seeking cover, the mine craters would be more troublesome than useful. But in this war the mine crater has distinct advantages which are not overlooked.

Deep holes are the basis of underground works and shelters. If you have ever dug you can well imagine the joy of the soldier, be he enemy or friend, who finds much of the digging already done for him. So the soldiers make full use of mine craters, either as well organized defensive works or as underground quarters.

### JOHN CELLA, OF ST. LOUIS, IS RICHEST YOUNGSTER WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI

John Cella, nine years old, to-day probably is the richest boy west of the Mississippi River. Recently he has become owner of \$12,000,000 worth of property.

Six million dollars was left him by the will of Louis A. Cella, racing magnate and theatrical man, who died in a hospital here. Cella left another \$6,000,000 to his widow, who lay seriously ill in an adjoining ward of the hospital in which she died. Mrs. Cella died the other day, her share of the fortune also going to the nephew.

Cella was one of the richest men in St. Louis, being the heaviest taxpayer in the city. He was fifty years old at the time of his death and had become a national figure in sporting circles. He owned the Grand Opera House and the American, Columbia, Kings, Shenandoah, Princess and Strand theatres. He also was interested in vaudeville booking agencies and controlled the American Hotel and American Annex.

Cella often boasted he made his start on \$40,000 he won shooting craps. When racing was in its prime in Missouri he owned the Delmar and Kinloch tracks, near St. Louis.

Part of the inheritance of the nephew is controlling interests in the Oaklawn race track at Hot Springs, the Latonia track at Cincinnati and the Fort Erie track near Buffalo.

## ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

### GRAFTS DOG BONE IN ARM.

On account of a gun wound it was necessary some time ago for the surgeons to remove a bone in the arm of Bert Spelman of Cherokee, La. Recently surgeons removed a bone from his shin and one from a dog and grafted them into his arm. It is learned that the operation was successful and that Bert will have perfect use of his arm hereafter.

### "A GUN WITHOUT A PEER."

What the Scientific American calls "a gun without a peer" is the new 520 millimetre mobile howitzer built by the Creusot Works for the French Army. This is mounted on a railroad carriage and fires a shell 20.47 inches in diameter. It is a fort wrecker and one shell from it is said to have sufficed to reduce Fort Malmaison, on which the Germans had spent so much time and labor, to a pile of dust and debris.

### WANTED TO GO TO PRISON.

Detroit, Mich., May 18.—"I want to go back to Jackson prison to finish learning my trade as a plumber," Reuben McMillan, recently released, explained just before he was sentenced. Reuben gave his ambition as the reason for stealing an automobile, driving away another and committing the theft of 2,700 pounds of stereotype metal, three counts charged against him. McMillan got his wish, Judge Wilkins of Detroit, Mich., sentencing him to Jackson for a term of two and a half to five years.

### THE ECONOMY OF VICTORY.

No matter what this war costs the Government and the people of the United States in the way of money, it is going to be much cheaper to win this war than to lose it.

The commercial and financial losses that would follow a German victory are not to be calculated. All that we spent would be lost, indemnities beyond calculation would have to be paid, and along with these losses would come a continuing loss in foreign commerce that would spell disaster.

With these material losses we would lose our national liberty and independence, our power to secure our international rights, our right to live in a world ruled by the dictates of humanity and civilization.

### WHY CAT'S EYES GLOW.

Not satisfied with the old explanation that cat's eyes glow in the dark because they catch and concentrate every little glimmer of light that may be about, scientific men have been making experiments recently to see if there may not be some other explanation for the eyes glow when there is no light at all. This is true of the eyes of many animals;

in fact, is true of most nocturnal creatures, including birds and insects. The first man to point to what seems to be the true reason was Professor Bugnion of Switzerland, who suggested that perhaps invisible rays—such as ultra-violet and infrared—were transformed by some chemical action into visible rays at the instant of reflection from the eyes.

### TWO BROTHERS MEET IN FRANCE.

Two brothers, one from South Dakota and the other from Montana, had an unexpected meeting at a port of France. The brothers are Otto Hovren of Roberts County, S. D., and Cornelius Hovren of Great Falls, Mont.

They had enlisted in the service of their country from different parts of the country, unknown to each other, and arrived on the other side only two days apart.

The one arriving first had gone down to the steamer landing for the purpose of witnessing the arrival of other American troops. He was standing near a gangway when, in a group of soldiers descending to the dock, he discovered his brother.

The brother recognized him at about the same time, and in an instant they were patting and hugging each other after their unexpected meeting in a strange land. Letters telling of the meeting have just been received by South Dakota relatives.

### BIG DENVER ORGAN A WHOLE ORCHESTRA.

One of the greatest pipe organs in the country has just been installed in the Denver Auditorium at a cost to the city of \$85,000. It combines the qualities of a cathedral organ and a symphony orchestra. The largest of its pipes is two stories high, forty inches square and weighs 1,250 pounds. The smallest weighs half an ounce and has the diameter of a straw, says Popular Mechanics.

The temperature of the six chambers in which the main organ is housed is kept uniform by electric heaters. Above the ceiling is the echo organ, which has four sets of vox-humana pipes instead of one, the usual number. The instrument is operated by electricity, requiring 15,000 connections and 300 miles of wire. A grand piano is attached to the console, which may be lowered into the basement when not in use. The great instrument is equipped with an automatic player.

An organist has been employed who will give free noon hour concerts during the week, as well as on Saturday, besides which the organ will be used with the municipal chorus of 1,000 voices in special programmes. In spite of the huge size of the instrument, its volume can be reduced to accompany a single voice.

## FROM ALL POINTS

### WHEN PEACE COMES.

Some day peace will come. Thousands—millions of men—will suddenly be thrown back again into civil life. Consider the vastness of the readjustment that will be necessary. Look back at the period of reconstruction after our own Civil War. Prepare for this new period of reconstruction. The day of reckoning is bound to come. Begin to save now. Thrift is the need of the present, the hope of the future.

Liberty Loan Bonds, War Savings, the safest securities in the world, are a wise provision for the day peace comes.

### TOTEM POLES GOING.

The totem poles are going. These quaint monuments of a vanishing race that have made the coast of British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska famous are fast wasting under the influence of wind and weather.

Once the designing and constructing of totem poles flourished among the Haidas and to a lesser extent among the Tsimpsian Indians. This was long before the white man invaded the Pacific Northwest. Real totem poles with the history of tribes and families carved into their odd structures are no longer made and each year sees some of the older ones disappear. Some are still standing in their original position in the village of Kitwanga, on the Skeena River. Some of these are said to be 200 years old.

### PATRIOT DOLLARS.

All the dollars in the world can not buy victory. Victory is not purchasable—it is won. Dollars can work for victory only in so far as they are converted into labor and materials. A dollar hoarded is a slacker; a dollar wasted is a traitor; a dollar saved is a patriot, doubly so when loaned to the Government.

A hoarded dollar represents idle power; a wasted dollar represents wasted power; a dollar saved represents power saved, labor saved, materials saved. Loaned to your Government, it represents power, labor, and materials in action, on the firing line, over the top. And more—it represents reserve power, energy stored, purchasing power conserved for its owner.

### STEER TEARS MEN.

Five men were held prisoners in trees on the farm of Galen Clark, a butcher, of Paxinos, Pa., when a big steer suddenly became mad, broke away from a herd that was being driven to the slaughter house and viciously attacked them.

Harvey Lewis, a man of powerful physique, tried conclusions with the steer, was tossed high in the

air, attacked by the animal when he landed on the ground and suffered a badly fractured right leg and other injuries, necessitating his removal to the State Hospital.

Shotguns were procured by farmers who went to the rescue of the men in the trees. Ten charges were fired into the infuriated steer, but it was not until Claude Lewis, a boy, brought a high-powered rifle into service that the steer was killed. The animal's body was fairly riddled with shot.

### GREAT WAR LOANS.

The following are the greatest war loans made by various belligerent nations:

British victory loan early in 1917, 5 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$5,036,235,320.

United States Second Liberty Loan, 4 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$1,618,000,000.

Eighth German war loan, 4 1-2 per cent. and 5 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$3,600,000,000.

French war loan of 1915, 5 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$2,261,864,100.

Austrian seventh war loan, 5 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$1,150,000,000.

Italian fourth war loan, 5 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$1,000,000,000.

Hungary seventh war loan, 6 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$600,000,000.

Canadian victory loan, November, 1917, 5 1-2 per cent. Total subscriptions, \$118,000,000.

### WINDOW VALUE OF CLOCK IN POTATO DISPLAY.

An Ohio grocer in displaying potatoes in his show window made effective use of a large clock. He put the clock in the center and surrounded it with well cleaned, choice potatoes. Several placards were scattered around, showing the food value of potatoes, and how through their use wheat may be saved for the allies and our fighting forces abroad.

In explaining the psychological effect of the clock, he said: "We all need to know the hour many times a day; in fact, we often glance at a clock even when we don't really care what time it is. Quite often when we see somebody else looking at a clock we are immediately filled with curiosity to know the time ourselves. Most of us invariably look at the clock in the city hall tower or in front of the jewelry shop whether we carry a watch or not. People who look at my clock one day are apt to do so every day if I make the effort to keep it set accurately. When they look in the window for the time, they can not fail to see the admonition from the Food Administration to use potatoes for wheat. This experiment has worked out quite successfully for me, and I expect to use it extensively in all of my future window display work."

## INTERESTING TOPICS

### STUCK IN CHIMNEY.

When Henry Redus, of Starkville, Miss., opened his grocery store he found a seventeen-year-old negro boy wedged in the chimney. The negro entered the store by way of the chimney and filled himself with good things to eat, not forgetting to cram his pockets as well as his stomach. Then he tried to force his way out through the chimney and stuck.

### CANNED ARTICHOKE.

After more than a decade of experiments, with only partial success, a California concern is said to have succeeded in canning artichokes, using a process which, according to the canner, delivers this finished vegetable with little alteration in character, flavor, or color. Artichokes have a high iron content, and to preserve them so that they would not turn back in the can has been the chief difficulty.

### BORDER CAVALRY DIVISION DISSOLVED.

The Cavalry division of the Army, organized on the Mexican border last year for patrol and instruction work, has been ordered dissolved. When the division was formed it was christened the "Overseas" Cavalry division in the expectation that it would go to France. Should the situation on the Mexican border require it, smaller bodies of mounted troops can be used just as effectively as the division organization.

### CUT BUILDING IN HALF.

A building 500 feet long was chopped in two and the two halves were moved about 500 yards by a detachment of colored selectives at Camp Meade, Md., without the use of any special devices and with but a delay worth mentioning. A group of 500 men caught hold of the supports and at the proper order they had the whole structure off the ground. Then, at signals, the slow pull began. Within seven hours the building was in place on its new site.

### MINING AUSTRALIAN LIGNITE WITH STEAM SHOVELS.

At Morewell, Australia, there are extensive deposits of brown coal. The veins are said to run from 150 to 200 feet in thickness. It is claimed that motor spirit, benzene, illuminating oil, paraffin, and other by-products could be profitably extracted. At present it costs about \$1.92 per ton to mine the coal, but an interested American claims, that with steam shovels, the coal could be mined at 12 cents per ton.

### NIGHT SCHOOL FOR ESKIMOS.

A night school for Eskimos, believed to be the first of its kind, is being conducted at Shismaref, a native

village in far northeastern Alaska, according to the Eskimo, a magazine devoted to the interests of the natives of the sections of the Bering sea, late copies of which have been received here.

The school is attended by the older natives and has an enrolment of eighteen. It is conducted by J. P. Jones and Miss Hollie Jones, the teachers of the regular Shismaref Indian School.

If summer sessions are held, lights are not needed, the long Arctic days making them unnecessary.

### NEIGHBORHOOD CLUBS.

In many villages there are neighborhood or community clubs which include the churches and other organizations, temperance or fraternal, meeting regularly and considering all sorts of matters touching the neighborhood welfare. These clubs have been giving a good deal of attention to food conservation, as their programs the past winter show. The result has been helpful, and it is now worthy that where these neighborhood clubs have taken an active interest in food and other patriotic questions there the pastors of the churches have paid attention to the matter from the pulpit. The neighborhood club speaks well for the enterprise and spirit of the neighborhood. One of these clubs that has had a war kitchen reports an awakened interest not only in regard to food connected with the vigorous prosecution of the war.

### ARMY SHOE PINCHES COUNTRY'S LEATHER.

The National Association of Tanners and allied organizations, in convention at the Hotel Traymore, Atlantic City, May 15, adopted resolutions pledging themselves to consider Government requirements before all other classes of business.

Facts brought out showed that the making of shoes for the United States Army takes practically all the sole leather that can be produced in this country, cleaning up more than 750,000 "bends" every month. One of the chief demands is for leather to make the new "Pershing shoe," two inches higher than the present type and costing twice as much. It is designed for rough country hiking and trench work.

Gen. Pershing has also recommended a leather moccasin that will run up the leg as high as the sock top and will be worn inside the regular marching boot. This is designed to meet the danger of "trench feet" from which the French and British soldiers suffered early in the war.

President V. A. Wallin of New York urged the tanners to keep their plants going at top speed during the war and advocated a central organization to represent the industry.

## WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, JUNE 21, 1918.

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## GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Chief of Police J. B. Van Bibber bagged a 15-ounce opossum in the center of the business district of Dixon, Ill. The opossum wandered into the city, dazed by the electric lights and sought refuge at the side of a telephone pole.

Don't be afraid to use plenty of soap and water on your \$15 tan shoes. If they are discolored by mud and grease, and even if these spots have been covered with shoe shining polish, and look as though they would never come out, just put the shoes on shoe trees, take a fine brush and soap suds and scrub, advises the Illustrated World. After they have dried and been rinsed and polished they will again acquire, if the heels are trim and even, that \$15 look.

Tangier Island, in Chesapeake Bay, has 3,000 inhabitants and not one of the men serves on a jury. There are no buggies, no automobiles, no wagons and only one horse on the island. There are three churches and the community is prosperous, happy and contented. Front yards are used as graveyards. Water is obtained from artesian wells. All travel and all traffic is by water. Fishing, crabbing, oystering and gardening afford a livelihood. The single physician enlisted in the army.

When the Indian was on the warpath for any length of time in cold weather he had a very ingenious and simple process for keeping warm. He could not build a fire without giving his location away, says the Philadelphia Ledger, so at night the party would dig a number of holes about three feet deep and in the bottom kindle a fire of burnt wood (charcoal). Then in spook fashion they would lie on the ground around the hole with their legs hanging down over the fire and go to sleep. This kept their toes comfortably toasted without warning the enemy as to their whereabouts.

A war-bonus system of prices for canning vegetables has been devised by a large cannery in New York State. Contracts are being made direct with growers in the neighborhood of the factory—first with the idea of eliminating transportation as much as possible by growing and canning crops in the neighborhood; second, with the idea that increased costs of growing and canning crops and labor shortage, with other factors, warrant the payment by canners of prices decidedly above normal, but that these high prices should be put on a war-bonus basis to facilitate a return to normal with the return of peace. This cannery is contracting for corn, peas, beans, and tomatoes, and furnishes high-quality seed and seeding plants at cost or less to growers. Terms were printed in full recently in the Canner.

## GRINS AND CHUCKLES

She—Mrs. Newed has a bird of a bonnet. He—And her husband has the bill of the bird.

"Why do they call it the face of the earth?" asked the teacher. "Cause there is so much dirt on it, I suppose," replied the youthful one.

Grandpa—Tommy, name some important things that exist to-day but were unknown one hundred years ago. Tommy—You and me.

"I wouldn't marry that old man for his money." "Well, you've got a poor opinion of my taste if you think I would marry him for love."

Singleton—After a man is dead he is soon forgotten. Secundum—Yes, as a rule; but the poor jay who is married to his widow is never allowed to forget him.

Freddie—What's the difference between being sick and an invalid. Cobwigger—An invalid, my boy, is one who makes those around him sick.

"You say he is a financial wreck. Then why is it that he appears so happy?" "Well, I guess his credit's so poor that he can't even borrow trouble."

"Rivers, to settle a controversy, wasn't the best meal you ever had a dinner on a first-class ocean steamer?" "No; you lose, Brooks. The best meal I ever had was on an empty stomach."

"Pa," said young Tumblestone, "if I eat dates enough will I turn into a calendar?" "You will turn into bed this instant," said the elder Tumblestone, "or I will assist you!" He turned in.

"What does the first expert say?" "He says the prisoner is guilty." "And the second expert?" "Not guilty." "There's a third expert, isn't there?" "Yes; he says both the other experts are liars."

## DENOUNCED ON HIS WEDDING EVE

By Horace Appleton

Mildred Montroy was an orphan.

I had known her mother and father well, and at the death of the latter I was appointed Mildred's guardian.

She was, by the consent of her parents, engaged to one Wilbur Whitting, a promising young man, also an orphan, who was completing his education in Europe.

When Mildred was twenty-one they were to be married.

I was at this time established as a private detective in New York City.

Three months before the day set for Mildred's wedding Wilbur Whitting returned home from Europe.

I had never seen him before, and I must confess that, while he was a handsome fellow, there was something in his bold and crafty glance that filled me with a vague and undefined distrust.

One night I was standing in the lobby of the Hoffman House, when I saw Wilbur Whitting and two other young men enter the barroom.

I knew the companions of young Whitting.

One was Jerry Bolter, an ex-convict, and the other was a pal of the notorious Smith Whittaker, the "safe blower," or "Prince of the Gopher Men," as his associates called him.

I sauntered into the gilded saloon after the two young men and my ward's affianced.

As they stood drinking at the bar, a few words of their conversation came to my ears quite distinctly.

"To-night at eleven. Red Mike's place in the Bowery," said Whittaker.

"All right; I'll be there," answered Wilbur Whitting.

With this they separated.

"I kept the two criminals under surveillance until they entered a disreputable dive saloon in the lower part of the Bowery.

When, at the appointed time, Wilbur Whitting arrived at the place and entered it I did the same.

It chanced that I had been in disguise when I saw my ward's affianced and his criminal associate enter the barroom in the Hoffman House.

I wore the same costume now, and so I feared no recognition.

Wilbur Whitting passed straight through the barroom and entered a room at its rear, which the barkeeper unlocked for him and then relocked when he had entered.

I caught sight of Bolter and Smith Whittaker in the rear room.

I lounged about the saloon as long as I dared, without exposing myself to suspicion, for the place was a resort of criminals, who are very quick to spot a "fly cop," as they call the detectives.

Finally I passed out to the street

Not twenty minutes later three men came out. They were in disguise, but their voices betrayed them to me.

"I don't know, boys, as I ought to run the risk of detection by taking a hand in the work you have laid out for to-night, for I'm sure of a fortune with the detective's ward, and I've no call for any more of this work," said Whitting.

"That's so; but you like the cold dollars, and you'll need some of them before your wedding day," said Whittaker.

"True," retorted Whitting.

"Are you sure Katholina is dead?" suddenly asked Bolter.

"Yes. Did we not have Viva's word for that before we left Europe?" But why do you ask?" said Whitting.

"I could almost swear I saw the face of Katholina look out of the window of a carriage that passed me to-day. She is a revengeful woman, and if she should yet be living, she may seek to block your little game."

"I tell you she is dead," said Whitting.

With this they passed on, and I heard no more.

They took their way to a private residence on East Thirty-first street.

I crept along on the opposite side of the street.

Glancing up at the number of the house in front of which I had taken my stand, I saw the number, and consequently knew what the number of the house of the criminals had halted before must be.

The house was that of a wealthy friend of mine. The burglars began to work at the lock.

It would never do to let them enter the house.

I crossed the street and blew a shrill whistle.

I was aware that I could not arrest three persons alone.

Instantly the burglars rushed from the house.

I crouched down close beside the fence.

They passed me, but the affianced of Mildred, who came last, saw me.

Quick as thought he whipped out a knife and made a leap at me.

My revolver cracked, and a bullet went crashing through the hand that grasped the knife.

Then I dashed away.

Next day I met Mildred in the library.

"Mildred," I said, "something troubles you. Will you not trust me by telling me what it is? Remember, my child, I have your best good at heart. I would fill to you the place as a father."

"How shall I begin?" she said, after a moment or so of silence. "Let me see," she went on. "From the first day of Wilbur's return he puzzled me. There was something about him unlike the Wilbur I had promised to marry. Do you believe he could have changed in his nature, or could have forgotten many little things that occurred before he went to Europe?"

"I hardly think so," I answered.

"The more I have thought of this the more troubled I have become, and now, at last, I have arrived

at the startling conclusion that Wilbur Whitting is not the Wilbur Whitting to whom I was engaged before he left for Europe!"

The time to tell her of the discoveries I had made regarding the character of Wilbur Whitting had come, and I was glad that our conversation had led to that point.

I told Mildred all.

She was startled.

A terrible possibility had occurred to me.

I believed now that the man whom we had received as Wilbur Whitting was an impostor, and the question arose: What had become of the real Wilbur Whitting?—granting that my suspicion was correct.

Undoubtedly he was the victim of foul play.

That very day I arrested Bolter.

I had proof enough of his complicity in a daring robbery, recently committed, to send him "up the river" for ten years.

I meant to use him to help ferret out the mystery of Wilbur Whitting.

Alone with the burglar in his cell, I said:

"If you will help me in a certain matter, I'll fix it so you can turn State's evidence and get clear."

"Done," said Bolter.

This was not a case of honor among thieves.

"Do you know a woman called Katholina?"

"Yes."

"Do you think she is in the city?"

"I do."

"Describe her to me."

He did so.

"Now tell me who this woman really is."

"You won't give me away as your informant?"

"No, I will not."

"Very well; the woman is really the wife of Wilbur Whitting."

"Is Wilbur Whitting his real name?"

"There you have me. That's what he called himself when I met him in Paris. He told me he meant to get rid of his wife so as to marry a girl in New York, who was an heiress. He thinks his wife, Katholina, is dead, for he hired an assassin of the Barriers to put her out of the way before he left Paris."

This was all Bolter could tell me.

It was the day before the night set for Mildred's marriage, when at last I met the woman I had searched for so long face to face on Broadway.

"Katholina," I said.

She turned quickly and said in English, with a marked French accent:

"You call my name. Who are you?"

"A friend. I can help you find your husband," I replied.

The lady was greatly agitated, but she took my arm, and I conducted her to my office, where she told me that her husband was an American, whom she had married in Paris two years previous.

She was poor but beautiful, and her husband soon tired of her and ill-treated her.

A few months before she had been assaulted and stabbed while returning from a cafe to her room alone.

The assassin left her for dead, but she was taken to the hospital, and finally recovered.

When she left the hospital she could for a long time find no trace of her husband, whose name was Leslie Burton, but at last she learned he had sailed for New York.

After the facts came to her knowledge, through the confession of the assassin who had attempted her murder, that convinced her Leslie Burton had plotted her death, and gone to America to marry another.

Katholina had never heard the name of Wilbur Whitting.

As she concluded the narrative, the substance of which we have given, I heard Wilbur Whitting's step on the stairs, and I placed Katholina behind a screen, telling her that I believed her husband was coming, but that she must not on any account betray herself.

We conversed for a while on unimportant topics, and then he left.

Katholina rushed forth.

"It is he, my faithless husband, upon whom I would be revenged," she said.

"You shall be," I said.

Then we arranged a surprise for the false Wilbur Whitting.

That night, just before the time for Whitting's marriage with Mildred came, he was alone with the woman whom he meant to betray.

Suddenly the door opened, and Katholina appeared in full evening dress, as she had come to the house as one of the wedding guests.

"Leslie Burton, I denounce you as an impostor!" she cried.

"What means this? I am an honest man!" cried Burton.

"You lie. The wound in your hand which you received from my pistol proves you are a criminal," I cried.

"Curses on you!" gritted the feigned villain, and he felt for a pistol.

Quick as a flash I "covered" him, and at a signal from me one of my assistants darted into the room and handcuffed him.

At that moment there came a surprise for me.

A young man, so like Burton that you could hardly tell the difference between them, rushed into the room.

"I am Wilbur Whitting!" he cried.

Mildred sprang into his arms.

He told how he had made the acquaintance of Burton in Italy, where he had soon after been kidnapped by brigands, as he now believed, at Burton's instigation.

Whitting had made his escape from the brigands, and at once set out for home.

His arrival was timely, and Mildred became his wife that very night.

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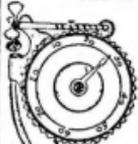
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