

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

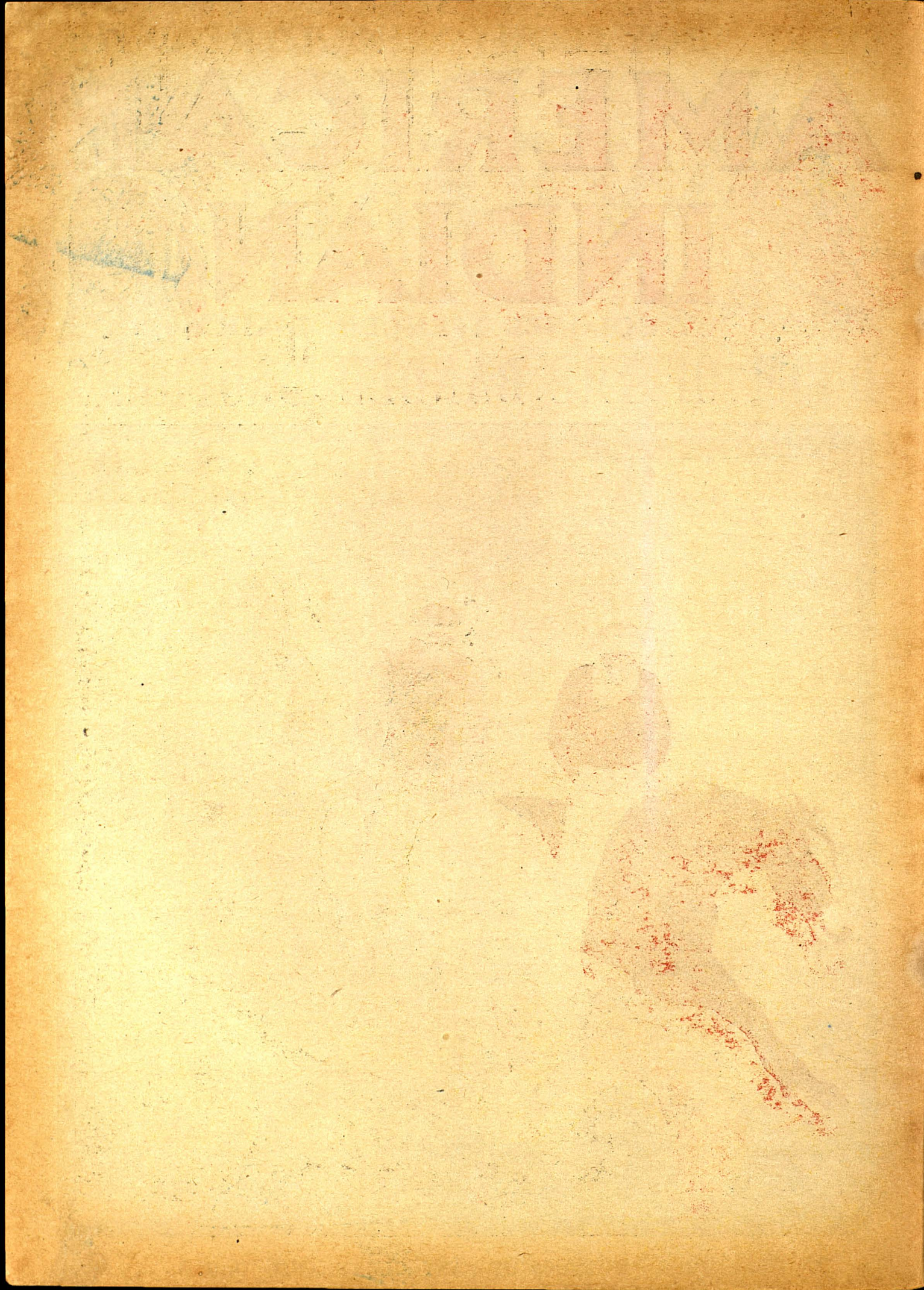
# AMERICAN WESTERN INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

## DOOM OF THE BANDED BROTHERS

"THE DOOM OF THE DREADED  
OUTLAWS IS DEATH."  
CRIED THE SCOUT.





# AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

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## THE DOOM OF THE BANDIT BROTHERS, or THE DEMON RENEGADES

*By Colonel Spencer Dair.*

### PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS OF THIS STORY.

**CAPTAIN PERCY FORREST, U. S. A.**—The brave commander of the Fifth United States Cavalry stationed at Camp near Independence, Missouri. The gallant young officer who had won his spurs as an Indian fighter in the far West was forced to take up deadly combat against a gang of outlaws who had been murdering peaceful Missouri citizens, holding up banks, burning the barns of farmers, and at length united their forces for the purpose of joining in a gigantic raid which was to extend over a wide area in the South-West. Captain Forrest, in his attempt to put down lawlessness, figured in the storm center which must follow a man who attacks bandits of the desperate breed he was forced to face.

**LIEUTENANT AND ADJUTANT OSCAR FRIEND, U. S. A.**—A fighting man, West Point bred, whose duty was to aid his Commander Captain Forrest in the dangerous work of attempting to uproot the band of outlaws. Like his companion, Captain Forrest, he found his work cut out for him.

**LITTLE WILLY MCKINNEY**—A desperado who led a mutiny against the leader of his band. The swift vengeance that was meted out to him was carried out with an outlaw's cunning and cruelty and makes a crimson stain in its recital.

**MUSHY COHEN**—This truculent outlaw knew what it was to feel the heavy hand of Fate upon his shoulder when he dared to resist the authority of his desperado commander. He suffered a dreadful punishment in company with his fellow conspirator, Little Willy McKinney.

**"ROARING BILL" BRADLEY**—A dance-house keeper in the town of Nayo, Missouri, who "shot off his mouth" about the outlaw who was devastating the country and who looted the bank in the town of Nayo. Forced to engage in a dance of death, he finally falls beneath the avenging pistol of the outlaw.

**FRED STAUNTON**—The unfortunate coach driver of the Nayo and Independence stage-coach. This vehicle was held up by a desperado who with a refinement of cruelty hardly credible, murdered the unfortunate driver.

**EDWARD FILKINS**—A young man of Nayo, Missouri, who was killed because he had engaged in a gun-fight with one of the outlaws and had shot him.

**THOMAS SIMPSON**—An aged farmer who was killed just as he had assisted two bandits to escape from their pursuers.

**MRS. LEONARD FILKINS**—Mother of Edward Filkins, who was forced to burn her own home after her only son had been murdered by outlaws.

### CHAPTER I.

#### OUTLAWS AT WORK.

"Boots and saddle!"

The long shrill sound of a bugle echoed over the parade ground of the Fifth Cavalry, United States Army, stationed near Independence, Missouri. As if

the sound had turned into life all the pent-up activity in the camp, there came flying from every direction many uniformed men. Then there came the rush of horses' feet and almost before the sound of the bugle had died away, the troopers of the regiment were in their saddles and were drawn up in line as their com-

mander, Captain Percy Forrest, ran from his quarters and vaulted upon the back of a splendid gray steed.

The commander was followed by Lieutenant and Adjutant Oscar Friend.

"Trot! Gallop!" thundered Captain Forrest.

Like an avalanche loosened by mountain rain, officers and troopers swept out into the cool gray air of an early Missouri morning and swung a thundering mass into a broad highway and at utmost speed started upon a campaign of blood.

"What's up?" asked Adjutant Friend of Captain Percy, as he swung his horse alongside of the straining animal ridden by his commanding officer.

"A messenger just arrived at the camp," snapped Captain Forrest. "Those infernal outlaws are up again. We are asked to come to the assistance of the citizens of a little town about ten miles from here. They have been pent-up in the town trying to keep the outlaws from burning it."

"What is it? Another one of these confounded Missouri feuds?"

"I'm afraid it is."

"Do you know who the outlaws are?"

"No, I do not, but I have my suspicions."

"Do you think we'll be in time?"

"God only knows, but I hope so. We must not spare our cattle."

"Do you know how many men there are in the outlaw ranks?"

"The messenger said about twenty. He added that the outlaws attacked the little town early this morning. There had been a fight in a dance hall in the place the night before, and a member of the gang of outlaws had been wounded. You know how those things go in a Missouri town in these early seventies. There is a dispute, someone lets off a gun, instead of resorting to his fists, as decent American citizens should do, a fellow gets a punctured hide, rushes away, gathers together a band of outlaws, and returns to shoot up the town. Then we soldiers are appealed to, and when we get there——"

"The trouble is all over and there are half a dozen men killed, a number of women frightened half to death, and by the time we get there, the disturbance is all over."

The slightly cynical remarks of Adjutant Friend were answered by a nod. The command swept forward until on the horizon a few miles away, a thick black smoke tipped with tongues of flame showed that a large fire was raging. Now and then, on the cool sweet air, came the sound of exploding rifles and revolvers.

"By thunder, they're at it!" muttered Captain Forrest. "Ride hard, boys!"

Every trooper in the command spurred and whipped the horses until at length, as the cavalcade hurried around a turn in the road, they saw a large building of frame in the center of a tiny hamlet, nestling close to a high mountain, wreathed in smoke.

"By George!" cried Adjutant Friend, "the outlaws are burning the bank!"

"If they have, they've looted it!" cried Captain Forrest.

The gallant commander pulled his revolver from its holster, and leaning over his horse's neck in the abandon of the perfect riding of a United States Cavalry officer, whirled down upon the beleaguered village followed by his command, every man with white set face and clenched teeth, eager to engage in

a combat with the outlaws, who could be seen dashing hither and thither through the town, and as the rescuers approached nearer, they could see that the citizens were making a brave fight.

At a word of command from Captain Forrest, the soldiers flashed into open order and the next moment, as their commander raised his revolver and sent a shot at one of the outlaws, every trooper turned loose.

"Look out, boys! Here comes the soldiers!" shouted a tall, stalwart, brown-haired man, who was riding a bay horse. "Get out of this!"

As was usual in raids of the character that the outlaws were figuring in, the miscreants scattered like frightened sheep. The troopers chased them hither and thither and Captain Forrest, whose aim was deadly, laughed as he saw an outlaw sink forward on his horse's neck and wildly clutch at the animal's mane.

"I got one, anyway," cried Captain Forrest.

There was a running fight for a half mile, but in the fierce sweep from the camping ground of the detachment, they had partially winded their horses, and the outlaws made their escape bearing with them their killed and wounded. Captain Forrest soon saw that further pursuit was useless, so he ordered the bugler of the detachment to sound a recall. In a few moments the troopers came straggling back and captain Forrest ordered his men to dismount, and immediately turned his fighting force into a pre-fighting brigade. It was nip and tuck for a few moments, and it looked to all spectators as if the town would be the center of a fiercer conflagration than had raged when the rescuers reached the tiny hamlet. But the troopers of the Fifth Cavalry, that crack organization of the United States Army, had been trained for just such exigencies, and they fought the flames with great success. Citizens assisted in the work of quelling the fire with an old-fashioned fire-engine worked by hand and bearing on its side in gold letters the words "Cataract Number One," which was brought to the scene, and threw a tiny stream of water upon the burning bank. The soldiers attacked the flimsy wooden structure with axes, and worked like beavers until finally the flames were thoroughly subdued.

While one detachment of soldiers and citizens were at work upon the burning bank, another detachment fought the flames in a square wooden house opposite. They were aided by an elderly woman, gaunt and tall, who owned the house. It was not until her home was partially destroyed that she stopped her frantic efforts to save her property.

Captain Forrest approached the woman, for he had heard the details of her story, with his sympathy showing in his face.

"I am sorry that we did not get here sooner," Captain Forrest said.

"What good would it do me now?" the woman said. "My only son was killed by the outlaws when he tried to defend me! At the point of a revolver I was made to set fire to my own house by the outlaw chief!"

Captain Forrest shook his head. In the presence of grief like this he was dumb.

"Do you know the name of the outlaw chief?" he asked of the woman, who was Mrs. Leonard Filkins, a widow who had lived in the little hamlet for many years.

"I do," replied the woman.

"Will you tell me the name of the outlaw chief?"

Mrs. Filkins placed her hand upon Captain Forrest's arm, and leaning over, whispered a name in his ear.

"I thought so," replied the Captain, as he gravely shook his head. "What can I do for you?"

"What can you do for me?" asked Mrs. Filkins, with intense scorn in her voice. "Good God, man! Can you ask me that? What use is the United States army if it cannot run down the outlaw who has murdered my son and has burned my property? Are you real men or are you tin soldiers? Why ask me what you can do for me? You know your duty! It is your business to run down the outlaws who have attacked this defenceless and peaceable town."

"I will do my duty," replied Captain Forest, "and I will tell you now that I will run down the outlaws, if it is a possible thing to do so. But it is not an easy matter, Mrs. Filkins, to cope with the guerrilla-like warfare adopted by this terrible band of border rovers. I have not been successful in the past, but I will do the best I can."

Captain Forrest, leaving the desolate woman again, began to make an investigation so that he could make his report to the General in command of the department to which the Fifth Cavalry was attached.

It was a crude and pitiful story he learned. As the messenger had told him, the trouble began when young Edward Filkins had become involved in altercation with an outlaw in a dance house in the town of Nayo, Missouri. No one could tell exactly what the trouble had been about. Two or three strangers had ridden into the town early in the morning, and had begun a career of wide dissipation which wound up in the dance-house in the small hours of the night. Edward Filkins happened to stroll into the dance-house and he was seen standing at the bar when one of the strangers in the place said something to him at which he took offence.

Then there came the sound of a shot and the outlaw dropped to the floor with a bullet in his shoulder.

"Behold how great a fire a little matter kindleth!" murmured Captain Forest. "A kid with a gun and an outlaw with a jag. This appears to have been the inception of all this murderous attack. Well, well, well! It is such tomfoolery as this that is making Missouri a hissing and a by-word everywhere."

Captain Forrest further investigated and after infinite detail, learned that about six o'clock in the morning the wounded outlaw, who had jumped out of the door of the dance-house after he had been shot, had returned with about twenty of his band. They rode into town in true outlaw fashion, firing their weapons right and left, and had proceeded immediately to the house of Mrs. Leonard Filkins, and as young Edward Filkins stepped out of his own door, had riddled the unfortunate youth with bullets.

Then the bandits had hurried to the bank across the street from the Filkins' residence, had killed the cashier of the bank, had broken into the flimsy vaults of the institution, robbed the place of all its money, amounting to about ten thousand dollars, and then had started upon a career of carnage throughout the town.

The dazed citizens in the place had rushed to arms and a pitched battle ensued. How many of the outlaws had been killed or wounded no one knew. Dozens of citizens had received painful and grievous wounds, and three had been killed outright, including young Filkins.

When the citizens saw that they could not cope with

the outlaws; they had despatched a messenger to Captain Forrest, and it was only himself and his men, by their opportune arrival, that had saved the town and its residents from actual annihilation.

Captain Forrest shook his head. He did not like the condition that faced him. He knew that he and his command would be immediately detailed to run down the outlaws, for this overwhelming disaster to the town of Nayo was of such a magnitude that the former isolated outbreaks of the bandit gang which infested this country, faded into nothingness in the face of this organized looting and pillaging of a town in the midst of a peaceful farming community.

Captain Forrest, however, had served his time in a territory which may be said to have made up a corner of Missouri and Kansas, which for a generation before the attack on the helpless town had been a focus for reckless and daring attacks by the outlaws that infested the country. Captain Forrest knew, unfortunately, that aside from the outlaw element, the citizens themselves had inherited an indifference to death. Ambushing, pillage and arson had long gone hand in hand with murder. Women and children had been killed as ruthlessly as had been fighting men. Bank robbers and train robbers were rife. Cold blooded and unhesitating murder was part of their every day life, and Captain Forrest, although himself a brave man, knew that he must meet an element which even a braver man than he, might not care to meet.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE OUTLAWS IN RETREAT.

After raiding the little village of Nayo, Missouri, the outlaws as was usual in their plan of campaign, separated in small parties of two or three and by circuitous routes returned to their haunts.

One knot of three men well mounted proceeded at a slow pace when they were sure they had escaped from their pursuers. They halted at a turn of the road beneath the shade of a clump of trees and swung out of their saddles for the purpose of giving their horses an opportunity to feed.

"We got in wrong there, Jesse," said one of the three men to the leader of the party.

"I guess we did," replied Jesse James, the famous outlaw. "I tell you, Cole, those countrymen back there are a hot bunch! They must have got one or two of our boys."

In the person of the man whom Jesse James addressed as Cole, another famous outlaw had been introduced by Jesse James for the first time within his band.

Cole Younger, although at this time just about starting in his career of crime, was, like his companion Jesse James, a former member of the terrible Charles William Quantrell gang of border ruffians and jayhawkers. In this gang he and James had met.

Quantrell flew a flag under which quarter was unknown, and mercy a forgotten thing. When his gang disbanded, Jesse James and Cole Younger who although, when they were with Quantrell were mere boys, continued their careers of crime. Each man slowly fought himself up into notoriety and each became in due time leaders of gangs of criminals worse in themselves than the original Quantrell horde.

Cole Younger in himself was a man who was the descendant of a worthy farmer who had been a County Judge, and who was twice elected to the State legislature of Missouri. Like Jesse James, he lived in Jackson County, Missouri. When Jennison, a Kansas jayhawker leader, in one of his raids in Missouri, burned the house of Judge Younger, and confiscated all his property, Cole Younger started out on his career of crime.

The two men, Jesse James and Cole Younger, often worked together and often worked alone. With the respective gangs were such bandits as George and Ollie Shepherd, Bud Singleton, Bob Moore, Clel Miller and Arthur McCoy, and in this raid upon the top of Nayo, Missouri, the two outlaws had joined forces for the purpose of shooting up the tiny hamlet which they had just left with such fatal effect.

Cole Younger, broad shouldered, blue-eyed, stockily built, and with a rather pleasing personality, after he had tethered his horse where it could feed upon the soft grass along the roadside, walked over to Jesse James and motioned him to come to one side.

"How much money did you get out of that bank?" asked Younger.

"I'm ready to whack up now. I've got all the cash in my pocket," replied Jesse James.

The two men then sat down and coolly divided the swag they had secured from the looted bank.

"All right, Jesse, you've played fair," said Cole Younger. "You've divided up the pelf equally between us, and I'm ready to go with you to the limit, if you want me to."

"I don't know exactly how high my limit is going to go," cried Jesse James, "and I will see later what we can do."

"Just as soon as the horses have had a bite to eat, we'd better sneak out of here as rapidly as possible."

At the end of half an hour, the party of three men started along aimlessly down the road, for Jesse James had not exactly planned in his mind any great campaign.

At the time of the trouble in the town of Nayo, Jesse James' band and that of Cole Younger had been crossing Missouri near the town of Nayo for the purpose of joining forces and engaging in a grand raid over Missouri, Kansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and as far east as West Virginia. They had in mind the looting of dozens of banks, as many railroad passenger trains, stage-coaches and travelers, as they liked.

The magnitude of this criminal program was to be a series of exploits unrivalled in criminal annals and they hoped their deeds were never to be again equalled by any gang of outlaws.

In these times it is almost unbelievable that in the heart of a country thickly settled, in the face of a long reputation for criminal deeds, and in a country thoroughly warned of their projected aids, that such things could happen.

But unfortunately a halt had been made near the town of Nayo for the purpose of having all of the different units which were to make up the outlaw band in its completion meet and Bud Singleton, in himself an outlaw of fame, had stolen away from the gang and started off on a solitary drunk in the hamlet.

It was the capacity for drinking strong liquor and then becoming quarrelsome that had caused the fight between Bud Singleton and Edward Filkins, and it was in revenge for the shooting of Singleton by Filkins

that Jesse James and Cole Younger and the rest of the encamped gang of outlaws had hurried to the town of Nayo.

Jesse James felt that the reputation of the outlaws must be preserved and that the shooting of Bud Singleton must be immediately avenged or the outlaws would lose much of their prestige, and would not stand as the type of a gang that must not be attacked by anyone in the community unless they cleaned up a town when a citizen of it had dared shoot one of their outlaw companions.

"I tell you, Cole," Jesse James remarked to Younger, as they continued along their route, "I'm sorry we had to stick up those fellows that were concerned in the shooting of Bud Singleton, and after all I wish they'd killed Bud. When he gets his skin full of bug juice, he hasn't as much sense as a Missouri goat."

"It certainly does look to me," replied Cole Younger, "that we've got to make a change of front and get the gang further away from this part of the country before we can get the boys back together again."

"I'll send Frank out on a scouting expedition," replied Jesse, "and see what he can do towards rounding up the gang."

Jesse accordingly called the third member of the party, who was his brother Frank, and after hurriedly explaining the situation, instructed Frank James to ride away for the purpose of notifying the scattered bandits of a place for a rendezvous.

The James and Younger bands had so long laughed at the law, defied the authorities and rode as they liked upon their expeditions, that they paid no attention at all to the fact that the United States soldiers had driven them from the town of Nayo, for they felt themselves strong enough, having denied State and County governments so long, to cope with even the militant arm of the United States government.

Yet after all, Cole Younger felt some hesitation in starting a bout with the United States itself.

"Say, Jesse," he said, "I'm a little bit leary of that cavalry officer, Captain Forrest. Do you know anything about that chap?"

"Oh, he's only been in command of the soldiers over in Independence for about six months."

"Is he a West Point man?"

"Dunno."

"Well, if he is, look out for trouble! Those West Pointers don't know nothing but fight."

"What you givin' me?"

"That's right."

"I hear that that fellow Forrest has been an Indian fighter in the far West, and he has been sent out here by the authorities at Washington to clean us up."

Jesse laughed heartily.

"Cap' Forrest," said he, "may be a powerful good Indian fighter, but I don't believe he can fight Jesse James and Cole Younger when they're together. And now I think of it, I'm just going to try conclusions with him for the fun of the thing."

"Look here, Jesse, success is turning your head, isn't it? When you stack up against that fellow, you're stacking up against Uncle Sam, and I don't want any government troops sent out to suppress us, thank you most to death."

"Well, there isn't much chance of a fight," sneered Jesse James. "As it is now, we're running away from that Captain."

"Jesse, do you know where in the world we are?"

"I don't know any more than Adam's off-ox."

"Do you know where we're going to?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. What I want to do is to get a good meeting place for the gang, and select a new camping ground."

"I know a good place within a few miles. It is on what they call Split Rock Road, and it's up among a lot of rocks which stick up in the surrounding country and from which you can see everywhere, and in case those soldiers are following us, a good look-out man can watch them and warn us in time to dust out from there, if necessary. I didn't say anything to you about it, but I tipped Frank off, before he left to have the boys meet us there."

"That was a good plan of yours."

The two outlaws rode along for a while in silence, and then Jesse James pulled up his horse sharply. The gesture was imitated by Cole Younger, who inquired what the matter was.

"I am lost," replied Jesse James. "We've got to find someone who can lead us to that Split Rock Road!"

Jesse happened to notice an old man ploughing in a field near at hand and trying hard to drive a straight furrow as he followed on far behind a mule as rickety and old as himself.

"Jump that fence with your horse, Cole," Jesse commanded, "and bring that chap over here."

Cole Younger did as he was requested, and so the old man stood by Jesse James' side.

"Do you know the way to the Split Rock Road?" asked Jesse James of the aged man, whose name was Thomas Simpson.

"I do," replied Simpson.

"Then you lead me to that road," said James.

"I cannot leave my ploughing," quavered the old man in a feeble tone.

"Yes you can," murmured Jesse, as he pulled a revolver from his holster, and held it at the head of the unfortunate farmer.

Thomas Simpson knew the argument that came from a loaded weapon held at his head, and he feebly tottered down the road at the head of the two outlaws, until he had reached the Split Rock Road, and then he told Jesse James that this was the road he was hunting for.

Without a word further, Jesse leaned forward in his saddle, placed his revolver at the head of poor old Thomas Simpson, and shot the unfortunate farmer through the brain. The old man reeled and tottered forward, and crumpled up on the ground a corpse.

"Dead men tell no tales," cried Jesse to Cole Younger. "If I had used that man as a guide and let him return to his plow, and the soldiers had come by and questioned him, we always would have known how we were surprised in the camp that we are going to form at the Split Rock Road."

"Say, Jesse, you always were a great General," admiringly replied Cole Younger.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MARCHING ORDERS.

"I like that," said Captain Percy Forrest to his friend, Lieutenant Oscar Friend, a day or two after the burning of the village of Nayo.

"Like what?" replied Friend.

"This order."

"What order?"

Forrest, without a word, handed a telegraph blank to his friend.

The message was as follows:

"St. Louis, Mo.

"To CAPTAIN PERCY FORREST,

"Commanding Fifth Cavalry

"Independence, Missouri.

"Your telegram describing outrage and burning at Nayo, Missouri has been received. I would suggest to you that you detach yourself from your command and with one companion take up the question of scout duty. After you have discovered the best manner of attacking the perpetrators of the dastardly outrage upon defenceless citizens, you are authorized to use your command in bringing the outlaws to justice. If you think it would be better to immediately attack outlaws without a preliminary scouting investigation, you are at liberty to do so.

"(Signed) WILLIAMSON, Major-General,

"Commanding the Department of the Missouri."

Lieutenant Oscar Friend read the foregoing message over twice. Then he handed it back to his companion Captain Forrest, without a word.

"What do you think of it?" asked Captain Forrest.

"Extremely departmental in tone and scope. First you are told to detach yourself from your command and start out on a scouting expedition against the outlaws, and then you are asked to crush the outlaws immediately with your command, if you see fit. Our catty Major-General commanding has taken his usual double-jointed pen in his hand and has sent you a message which means in case anything goes wrong, you have got to stand for it, not he."

"Perhaps that's so," replied Captain Forrest. "However, army life does not differ greatly from civilian life. The man behind the gun has to stand for the trouble in case any trouble comes. However, my plan is to detach myself from my command in spite of my tears and the general lamentations, get myself into scouting frame of mind, and go out and see what I can do toward at least discovering where the outlaws are to be found, their numbers, and who are their commanders."

"You know who is commanding them, don't you?"

"Mrs. Filkins said that she recognized Jesse James, as being with the band. Jesse is liable to be the focal point in this welter of blood, murder and arson, and I may suggest that I believe Mrs. Filkins is right in her recognition of the famous bandit."

Lieutenant Friend tilted his cap backwards and dreamily looked over toward the range of blue mountains whose hazy tops could be seen miles away from them.

"Look here, Percy," he said, "I think you have taken on a pretty heavy contract. It's no joke, going up against the Jesse James gang. But of course, you'll take me with you, and I will protect you in a great measure."

Captain Forrest was highly amused at the rather clever way in which his friend had "butted in," but when he came to think more in detail, he made up his mind that the suggestion of Lieutenant Friend was a good one. There was no reason why Lieutenant Friend

should not accompany his commander and superior officer. Two men in all, against twenty outlaws, was better than one man against a band.

"It's a go," replied Captain Forrest, to the mute inquiry in the eyes of Lieutenant Friend. "If you want to get shot, quickly, thoroughly and with little fuss, go to our quarters and get on a kahaki scouting suit, a broad brimmed hat, and oil up your revolvers and meet me here in an hour. I'll get into a similar rig and we'll play the part of two tender-footed Eastern men in this part of the country on a hunting expedition."

"I like that!" laughed Friend. "There isn't anything to hunt bigger than a sparrow within forty miles of Independence at this season of the year."

"Oh, yes there is," replied Captain Forrest. "There's outlaws!"

Without much ceremony, the transfer of the troop to the next in command to Captain Forrest was made, and the two officers, carrying sidearms and short buffalo rifles took the long trail, as Lieutenant Friend expressed it.

"Whither goest thou?" asked Lieutenant Friend.

"To Rome—that is, to find the outlaws," replied Captain Forrest. And the two men walked along quickly until down the road they saw a man on horseback, leading a second horse.

"Who's this fellow with the horses?" asked Lieutenant Friend.

"The horses are ours," replied Forrest. "That's orderly O'Mahany of our troop, at the head of the leading horse."

"That's a good idea of yours, Percy. I thought you had arranged a little walking match for me, when we first started out."

The two officers mounted their horses, and soon were far away from their barracks into a country that became lonelier and lonelier. The road on which they were riding wound down a ravine, through a fringe of heavy timber, and jutting rock. The valley in which they were proceeding, after their sharp ride in the warm sunlight, seemed dark and dismal and thick with the feeling of approaching calamity.

"This is a tough kind of a joint here," remarked Friend. "Why are you coming here?"

"I don't know," replied Forrest, "except that I have a feeling that this would be a place which would form a good rendezvous point for Jesse James and his men. I've been looking over the war map of this part of the country, and I have discovered that of all places around here, this is the most liable to have been selected as a shelter by the outlaws. The condition of the country between here and Nayo would naturally tend to throw the outlaws into this vicinity. My experience has been that while men think they take roads, they are influenced more than they think by the natural tendency of thoroughfares leading to one particular spot. Now in the cross-work of roads, bridle paths, trails and cow-paths that allow people to pass to and fro through the country in this part of Missouri, I have discovered by looking at our maps in the barracks, that all of the labyrinth of roads seem to center upon the Split Rock Road."

"Where is the Split Rock Road, Mr. Detective?" questioned Lieutenant Friend.

"I don't pretend to be a detective," replied Forrest, "but my West Point days taught me that a quiet study of a State map and of the roads in any State, is the most desirable part of one's fighting campaign. So I

studied my map and I firmly believe that somewhere around the vicinity of the Split Rock Road, we will get into touch with Jesse James."

"If you're not a detective, you're certainly a lawyer," rejoined Friend. "I suppose that somewhere in the beautiful mosaic of your argument, you have placed the exact point where you are to meet Jesse James, and have arranged for the newspaper pictures showing the event."

"I have," drily replied Forrest. "And down in one corner I have arranged a star with these words: 'Star shows the place where Lieutenant Friend was shot.'"

Lieutenant Friend did not reply to this sally of his companion, but followed Captain Forrest into a shady nook along the side of the brook, which shone through the trees about twenty-five yards from the road on which they were proceeding. Captain Forrest explained that he proposed resting at this point until evening, and then had planned to tie his horses and reconnoiter a bit in the hopes of discovering something of the James gang.

It was well into the evening before this sortie was made. The horses had been lariatied out so they could feed during the absence of their owners, and after looking well to their weapons, the two army men sallied forth, intent upon discovering the outlaw camp. The way led across constantly rising ground, studded with low bushes and screened by a second row of saplings. Climbing up the constantly rising ground was hard work because in many places the brook had backed up and Forrest and his companion often were wading knee deep in mossy ooze. The men at length reached higher ground and heavier timber which screened them more thoroughly than on the lower slopes, and they walked along carefully, taking great pains to avoid stepping on a snapping twig or in starting stones rolling that might betray their presence, and eventually found themselves in the midst of a gigantic pile of rocks. The general aspect was one of terror and dread. The gnarled rock made many strange and fantastic shapes about them. They seemed to center into an enormous mound. This great pile of rock was split into a thousand peaks and crags and crannies; here and there grew trees in little valleys in the rock, and exactly in the center of this gruesome pile could be seen the darting, flickering light from a camp-fire.

"Down, map!" murmured Forrest, as he clutched his companion by the arm and sank to the earth, bearing Lieutenant Friend with him. "There are the outlaws!"

"What place is that?" asked Friend.

"It is called 'Split Rock,' and it is from those rocks that the Split Rock Road gets its name. The road runs along the base of the rock, further on behind that camp-fire."

The two men crept nearer and nearer to the flickering light, progressing over the ground in true scout fashion. Captain Forrest was a trained Indian fighter, and he had the far-western army man's deftness in creeping along when stalking his enemy; and it was a wonderful bit of wood-craft to see Captain Forrest dart behind a bit of rock, remain there for a moment, motionless, then spring to the shade of a tree, worm himself like a human snake across a valley, followed by Lieutenant Friend in the same fashion, until at length, breathless but determined, the two officers shielded themselves under a fir tree not fifty feet away from the



form of a man pacing slowly backwards and forwards with a heavy rifle upon his shoulder.

"Those outlaws know something of military discipline and tactics," remarked Lieutenant Friend in a whisper.

"Of course they do," replied Captain Forrest. "In my opinion, the reason why they have been allowed to form hard riding bands of terror and sweep like a lightning plague over this part of the world, is because no one has taken them seriously as a united fighting force. Everybody seems to think that Jesse James and the men comprising his band are isolated bits of human scoundrels who are fighting without plans, independently and in groups of two or three. When I was sent out here to try and stop the depredations of Jesse James and his companions, I discovered that while Jesse and Frank James, as commanders, were always united, their gangs appear to be elastic. Jesse will take four or five men and hold up a country bank for the purpose of robbing it, but if he wishes to stick up a train or a stage-coach, he increases his force to ten men. It shows me, therefore, that Jesse James has an elastic band that he can increase or decrease as he will. In my opinion, therefore, the mistake that has been made in fighting him has been in just considering him to be an outlaw with a small following. To get him at all, we must treat him seriously, and as if he were a commanding general in possession of a troop of which we know nothing."

"That is why you have adopted this scouting method before taking more active measures."

"That is just why I came on this scouting expedition, and just why I think that my plan is the best one. Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Lieutenant. I am going to try to pass that sentry which Jesse James evidently has stationed out here to guard against a surprise on the part of myself and my command. You stay here and I will go ahead and see what I can learn. If you see or hear a shot, or I cry for assistance, get into the game quick. We are only two, but we know our campaign and what we intend to do, and in that very unity I look for success in this preliminary scouting that could not be accomplished with more men."

Mushy Cohen, the sentry posted outside of his camp by Jesse James, did not dream all this time, that wriggling along near him was approaching the tall and agile form of Captain Forrest. The sentry was hungry, as it was now nearly ten o'clock at night, and he had not been relieved after many hours of watching, thoroughly angry, and slightly malicious, thinking that his comrades had not treated him fairly in allowing him to remain so long on duty.

These reasons made it easier for Captain Forrest, who slowly wormed himself within striking distance of his foe. Captain Forrest, Indian trained, had blunted his sensibilities a little, and he was not squeamish about attacking an outlaw with the same tactics that he would a blood-thirsty red Indian, and so the army officer crouched himself for a spring and awaited the moment when the sentry's back would be turned to him in his ceaseless pacing to and fro.

Mushy Cohen had made two steps with his back to Captain Forrest, when that officer launched himself in air and came down upon the back of the sentry with the same ease with which a tiger descends upon the back of a defenceless doe.

Mushy Cohen gave a smothered shriek as the long fingers of Captain Forrest closed around his throat, but

he was dragged backward in such a tempestuous whirl of action that for a moment, Mushy was paralyzed with astonishment and dread. Bravery and quick action, alas, are often held by outlaws as well as by honest men. The intelligence of the outlaw told him that he had been attacked almost before he had been grasped, and Mushy started immediately to extricate himself from his position. He drove his elbows backward, striking Captain Forrest two sharp blows in the pit of his stomach, and nearly doubling him up. Then the outlaw shoved his head back, striking Captain Forrest in the nose, and although the army officer held on with all his might, the outlaw succeeded in turning himself so that he faced his foe.

Mushy Cohen could not scream, however, because in spite of two bits of painful prodding that Captain Forrest had received, he hung on to the outlaw's wind-pipe with all his force, and squeezed away with all his might.

When a brown and active hand clutches one by the throat and squeezes hard enough, there is not much opportunity for extended argument. There were several seconds of struggling between the two men, and then Mushy Cohen, the outlaw, fell limp and insensible at the feet of his captor, Captain Percy Forrest. Captain Forrest threw the unconscious outlaw over his shoulder as if he had been a sack of oats, and boldly walked back down the hill to the point where Lieutenant Friend was secreted. The two men in a few seconds bound the helpless outlaw and laid Mushy Cohen under the shade of a tree, hoping that when he came to consciousness, he would think over his past life with profit to himself and to the community in general.

As soon as profitable, Captain Forrest returned to the point where he had attacked Jesse James's sentry, and picking up Mushy Cohen's hat and rifle, crammed the hat down over his forehead and swung the rifle over his shoulder, at the same time motioning to Lieutenant Friend to conceal himself behind a rock a few feet away. The astonishing spectacle of a United States army officer, an Indian fighter of renown, holding high rank in a crack cavalry regiment, striding back and forth guarding an outlaw camp, could thus be seen, had there been any interested observer present. The action on the part of Captain Forrest had been taken without a moment's thought. He had noticed upon his return to the sentry's post, after he had removed the inconspicuous man, that in his hurried removal, Mushy Cohen had left behind him his coat and rifle. Seeing a chance to at least get nearer the outlaw camp than he had been before, Forrest had turned outlaw sentry. Just as he was regretting his step, a man shot out of the darkness behind him and Captain Forrest knew immediately that this man was the famous outlaw Jesse James himself.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### IN DEADLY PERIL.

Jesse James approached Captain Percy Forrest but hardly glanced at him as he did so.

"How are things?" gruffly asked Jesse.

"All right," as gruffly replied Forrest.

As for Lieutenant Friend, he fingered the trigger of his revolver, which he held in his hand, because he had a feeling in his mind that much sorrow and trouble in the future could be avoided by his shooting the famous

outlaw. Lieutenant Friend knew, however, that if he took this action without consultation with this commanding officer, Captain Forrest, he might get himself into serious trouble, and so did not send the fatal shot speeding on its way.

"Say Cohen," asked Jesse James, "be very careful and watch every avenue around here, by which a surprise could be effected. During to-night, while you're on post, a lot of our boys will begin straggling back, and of course, you are to admit any of our people to the camp, but be careful and don't let strangers get by you, because I've got a hunch that those officers and soldiers who chased us out of Nayo haven't stopped with that part of their campaign."

"All right," quoth the pretended Mushy Cohen, and Jesse James turned backward and started for his camp again, not knowing that within ten paces stalked Captain Forrest, who had immediately thrown down his rifle, drawn his revolver, and carrying it in his right hand, hurried after the retreating outlaw.

It was a very dark night, fortunately, and Captain Forrest, when he threw down Mushy Cohen's rifle, knew that he would be replaced as sentry immediately by Lieutenant Friend who had seen the tactics pursued by Forrest from the place of his concealment.

Captain Forrest soon found himself within the citadel of the bandits. One or two dozen men were to be seen seated around a camp-fire built on an elevated plateau.

A few army tents were scattered here and there, and at the extreme left was an old two-story log cabin, tumbled down and having the appearance of having been deserted for many years, thatched over with a covering of saplings by the outlaws, to be used as the temporary headquarters of the leaders of the bandit gang.

In this surmise Captain Forrest was correct. There was a door open and in this door disappeared Jesse James. Captain Forrest did not know that within the house, on the upper floor, in a room situated directly over the main entrance door, lay Cole Younger with his boots off, taking a rest after his day's labor.

Captain Forrest crept around behind the door and gently pulled it flush against the side of the cabin, and while he squeezed himself through the narrow space, also managed to use the door as a screen between him and the camp-fire with its surrounding circle of outlaws, while at the same time it gave the officer an opportunity to look within the cabin. Captain Forrest saw Jesse James sit down at a table made of two boards placed across the sawed-off butt of a tree, and begin rapidly counting some money. From the size of the pile of bank notes, Forrest judged that there were several thousand dollars in the hands of the outlaw. Forrest knew immediately that this was probably the loot taken from the bank which had been raided during the wholesale slaughter of Edward Filkins and his companions. Captain Forrest knew that he could not get the money, although his fingers itched to do so. But he watched Jesse James with curious eyes, as the outlaw divided the money into small packets.

"Pay day in the outlaw camp is rapidly approaching," murmured Captain Forrest to himself. This was what had happened the officer saw immediately after. Slowly all the outlaws around the camp-fire entered the room in which sat Jesse James, passing by the spying officer so that any member of the band could almost have touched him by raising their hands, and

after each outlaw had received some money of Jesse, they left the famous leader alone.

"I didn't know that they had pay-days in the outlaw camp," thought Captain Forrest, "but I am glad to have been enabled to see it. I suppose I ought to have known that outlaws had to have money just as well as army-officers."

Captain Forrest knew that he could not remain where he was long, because at any moment someone might close the door and he would be discovered, so he sank to the earth and stole around quietly to the rear of the cabin, where he ingloriously secreted himself in the wood-pile. He lay thus for an hour, and then heard Jesse James go upstairs and heard the thud of his boots as the outlaw leader threw them down in the frail structure, as he prepared for bed.

Captain Forrest walked around to the front door, after assuming himself that the bandits were asleep in their various quarters, and with infinite care slipped within the door. He saw the form of a man lying on a cot directly in front of him as he entered the room, and the officer saw that this man was a personal sentry, posted there to defend Jesse James, and who was therefore one of Jesse James's trusted lieutenants.

"Who are you?" the outlaw asked in a low tone of voice; and he half motioned toward Captain Forrest with his six-shooter. Then it was that Captain Forrest looked across into eternity. He knew that he did not have far to go.

## CHAPTER V.

### JESSE JAMES IS WARNED.

"Who are you?" whispered the outlaw again, as he waved his self-cocking .45 in the direction of Captain Forrest.

Into the mind of the Captain there flashed just one idea. That was that if he was going to shoot at all, he must shoot quick. He knew he would be killed in a flash, if he himself did not shoot. He knew, too, that he must shoot at his mark with fatal effect or not at all. Forrest dropped over to the left, crouching down as he did so, going after his gun with his left hand, and then turning the weapon sideways in his hand, fired it.

Crash! The shot re-echoed through the narrow low-ceilinged cabin, awakening all of the outlaws in the camp. Forrest knew that this would be so, but he had no time to do anything but shoot and shoot quick. So far as he was concerned at that particular moment, Jesse James, Cole Younger, all of the outlaws surrounding him, were wiped off the map; it was merely a case of an unknown outlaw against an army officer, each armed, each ready to fire, and with nothing else around them—just these two desperate fighting men.

In the darkness, Forrest did not know whether his shot had gone home or not. He straightened up as he sent away his first bullet, and pulled his trigger the second time, but he missed the outlaw, he was confident. The entire tragic occurrence did not take the space of one long breath, and following upon the sound of the first shot, the outlaw staggered back upon his cot, quivered once or twice, and was dead. He had been shot directly in the center of the brain by Captain Forrest. The army officer was unharmed.

The sound of the two shots, for the outlaw had been killed so instantaneously that he had not had time to

fire his weapon at Captain Forrest, alarmed the outlaw camp in a moment. From every direction, men came running. There were loud shouts of amazement and many fierce oaths, but no one saw the speeding scout fly down the trail which led to a water hole back of the cabin, save Jesse James, who, at the first crash of the resounding shot below him, had guessed the situation, jumped into his boots, had vaulted from a rear window of the cabin and with revolver in hand, pierced the deep shadow of the adjacent woods not twenty seconds behind the hurrying form of Captain Forrest.

Captain Forrest, as he ran, caught his foot in a root, and went crashing and tumbling down a slight declivity, his revolver falling from his hand as he fell, and half stunned and bewildered, brought up in a seated position at the bottom of an old water-course, while with a great shower of gravel and dirt, Jesse James hurtled the gully in mid air, saw the man he was after crouching beneath him, with splendid effort turned and fell directly upon the army officer and in a moment, the two men, were rolling over in a rough and tumble fight.

Jesse had the advantage of a preliminary round, because he fell upon the officer, but the wrestling game was not unknown to Captain Forrest, and he bowed his back and crouched upon his knees and hands, and as Jesse descended upon him, gave a mighty upward heave and his foe went flying over his shoulder. Jesse, however, was on his feet in a second and raised his weapon to take the life of his antagonist. Captain Forrest felt sure that his life would be ended because he saw even in the semi-darkness, the rigid arm of Jesse holding his heavy weapon, and Forrest expected every second to feel the terrible agony of the bullet as it ploughed through his body. Just as Forrest had given himself up for lost, a form at the feet of Jesse James whirled upward and clutched the outlaw's weapon. It exploded harmlessly in the air. Faint with his emotion, for a moment Forrest did not indentify, and then saw that it was his companion Lieutenant Oscar Friend. Jesse James also made up his mind that he had picked up more enemies than he knew of, and suspicious by nature, as evil men usually are, Jesse wrenched himself loose from Lieutenant Friend's grasp, plucked the Lieutenant's revolver from his hand as if it had been a feather wand and started to retreat to his fellow outlaws.

It was impossible for Jesse to get by Forrest, because the officer had squared himself in such a position to block the way, and even in the night, Jesse knew that the odds were two to one against him, and he relished no further personal combat with either of his unknown assailants. Jesse felt that he was trapped unless he made Herculean efforts to escape. The warning that had reached Jesse when Captain Forrest had killed his companion and his guard at the same time, was sufficient not only to alarm the outlaw but to thoroughly mystify him. Jesse James did not dream that one man would have dared to enter his camp and get near enough to his person to kill his body guard, and he was alarmed and amazed and thought only of getting back to his companions when he found that the man he had supposed was alone when he began his pursuit was accompanied by another man. So far as Jesse James knew, these two men might have a hundred companions, and although brave himself, so far as physical courage is concerned, Jesse was crafty and felt that the time

was now near for him to make his personal escape from the predicament in which he found himself.

But, when Jesse saw that Forrest was in his way again, he tried to retrace his steps only to find Friend fumbling with his revolver, which, luckily for Jesse, had become twisted in the Lieutenant's holster during the effort he had taken to save Forrest's life by attacking the outlaw. Jesse James found himself hemmed in, but with that marvellous dash and detail which made him the leading criminal of his day, he dashed ahead, avoiding the two officers as if he had been a foot-ball player making a splendid hundred yard run, and thus melted away at right angles and disappeared into a little clump of maple trees that surmounted the miniature battle-field in which the contest was raging.

"After him!" muttered Captain Forrest. "Don't let him get away, Friend!"

"Bet your boots I won't! It's worth some money in rewards to catch that cuss! It's the King Highbinder himself, Jesse James!"

The men chased the flying outlaw into the gloom of the forest, and as the moon by this time had risen, they had no hesitation in the path they took, and the direction they were to go was plainly marked by the fast running form of the famous criminal, who ran like a deer through the dimly lighted wood.

"We have him!" cried Forrest. "He can't escape us now!"

Lieutenant Friend gave a cry of pleasure, for he saw that Jesse James had come flush up against a canyon or deep cleft in the solid rock, and in his own mind, felt sure that at last the famous outlaw was at bay.

Visions of success often times are merely visions. The two officers closed in on Jesse and he, seeing their action, rushed down along the canyon in the hopes of finding a place where he could descend into its depths. But the shelving sides of the declivity made it impossible for any man to get to the bottom of the canyon without losing his life because the point where Jesse was speeding was several hundred feet in depth.

Making sure that their prey was thoroughly hemmed in, the officers ran after him, but Jesse kept on still along the brink of the terrible abyss.

His straining eyes were watching for some method of extricating himself from his perilous position. Jesse bitterly bewailed in his own mind his temerity in putting himself into the awkward situation he was facing. He could not turn back because of his pursuers, his progress seemed to be stopped by the yawning canyon, and he ran along the brink of a steep, his mind filled with anguish and fearing that at last his deeds of blood were over, and that he would fall captive to his pursuers. Jesse did not really understand why he was not shot immediately. His reputation for deeds of violence and quick gun work was so great, and his declaration so well known to everybody that he would not be captured alive, had made it almost certain that when he was hemmed in by any party of pursuers, he would be immediately killed.

Jesse, however, did not know that the two army officers were anxious to capture him alive. Both Forrest and Friend knew that Jesse's weapon had been lost in the struggle. Although at first he had designed to shoot Jesse when his own weapon caught in his holster, Friend had an opportunity to change his mind, and he had decided that it was better to do so rather than to kill the outlaw. Captain Forrest did not want

to kill Jesse anyway, because he had the fighting man's natural aversion to killing a fleeing man.

All these motives redounded to the credit of Jesse, and account for his not having been slain in the first few hundreds yards of his remarkable efforts at safety.

"Press him hard!" shouted Forrest. "Close in on him, Friend, and throw him!"

But this order was fated not to carry out. A cry of triumph rang from Jesse James's lips. He had seen, only a few feet ahead of him, a way out of his perilous position. Across the ravine which was now about fifty feet wide, as it narrowed occasionally and widened later into several hundred feet, lay a maple sapling.

A bolt of lightning had shivered a tall young tree at its roots, and the incipient monarch of the forest had fallen directly across the frightful chasm. There it hung, making a frail pathway, so slight, so brittle that only a desperate man who preferred to die in a mad effort to escape than to be captured, would ever have dared to cross the frail bridge.

Yet Jesse James, without a moment's hesitation, ran at full speed directly upon the frail sapling.

"He'll kill himself!" cried Forrest, as he saw the daring act of the outlaw leader.

As if he bore a charmed life, Jesse, however, made three or four catlike steps, swung a little to the right, and appeared to be about to dash into the depths of the canyon to a frightful death, regained his equilibrium, and then lightly darted across the swaying tree, and in a moment had reached the other side.

Forrest and Friend gazed at each other in absolute awe and astonishment. They would not have believed that such a feat was possible, yet it had been accomplished before their eyes. Almost doubting the evidences of their senses, they watched the still swaying sapling and walked around its stump on their side of the canyon, while from the other side they heard the mocking, jeering laughter of Jesse James, the escaped outlaw, echoing through the woods.

The officers themselves were in almost as great peril, they felt, as Jesse James had been, who thus made one of the most memorable escapes from capture of the hundreds made during his eventful outlaw existence.

Forrest and Friend could hear the hoots and howls of rage of the other outlaws at the camp, as they beat the country immediately surrounding the cabin in hopes of discovering the man who had killed their companion, Fighting Phil Shannon.

"I would like to negotiate that tree myself," said Forrest, "if I only had the sand."

His remark was unanswered, because just at that moment the sapling began slowly to part at its shattered roots, and then with a sullen plunge, rattled down into the abyss beneath, carrying with it a shower of stones. The position of the previous hour had been reversed. The army men, instead of being scouts and pursuers of Jesse James, had become the unmasked enemy who were now being pursued by the outlaws, who demanded red vengeance for the death of their comrade.

Captain Forrest was not only baffled in his plans by the necessity that faced him, and which had ended in the killing of Fighting Phil Shannon, but he also now was in great peril, and he faced a position that required quick thinking with which to extricate himself.

## CHAPTER VI.

## JESSE JAMES RAISES FUNDS.

To an outlaw of the caliber of Jesse James, a danger passed is a danger forgotten.

As soon as he had escaped from his pursuers, Captain Percy Forrest and Lieutenant Friend, Jesse made a circuit and entered his camp again undisturbed. He saw that he was being spied upon, and he guessed that the two men who had pursued him were probably in some way attached to the Fifth Cavalry stationed at Independence. Jesse knew that for the past year he had figured in one criminal exploit after the other, and he remembered with an inward shudder Cole Younger's warning that it was best not to raise up United States troops against him.

Intent upon discovering how the spies had entered his camp, Jesse searched the outposts and soon came upon the bound form of Mushy Cohen, who had been swearing as well as he could with a gag in his mouth in a mixture of broken English and Hebrew.

Jesse James unbound his angry follower, and after he had calmed Mushy down somewhat, secured from him the story of how he had been captured; and of course, in a few moments of puzzled memory, Jesse knew that the same two men, who had almost ended his career, were the same who had surprised and bound Mushy Cohen.

"You're a fine sentry!" sneered Jesse James, as he kicked his abject associate forward into the center of the camp. "You can thank your lucky stars that I haven't got my gun with me!"

For some time Jesse assisted the outlaws in a search for the two officers, and finally, when this search had not been productive and the hour was waxing late and he remembered another plan that he had in mind, the outlaw delegated the work of pursuing the officers to Cole Younger. Then hastily mounted his large bay horse, and was soon wending his way toward the village of Split Rock that lay within two miles of the scene of his narrow escape and of the man hunt now being carried on by the outlaws.

Jesse James knew as well as any other man alive that it would be impossible to keep his men with him without the liberal use of money. Cash talks, their leader knew. The outlaw was shrewder than Cole Younger. Cole appealed only to other men to aid him in his campaign of violence by exciting their desire for blood, natural among the hard riding outlaws, and by giving them an infinite share in plunder secured. Jesse James, however, always stipulated in advance that each member of his band should receive a certain sum of money which the outlaw leader furnished and also as a further reward, each member of the band was to figure in future rewards on a percentage basis. Many outlaws of fame in Independence fields had assisted Jesse James on this basis of payment, and the bandit therefore always had at his command the pick of the gun-men and the bad men of the United States.

But bad or good men had to be paid, and Jesse James was short of funds. He had come to a point where it was necessary for him to get some ready money. The plunder secured from the bank he had last raided, ten thousand dollars, he had divided with Cole Younger, and Cole Younger had settled with the members of his own gang, leaving Jesse to settle any arrears due in his own men.

Jesse had left just enough money to placate his own associates, and, not wishing to let Cole Younger into the financial situation, had started off alone to see what he could do in the way of retrenching his exhausted exchequer.

Jesse knew that between the town of Independence, Missouri, and the hamlet of Nayo, an old fashioned stage coach made its weekly progress. Confederates of his in Independence had informed him that on every Thursday night an extra trip of the coach had been made in the past, and that ten or fifteen thousand dollars of the funds of the bank in Nayo had been transferred by that bank to a larger institution in Independence, to maintain the balance of exchange between the two financial concerns.

Jesse James had decided that he would hold up the coach on this night which was, by the way, the night when the treasure was to be transported. Jesse had figured that it was a one man's job to hold up this coach. Perfectly sure of his own ability as an outlaw and hold-up man, Jesse James never took into any of his plots any more men than was absolutely necessary. He was wont to say that one man would not betray himself, two men reduced the chances of one man's escaping, and a plot held by ten men was at any time liable to land all of the ten men either in jail or in their graves.

It was about two o'clock in the morning, and the moonlight was flowing down upon a scene of sylvan and peaceful contentment, when Jesse James emerged upon the highway connecting Nayo with Independence. Jesse secreted his horse at the extreme end of a field skirting the highway, and then placed over his face a black mask which concealed his features, and turned his coat inside out. Even in this uncouth garb, there was something about the outlaw that spelled power and bravery. Jesse stood in his high-topped boots while around his waist was a broad leather belt, and far in front of his right hip, where his hand could rest upon them in a second, was a brace of heavy army revolvers of high calibre, bound to shoot bullets of the most death-dealing kind. Jesse stood in a wide shadow made by a tree, exactly in the center of the road with his heels close together, and his two hands resting on the white ivory handles of his revolvers. The rattle of the oncoming coach, as it swayed in the gutters and lurched forward in the stretches of good road, came faintly to the outlaw's ears, and there crept into Jesse's face the snapping light which always seemed to linger there when a deed of violence of blood had begun.

It seems incredible, but in spite of the fact that all of the wide country knew that Jesse and his band were out, and that Cole Younger had joined them, with his equally notorious band, that a coach containing thousands of dollars in bank notes and gold should be allowed to lurch through the country with only a driver in charge. There was a sneering laugh on the face of Jesse when he saw this condition. He knew that he was going to be successful in raising funds to continue his bloody campaign.

Jesse pulled his two ivory mounted revolvers from his holster, and raised the weapons just as the coach came down the hill on a keen run of four metalled horses.

There was a flash and a sharp retort, and the night-leading horse plunged forward on its head and fell across the road, stone dead, with a bullet from Jesse

James's revolver in its brain. There was a plunging of animals, and then the entire equipage sprawled across the road, and unable to carry the weight of their dead companion, the three other horses came to a stop as Jesse flashed around in view holding his two revolvers in his hands, which he levelled at the head of the driver of the coach.

"Get down from there!" Jesse commanded.

One look at the figure before him was enough for Fred Staunton, driver of the coach. He "got down" with amazing celerity, and although he had not been requested to do so, held up his hands and tremblingly stood in the road awaiting the next order of the masked figure standing silently before him.

Jesse walked over to the thoroughly cowed driver, not in the slightest abating the deadly aim with his revolvers. He took no chances. In early Missouri days, sometimes held-up men shot suddenly, and Jesse did not propose to be made the victim of any ruse that the stage-coach driver might have in mind. As soon as he had reached the side of Fred Staunton, Jesse thrust the revolver in his right hand back into its holster and firmly bound the unfortunate driver and tied him to a wheel of his own coach.

Then Jesse knew that he would be undisturbed, and he climbed up on the box of the coach and soon found the money he was after, which was held in a steel case, secured with a padlock. Jesse pulled a small burglar's jimmy from his pocket, and in a moment had wrenched open the box. His eyes were filled with happiness as he gloated over the treasures displayed before him. There lay great stacks of ten, twenty and five dollar bills, rolls of gold, bags of silver, and all of this loot Jesse transferred to his pockets, and, without saying a single word further, either in self-praise or of warning to Fred Staunton, stepped down into the road and calmly began extricating the dead horse from its harness and straightened the team out into the road again, minus its dead night leader. Jesse then cut the remaining leader loose, and with an amused smile on his face, saw that the coach which had had four horses attached to it, had now only two. He unbound Fred Staunton from where he was secured to one of the front wheels of the coach, and at the point of his revolver, marched him to the rear of the equipage where he fastened the unfortunate man to the coach by a long rope, one end of which the outlaw turned into a hangman's noose and deftly threw over the stage-driver's head.

He then unbound the legs of Staunton, but took care that his arms were still firmly secured. Staunton was thus able to walk, but there was a rope around his neck, from which he could not extricate himself, because of his bound arms. Staunton was now standing about ten feet from the coach in the dangerous position of having a rope around his neck, and his peril was increased in a moment, when Jesse started the team and urged it on to a mad gallop by striking each horse with his revolver. Jesse cried in high pleasure as he saw the horses running at their topmost speed, and the driver running as fast as he could behind the coach for the purpose of saving his life. No one could ever tell just where the stage-driver stumbled, but when the coach was found, late on the same morning by some farmers, it was dragging the hapless driver behind it, because when he had fallen, his execution by hanging had immediately occurred. In his after-life, Jesse James was wont to tell of this atrocity as being the greatest joke he had ever played on a fellow human being.

## CHAPTER VII.

## JESSE JAMES'S REVENGE.

Feeling secure now in the position of funds enough to continue his campaign, Jesse James, the outlaw chief, secured his horse from the point where he had hidden it, and soon resumed his journey.

Having secured his cash, he now thought of his revenge. An hour's further ride brought him to the farm owned by William Kittridge, who had offended Jesse James because he had refused to contribute fodder for the horses of the outlaw leader's companions and himself in a previous raid made in this part of the country by the outlaw chief.

Kittridge, had by his refusal, earned the undying hatred of the outlaw, and Jesse James was desirous of impressing upon every community at every possible chance, the fact that the gaining of the enmity of the James boys or their associates was always followed by swift punishment.

Jesse had decided to teach Farmer Kittridge what he considered to be a needed lesson. As the outlaw rode along, he saw, coming toward him mounted on a rangy dappled horse, the figure of a man which he identified as his brother Frank.

"Hello, Frank," Jesse hailed, when the newcomer had approached and Frank gave a joyous shout when he saw his brother.

"How in the world did you come here, Jesse?" asked Frank.

"I came here," replied the outlaw, "because I want to go and see Farmer Kittridge and do a little business with him. By the way, I just held up the Nayo coach."

"How much did you get?"

"Enough hoodle to keep us going until we can get to the next place."

"Did you take out our bit in advance?"

"You bet I did! The James boys aren't going to get left. Not if I know it."

Jesse James winked at his brother Frank as he spoke, and then inquired as to the success of his brother's mission.

"I saw all the boys I could find," said Frank, "and I told them to go into camp to you at Split Rock Road—you know, the place we had selected up among the split rocks."

"That's right. But we've been having a lot of trouble at Split Rock. There's been bloody murder and sudden death going on there!"

"That's nothing new wherever you may be," laughingly rejoined Frank. "Tell me about it."

Jesse detailed the story of the attempt to capture him made by the two unknown scouts, and Frank whistled shrilly when he heard the tale.

"Who are those two fellows that were after you, Jesse?" asked Frank.

"I don't know," returned Jesse, "but of course, they must have been a couple of soldiers. They put up the slickest game that's been handed to me in years. In fact, no two men ever got so near since I first started out in this game of ours. I feel a little leary of those fellows, whoever they may be, because it's the first time that anybody has had the nerve and brains enough to get anywhere near any camp that I have established."

"That's right, but this was only a snap-shot, anyway. You see we were all pretty disorganized by the unfortunate necessity of raiding that town after Bud Singleton was shot, and I suppose things weren't run-

ning as they ought to be at the camp. We ought to kill Mushy Cohen for letting those fellows get to him."

"I kicked him good and plenty."

"Kicking don't do any good. It's killing that that chap needed."

"It isn't too late yet."

"No, that's true. But, Jesse, where are you bound for?"

"I'm going to make life one dizzy round of pleasure for Farmer Kittridge."

"You mean that fellow that refused us hay and grain for our horses some time ago?"

"That's the very chap!"

"His farm is around here somewhere, I remember."

"Yes, it is only a few miles from here. I want to go over there and show that farmer that he won't do anybody any good, himself especially, by defying the Jesse James gang."

"All right, jog along, Brother Jesse, I'm with you!"

Jesse and Frank, after about an hour of sharp riding, reached the farmhouse owned and occupied by William Kittridge. The house was a Gothic structure a story and a half in height, with tiny dormer windows, and green blinds, and its white painted exterior, something unusual in Missouri at this period, indicated that it was the abode of a farmer of substance. This fact was evidenced further by a neat row of barns painted red with white trimmings, which from their size, showed that they occupied part of a farm of extensive dimensions. Farmer Kittridge had more than a thousand acres of land under cultivation, and his farm supported several hundred head of stock, and he had been one of the earliest of the Missouri farmers to start the business of breeding high-grade running horses.

Jesse laughed in a sardonic manner when he saw the peaceful scene that lay before the eyes of himself and his brother, as they looked down the roadway leading to the quiet center of Farmer Kittridge's wealth.

"When you see Kittridge, Frank," said Jesse, "you pull your gun on him and make him walk out in the middle of the road. You tell him that your brother Jesse has gone inside his barn to arrange a Fourth of July celebration."

Frank James grinned because he saw his brother's program as soon as Jesse had spoken, and the couple separated, Jesse going into the barn while Frank rode up to the front door of the neat old farmhouse and began thundering away with his gauntleted hand upon the knocker of the door. The polished brass knocker in the form of a lion's head, reverberated upon its copper base and filled the interior of the house with its strident warnings. Farmer Kittridge, who was within the house, not knowing what to make of the sounds made by the outlaw at his front door, rushed out to ascertain the cause of so much noise, to find himself gazing within the narrow depths of a revolver barrel, behind which the blue eyes and light mustache of Frank James unmistakably told the farmer who his caller was. The farmer knew in a moment that Frank James had returned to extort reprisal for his temerity in refusing fodder for the James gang more than a year before, and Kittridge's face turned white with fear, although he spoke no words.

"Come out here, you ——" sneered Frank James. "I don't propose to let you get to a gun. Hold up your hands!"

The time-honored and time-worn phrase, so far as

the James boys were concerned, filled Kittridge with alarm. He obeyed the summons immediately, however.

"March out ahead of me into the road!" commanded Frank.

The farmer did as he was bade, and walked out in front of his home, Frank following on his horse.

"Get down on your knees!" muttered Frank, and the farmer obeyed.

By this time, Jesse had arranged the Fourth of July celebration he had spoken of. The preliminary display came, when from the roof of the main barn of the farm darted a great cloud of thick black smoke, showing that hundreds of tons of hay in the upper part of the building had been set on fire. Soon smoke and flames burst from the other buildings surrounding the main structure, and within ten minutes Jesse James had darted hither and thither with his own hands setting fire to every outbuilding upon the Kittridge farm and also had ignited the interior of the farmer's house.

In far less time than it takes to describe the horrible action, every building owned by Kittridge was a mass of flames. In some of the buildings, cattle were confined. The almost human shrieks of the burning animals made a terrible sound but both Frank and Jesse James apparently enjoyed the agony of the dying brutes, for they laughed as if the entertainment was the best they had ever witnessed. Farmer Kittridge upon his knees, watched the entire demolition of the result of years of patient industry on his part. All his property, save his acres, had been destroyed to satisfy the vindictive whim of an outlaw leader and his outlaw brother. Kittridge could not help but think that the law had faulted somewhere, that allowed such human devils to burn an honest man's property, undisturbed. But he continued to kneel with white face and tightly drawn lips, not even daring to voice a protest over the destruction of his property. Jesse James, after he had thoroughly ignited all of the buildings, walked over to Farmer Kittridge and began taunting him. Every epithet that an evil mind could devise was hurled upon the unfortunate farmer. Kittridge knew that his only hope of life was to make no retort, and although he was a man far on the shady side of life, he felt that existence was still sweet to him in spite of his demolished property.

Jesse at length having, as he thought, sufficiently taunted his enemy, Farmer Kittridge, ordered Frank to lead him up towards the main burning barn, and turn him so that he would stand in a position with his face toward the conflagration and his back to the two outlaws.

Farmer Kittridge felt that his last hour was approaching, and began muttering prayers.

"Get out of the way, Frank," bawled Jesse, as he drew his revolver from his belt. "I'm going to make that fellow look like a sieve."

Jesse raised his revolver and took careful aim. It was his intention not to kill Kittridge immediately, but to prolong his agony by inflicting many painful but not fatal wounds. Jesse's skill with the revolver was remarkable. He seemed to be able to shoot and hit his mark at any point he wished, without taking the slightest aim.

Jesse squinted along the muzzle of his six-shooter, however, as he took aim at Kittridge, because he did not wish to be balked of his revenge by killing his victim at the first shot.

"Clip his wings a little, Jesse, before you give him his death wound," sneered Frank, who stood near by with his revolver in his hand.

Frank had hold of the reins attached to the bridles of their horses, and watched the scene with a critical eye.

Just as Jesse's lean forefinger was pressing the revolver and thus releasing its leaden freight, there came the shrill call of a bugle echoing down from a hill along which the highway led.

"Charge!" roared a voice.

"What's that?" said Jesse, as he lowered his weapon without firing.

Again came the bugle note, shrill, clear and inspiring.

"Soldiers!" hissed Frank James. "Mount and get out of here, Jesse! Here come the soldiers!"

This seemed to be the fact, because darting down the highway could be seen a man waving his hat and shouting with all his might.

"Come on, boys! Come on!" howled the heroic figure, as it could be seen spurring its horse's sides to incite the creature to renewed endeavor.

"It's the Fifth Cavalry!" yelled Jesse, as he saw the flying figure approaching rapidly. "We've got to ride for our lives, Frank!"

Scarce a hundred feet behind the first mounted form could be seen a second rider.

"Get out of here quick, Jesse!" shrieked Frank. "I know that second fellow! It's Lieutenant Friend of the Fifth!"

The two outlaws at the best speed they could get out of their horses, rushed down the highway away from what they believed to be the organized attack of Captain Forrest and a troop of his soldiers.

As the outlaws vanished, Farmer Kittridge fell forward on his face in a dead faint. The revulsion of feeling that came to him when he discovered that he was not to be assassinated, owing to the opportune arrival of assistance, was too much for him, and he did not see the pitying face of Captain Forrest leaning over him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RUSE OF CAPTAIN FORREST.

When Farmer Kittridge regained consciousness, he looked about vainly for the troop of cavalry whose opportune arrival, he felt sure, had saved his life from being taken from him by Jesse and Frank James.

Instead of the troop of cavalry, he saw the smiling face of Captain Percy Forrest of the Fifth Cavalry looking down on him while his hand poured generous doses of liquor down the farmer's throat from a flask which he held in his hand, and with which he was trying to resuscitate Kittridge.

Holding two sweat-covered horses he saw the stalwart form and grinning face of Lieutenant Friend.

The bewildered farmer looked at his two rescuers and his lips moved faintly.

"Where are the soldiers?" he said.

"We are the soldiers," laughed Captain Forrest.

"That is, he is one soldier," said Lieutenant Friend, "and I am the other soldier. One man would be one soldier, and we being two, we therefore, are soldiers!"

Kittridge was bewildered, and finally managed to murmur that he had heard, just before he fainted, the key bugle sounding the charge, and had also heard the

voice of Captain Forrest urging on his troops in an effort to rescue the farmer.

"Well, that was just a little ruse of mine," said Forrest.

"The fact of the matter is that we are all that there are here of the Fifth Cavalry. We have just been having a little brush with the outlaws ourselves, and fortunately, happened to be around in this vicinity when we saw the smoke arising from the burning buildings. We were a mile or two away at that time, but we rode hard. We reached the top of yonder hill just when we saw you being led out for execution at the hands of Jesse James."

"But how about the bugle?" faltered the farmer.

"Here it is," replied Forrest. "This horse I am riding belongs to the bugler of our troop. He forgot all about his bugle when he turned his horse over to me. It was swinging at my saddle pommel in its usual place when we started on the long stretch of that hill, and I could see that if I didn't do something quickly that you would be assassinated."

"Being a bright youth," interpolated Lieutenant Friend, "Forrest sounded the charge on the bugle, howled like a maniac as he usually does when he is going into action, for his men to follow him, and I representing the troop and being 'his men' rushed after him and yelled just as loud as he did. By dint of many yells, another bugle charge, a few revolver shots and through kicking holes in the ribs of our horses, we managed to put up a very good military comedy. Anyway, we made Jesse James think we were the entire Fifth Cavalry, and incidentally we saved your life!"

Farmer Kittridge, although heartsick over the financial loss he had sustained, was thankful to escape with his life, and at the suggestion of Captain Forrest, who assisted in the operation, a stray horse was caught and the Farmer started back toward the village of Nayo where his son lived and where he said he could remain for a few days, out of reach of the outlaws in case they returned, still determined to assassinate him.

As soon as the farmer had been disposed of, Forrest looked over the burning embers and saw that no living thing was contained among them, and shaking his head at the evidences of unnecessary incendiarism that lay before him in the destroyed buildings, started away with Friend because he saw there was no further use for his remaining in this vicinity.

Forrest knew, also, that it would be dangerous to remain longer in case Jesse and Frank James returned, for if they did come back, they would quickly see how they had been put to flight by two men instead of a regiment of cavalry.

Captain Forrest and Lieutenant Friend had escaped from the pursuit by the outlaws near the Split Rock Camp, but only with extreme difficulty. The two officers had been enabled to make their flight by the desperate expedient of doubling back on their tracks and using their woodcraft gained in many Indian uprisings. They had wormed themselves back through the narrow strip of timber surrounding the outlaw camp, and had managed to do so unobserved by taking advantage of every possible shelter.

They had finally issued out on the Split Rock Road and had gotten back to their secreted horses, and knowing that the outlaws were now fully aware of their being in the vicinity, and feeling that further scout duty was unnecessary, at least at this moment, the

two pursuers of the law breakers had started back toward Nayo, and had thought by hard riding that they could escape the treacherous gang.

They had managed to evade pursuit, and then they were able to get back to the road on which was the farm of William Kittridge and, at the psychic moment when the farmer was about to be assassinated by Jesse James, had been enabled to dash down upon the scene and by a clever ruse drive off the bandits before they had been able to accomplish their murderous purpose.

Captain Forrest, as he rode away with Lieutenant Friend from the scene of vandalism committed by the James boys, knew that he had thrown now his professional reputation into the scales in the hopes that it would outweigh an outlaw's astuteness, and that it was now a matter of honor with him to either capture or kill Jesse and Frank James. It was with no light heart that the brave officer continued his journey, revolving at the same time in his mind a plan that he had hatched there, which made him feel that its successful accomplishment would enable him to perform the dangerous mission he was upon.

Jesse James and Frank James, after riding several miles at the best speed of which their horses were capable, and then finding that they were not being pursued by what they thought was the major portion of the United States Fifth Cavalry, halted and looked at each other in dismay.

"I wonder if we ran away from a shadow?" sneered Jesse James.

"I don't know," replied Frank. "I don't know what we ran away from, but we ran away right smart!"

"I saw that fellow, Cap' Forrest and his side partner Lieutenant Friend, coming like a couple of demons down the road, and I passed up my hand."

"Nothing doing for me, beau!"

"They sure came swift," replied Jesse. "What got me, was that bugle sound. You can't fool me, but I heard a bugle sound 'Charge!'"

Jesse turned the entire situation over in his mind, and with the subtle adroitness of which he was capable, figured out that the movement had been wise, in escaping from the position in which they had been found when Forrest came charging down the hill, even if he had not had behind him a troop of United States Cavalry soldiers.

Jesse could not help recalling the dread that Cole Younger had exhibited in having what had appeared to him to be the paralyzed arm of the United States government raised against the outlaws. Jesse was shrewd and at first had laughed at the fact that the Fifth Cavalry had been called into action against him and his dependent creatures. But when he came to think more gravely upon the subject, he had seen that his situation was a serious one, and he eventually arrived at the same conclusion as had Captain Forrest, that either the United States Cavalry must exterminate Jesse James, or Jesse James must exterminate Captain Forrest, who up to the present time was the militant force in the field of the United States forces.

"It looks to me," said Jesse, "as if we had better dust out of here and make some point other than Split Rock for the meeting place of our men."

"Where will we find a better place?" asked Frank. "We have started out on this raid, and we can't drop it now for any brush with the United States troop. There's nothing in it, this bucking up against soldiers, but remember, you sent me out to send all the boys to



Split Rock, after they had all separated when we were attacked by the soldiers back at Nayo. What are you going to do with all of the men that will come straggling back in twos and threes? You see, I didn't see all of the men, but got up against those that I could and told them to show up at Split Rock and to notify any other of the boys they came across."

"That's so; I didn't think of that! I don't suppose that more than half of our boys have shown up, and if we leave Split Rock Camp, we will be deserting our companions. Whoever is chasing us will get back and turn out the soldiers and they will lay low and pick off the returning parties and we won't be there to help in the fight. The only thing that we can do, I guess, is to remain in camp at Split Rock for the present, and if the soldiers make it too hot for us, we can scatter and run after they have attacked us."

The two outlaws conversed upon the question of remaining or not remaining at Split Rock Camp for some time. After careful deliberation, they decided to stay in the camp, at least for the present, and Jesse despatched Frank back to Cole Younger, who had been left in command of the outlaw forces, to acquaint him with the decision.

Jesse did not tell Frank where he was going, except to say that he would return to the Split Rock camp later on. After Frank had left Jesse, the latter mounted his horse again and started off down the road, eventually getting to a road that led back to the village of Nayo, and in the course of time, reached the hamlet and boldly rode down the main street.

It was a foolish thing to do, it would appear on the surface, because, Jesse, by taking this action, had plunged himself into a town seething with desire to arrest him. There was not a citizen in the place who would not have tired conclusions with the outlaw immediately, had they known of his presence, either by shooting Jesse from ambush, or by trying to overpower him by force of numbers. Jesse's skill with the revolver was so well known that no citizen of Nayo would have faced the outlaw and attempted to kill him in an open fight.

Jesse had counted upon his reputation for dexterity with deadly weapons, to keep from an open attack and the outlaw's sharp eyes darted hither and thither as he rode rapidly through the streets, his purpose being not to run into an ambush. The citizens of Nayo, however, did not dream that Jesse James would thus dare to ride into the town, and the solitary outlaw horseman was not disturbed in his progress.

Jesse soon reached the dance hall where Bud Singleton's foolish quarrel with Edward Filkins had precipitated the events which had just transpired. The dance hall was kept by Roaring Bill Bradley, who had a notorious reputation in the town. Roaring Bill was what is known as a "false-alarm bad-man." He had figured in many shooting episodes, but was noted for never going into one without having the odds on his side.

The dance house kept by Roaring Bill Bradley was of the usual Missouri type of these days. It was in a low two-story frame building, on the single spidery street of the town. The upper floors were divided into gambling rooms where there was a faro-lay-out, a roulette table, a keeno game and little rooms used by private poker parties.

Down stairs the front of the building was devoted to the bar itself. Roaring Bill Bradley had fitted up

the bar-room to a high degree of Missouri elegance. There was a polished mahogany bar at one end of the room, with a large plate-glass mirror behind it, and ranged along in front of the mirror on a little shelf were many glasses. Signs around the room bore legends. One sign said "Gentlemen must treat ladies after each dance." "All mixed drinks one dollar." "Tickets for the dance hall Two Dollars. Each ticket is good for two drinks."

A big horseshoe swung from a crystal chandelier in the center of the room. The center of the horseshoe bore the words "Welcome." Another sign said "Gentlemen who shoot out the lights or injure the bar furniture must be prepared to settle with the proprietor." "Any lady who draws a gun in this dance-house, will be immediately removed from the place."

The dance-hall proper was reached by a doorway at the right of the bar. A polished and waxed floor showed where the devotees of the dance enjoyed themselves. There was a little raised platform where the orchestra played nights. The orchestra consisted of the usual thing—a colored man who played a rickety piano, while another colored man sawed on a violin, until he made it wail in protest, meanwhile "calling off" the various figures in the dance. For the purpose of engaging in the dancing pastime, the young half-criminal element that frequented the place bought a ticket at the bar for two dollars and went into the room and selected any partner he wished among the numerous females who lined the settees along each side of the room. A sign showed that the art of selection in the method used sometimes ended in quarrels. The sign said "Any two gentlemen selecting the same lady must not fight either in the dance-hall or the bar. Go outside to do your shooting."

Roaring Bill Bradley was alone in the bar-room of his dance-hall when Jesse James entered, the resort being tenantless save for its proprietor.

Jesse James had pulled his wide-brimmed felt hat far down over his drawn brows, and, as it was not usual for a horseman to drop into the place to get a drink, Roaring Bill at first paid little attention to the customer. Jesse walked up to the bar and Bill turned lazily around and in a gruff voice asked his customer what he could do for him.

"Gimme a drink!" said Jesse.

Roaring Bill produced a bottle half filled with whiskey from his stock packed in ice in a little copper tank underneath the bar, but Jesse James waved this away with a sneer.

"None o' your bar whiskey for mine!" the outlaw said. "Give me some o' that fancy dope up there alongside of those glasses!"

Bradley did not understand the gruff voice of his caller, but he turned to get the bottle indicated, which was of the type known as "Nigger Whiskey," and as he turned away Jesse drew his revolver.

There was a startling explosion and the neck of the bottle held in Bradley's hand flew over among the shining glasses, reducing several of them to bits of broken crystal.

Jesse did not fire again, but Bradley shoved his hand down in under the bar for the purpose of getting at his gun which lay there in plain sight. "Here, you!" snarled Jesse, "Don't you touch that gun!"

The outlaw drew another revolver from his holster with his left hand, and he levelled it at Roaring Bill's head.

"Don't you move!" hissed the outlaw.

Roaring Bill did not move.

"Jesse James!" he muttered.

"You bet it's Jesse James," the outlaw replied. "I thought I'd come and make you a sociable morning call."

"Now, Jesse, what's the use?" whined Bill. "I've always been a friend of yours. What do you want to come in here for, like this, and muss up a gentleman's place?"

"One of my boys told me the other day," snapped Jesse, "that you said that if Jesse James came into your saloon that you'd cut his heart out and hang it up on the chandelier! I am here waiting for you to do the cutting!"

"I never said no such thing!" protested Roaring Bill. "You know, Jesse, I always thought you were a perfect gentleman. Anything I've got is yours."

Jesse laughed in a strange manner. He walked over to the bar, still keeping his revolver trained upon Roaring Bill's head, and he poured out a glassful of whiskey.

"Now you come over here, Bill, and take a drink with me," continued Jesse. "No, don't put your hands down. Get down and lap up that booze."

In spite of his protestations, Roaring Bill was forced to hold his hands up in the air, lean over, grasp the whiskey glass between his teeth, and drink as much of it as he could, under the embarrassing circumstances. The fiery stuff caused the dance-hall proprietor to choke and swear, but nevertheless, he managed to get a good portion of the whiskey down his throat.

"That's the way dogs drink," hissed Jesse. "You're nothing but a common, every-day dog, so I made you drink the way you should. You run a dance-hall, Roaring Bill, and I'm going to see how you can dance."

Roaring Bill weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, and was built according to his weight.

"Why, Jesse, I can't dance!" he whined.

Bang! The shot from the revolver in Jesse's right hand neatly clipped the straps on the right boot of the dance-hall proprietor.

"Dance!" howled the outlaw.

Swearing like a certain army in Flanders, Roaring Bill awkwardly began to shuffle about on his feet. Jesse James enjoyed the spectacle hugely.

"You dance like a bear!" bawled Jesse. "Hey, Bill! Hit it up!"

Roaring Bill tried to dance a little faster. Bang! went Jesse's revolver. The shot neatly cut the straps on Bill's left boot, and he began to dance with more abandon.

"Whirl around, Bill," cried Jesse. "Give us some fancy steps."

Roaring Bill knew that Jesse was in a humor where he might do anything, so he did "hit it up" and with elephantine grace gamboled around the room.

"Get up on the bar, Bill," commanded Jesse. "Dance up and down the bar, and if you fall off, I'll kill you."

Roaring Bill made heavy weather in getting up on top of the bar, but he did so finally, and capered about, doing his best to satisfy the outlaw and for half an hour the unfortunate dance-hall keeper shuffled about while cut-glass flew in every direction and the bar looked as if a cyclone had struck it.

Jesse urged on Roaring Bill, and every now and then stalked up to the bar and poured himself out a brim-

ming glass of whiskey. In fifteen minutes he had consumed enough liquor to have floored an ordinary man. The fiery stuff, however, did not intoxicate Jesse in the slightest degree. Instead, it appeared to excite all the fierce instincts in the man. His face grew whiter and a deadlier light began to creep into his eyes with each drink.

Still training the revolver in his left hand upon the dance-hall keeper, Jesse turned loose with the weapon in his right hand. A shot crashed into the mirror and ruined it.

Another shot ploughed its way among the bottles and the glasses, and before six shots had been fired, the bar was absolutely wrecked.

Jesse shoved his empty weapon into his right boot and yanked another gun from his hip pocket.

"I came down here to give you a warning, Roaring Bill," Jesse leered, as he walked quietly to the door.

Roaring Bill, still dancing, said nothing.

"If you say again," added Jesse, "if you ever make a single remark about me, I'll come back and fill you so full of bullets that you'll sink in a tumbler of water."

Jesse backed toward the door, and as he did so, he slightly lowered his revolver.

This was Roaring Bill's opportunity. The dance-hall proprietor ran his hand into the breast of his jacket and with a wonderfully quick motion drew a revolver and fired it point blank at Jesse James. Jesse staggered back for the bullet had struck him directly in the waist.

As he fired, Roaring Bill tumbled down behind the bar out of range of Jesse's weapon, because he did not know how badly the outlaw was injured, and did not feel like taking chances of a return shot.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A FIGHT WITH THE OUTLAW.

Jesse James, as he staggered back, felt sure that he was fatally wounded.

He ran his hand down to his waist, expecting to find that his blood was running freely from a gaping wound, but instead, saw that Roaring Bill Bradley's bullet had struck him in the center of the broad leather belt which bore a square gilt buckle. This buckle had reflected the bullet and thus saved Jesse James's life. The outlaw was uninjured!

Although he had shot up Roaring Bill's place and once more had gratified his private revenge, Jesse knew that his position was by no means an enviable one. He had gratified his revenge, but from the sound of the trampling of horses' feet in the street outside the dance house, and from the loud shouts that came to his ears and many revolver shots, Jesse knew that the town had been alarmed and that citizens were arming for the purpose of hurrying to the saloon as rapidly as they could. A bell in the church began ringing rapidly and its brazen note echoed through the place.

Jesse feared that Roaring Bill would shoot again, and he was also afraid that his horse, which he had left outside, would be captured by the citizens, and thus his means of getting out of town would be taken from him. The nerve of the outlaw did not desert him. Crouching down, he tiptoed to the window overlooking the street, and to his delight saw his horse standing motionless, although he looked up and down the street carefully, no sign of the citizens could be seen, although the church bell continued ringing, shots in the distance

could be heard, and Jesse surmised that the inhabitants were meeting at the church, no single man having the hardihood, apparently, to face the outlaw. It was this fear on the part of peaceable people that had so many times worked in favor of the bandit.

Bradley, meanwhile, was carefully keeping his vast bulk behind the bar as well as he could, and yet at the same time, was trying to edge around so that he could get a shot at Jesse. Bradley was a typical gambler and gun-fighter, and he was a remarkably good shot with a six-shooter, but he was not the peerless absolute genius with a revolver which gave Jesse entire superiority over his fellow gun-men. It was the ferocity of disposition and the abnormal desire to kill people that made Jesse James such a deadly power in the land. Ungoverned by law, rejoicing in blood, the mere fact to Jesse James, that a man was lying behind a mahogany counter doing his best to get into a position where he could successfully shoot him, had no terrors.

Jesse was determined, if he possibly could, to "get" Roaring Bill Bradley. Roaring Bill, on the other hand, thirsted for the notoriety of killing Jesse James. There could be but one ultimate result to such a position. One of the men would either have to be killed or so desperately wounded that he could not continue the combat.

Roaring Bill managed to edge his bulk around the edge of the counter and fired a shot at Jesse, who had overturned two or three chairs, making an impromptu bulwark before him. Roaring Bill let fly with his weapon, but the shot only buried itself in the woodwork of one of the chairs. Roaring Bill had the best of the protective measures adopted by each fighter, but Jesse fired at the smoke and flame which issued from his opponent's weapon and was lucky enough to land his bullet in Roaring Bill's left forearm. The impact of the shot caused Bill to drop his revolver, but he quickly grasped the weapon with his right and uninjured hand, and took another quick shot at Jesse. A little puff of dust flew up from Jesse's coat in the upper part of his shoulder but the bullet only plowed a crimson welt, and the two men sank back behind their respective fortresses bleeding somewhat but in no way fatally injured.

Jesse had cleverly planted himself where he could command not only a view of the hiding place of Roaring Bill, but of the street outside, as well, through an open window. Jesse saw a bearded man carrying a rifle slouching across in the shade of some maple trees that line the street, and without question, trying to sneak up and secure the outlaw's horse. It was a long shot and a long chance, but Jesse raised up quickly, sighted through the window glass with lightning rapidity and delivered his fire at the stranger. There was a whirling of arms, and the citizen sank back and settled down on the ground where he lay still. Jesse did not know whether he had killed or merely wounded him, but Roaring Bill, who just then had peeped out, fired once more at Jesse. The bullet sent the outlaw's hat spinning from his head and he fired at the retreating form of the dance-hall keeper, but did not hit him. It was the first time that Jesse James had missed a shot of this character in a long time, and he probably would not have done so, had it not been for the fact that after he had shot the stranger across the street, he had to turn around to get a sight at Roaring Bill.

Both sides now sank back and awaited developments. Roaring Bill dared not issue again from the protection of the counter, and, although once or twice, Jesse fired

at the counter itself in hopes of penetrating it and thus getting to his assailant it was ineffectual. The counter had been made for just such emergencies, of mahogany reinforced with an inner lining of sheet steel, so that Jesse's bullets only buried themselves in the wood, the inner steel sheath acting as a bomb proof fort. For several minutes, absolute silence reigned in the saloon, save for the heavy breathing of the two men. Each gun-fighter was in perfect physical shape, and neither of the men suffered materially from their flesh wound. Jesse was determined to wreak vengeance upon the dance-hall keeper, and the latter was fighting for his life.

Jesse could not understand why the citizens in the town did not begin to appear upon the scene, but he figured in his mind that this was probably due to their being leaderless.

This was, indeed, the cause. It was almost an unbelievable situation that an outlaw could ride into a town and engage in a combat with a saloon and dance-hall keeper which now had lasted almost an hour, without some representative of law and order stopping the fight. The town of Nayo, however, did not possess a police force and the solitary lesson taught the inhabitants of the place by the burning and looting of the bank, the destruction of Mrs. Leonard Filkin's home, the assassination of young Edward Filkins, and the killing of the two other citizens of the place, had driven all the men in the hamlet into a state of nervous fear. They dared not attack Jesse James, although the odds were absolutely in their favor. The only man in the town with bravery enough to attempt any untold act, lay under the maple tree, whether dead or alive after Jesse James had shot him, none of his friends knew.

Jesse determined that he must close the combat quickly, for he did not know exactly what steps the citizens were taking, and so the outlaw moved a little to the right, reached back and grasped his hat which the shot from Roaring Bill's revolver had brushed from his head. Jesse elevated the hat on the point of his weapon and raised it so that its crown and a little of its brim showed over the top of the fortress. Jesse's idea was that when Roaring Bill peeped out and saw the hat, he would imagine that Jesse was peering over the chairs in front of him for the purpose of seeing where his enemy was.

Jesse waited several moments until Roaring Bill peeped from his coin of vantage. Roaring Bill's heart beat high and he stealthily took a shot at the crown of the hat, judging that Jesse's head was inside. The dance-hall keeper sent a bullet directly through the crown of the hat and then scuttled back to his fortress. Jesse James immediately pulled the hat backward and shuffled with his feet and groaned as if in his death agony.

Roaring Bill felt sure that he had killed the notorious outlaw and with a wild shout of triumph rushed from his place of refuge.

This was Jesse James's opportunity.

Jesse fired from behind his shelter between the rounds of one of the chairs, and the outlaw's bullet struck the dance-hall keeper directly in the center of his broad chest.

With a scream that echoed through the room, Roaring Bill collapsed and fell to the floor dying. His revenge having been satiated, Jesse James ran out of the place and vaulted upon his horse. It was a beautiful exhibition, because it is by no means an easy feat to

jump upon the back of a horse from the ground without touching a stirrup, yet Jesse managed to perform this feat at any time, and his horse, trained for just such emergencies, without a preliminary movement, jumped into a gallop and Jesse tore down the street and out into the country and was soon lost to view along the country road.

For the second time in two weeks, Jesse James had shot up the fated town of Nayo, and had added a fourth name to the list of those who had died at the ringing summons of his weapon.

Jesse rode hard, as was his custom, until he was joined by his brother Frank, who after he had seen Cole Younger and delivered their leader's message, had retraced his way toward Nayo. Frank was somewhat worried at not finding Jesse near the place where he had left him, but when he saw his brother coming, assumed his usual air of bravado and with a wave of his hand greeted him.

"Hello, Jesse," said Frank. "Where've you been?"

"I've been settling a private matter with Roaring Bill Bradley."

"Do you think that's a brotherly thing to do?" questioned Frank in a grieved tone. "It seems to me that you ought not to have gone out on a game like that without inviting me along to see the fun. Are you hit?"

The gash in Jesse's shoulder from which the blood had flowed freely, staining his coat, indicated to Frank that his brother was wounded.

"A mere scratch," replied Jesse.

"How about the other fellow?" asked Frank.

"I got Roaring Bill right plumb in the center of his chest. I let him have one of those mushroom bullets and it ended his useful career as a dance-hall keeper in the neatest possible way."

"Good boy, Jesse!" replied Frank. "I'm glad you settled Roaring Bill. He's been too mouthy around here for a good many months. It seemed time that we stopped his yawp. If there's anything I hate, it's to have people talk about me behind my back. But you had better come down in the bottom land over by that creek at our right and let me see how badly you are hurt."

The pain from the flesh wound suffered by the bandit was beginning to be felt, so Jesse accepted Frank's advice and they went to the creek where Frank washed his brother's wounds and bound them up with the rough surgery so well known to the outlaws who were stopped from activity only by a fatal wound.

Frank had slung across his horse when he had left the camp, a substantial cold lunch, and the two outlaws managed to allay the pangs of hunger while they laid deeper plans for their future guidance.

"How are things at the camp?" asked Jesse.

"Pretty fair."

"Is Cole Younger treating the boys right?"

"Yes."

"Boys all satisfied?"

"Seem to be."

"What's the matter? You don't speak very brisk."

"Mushy Cohen seems to think that he's running the whole show. Cole Younger has appointed him second in command of the boys and some of the boys are growling."

"Some of the men we've got now would growl if they were in Paradise. But I don't blame them for

kicking on Mushy Cohen. He hasn't got sand enough to lead a bunch of rabbits in a raid through a lettuce patch."

"Well, he's getting kind of brash. I didn't say very much, because I knew you had a way of settling those little matters. But I guess it's up to you to hurry to the camp and try to quell this new Israelitish Moses who is trying to lead our boys to his kind of Promised Land."

Jesse studied over the words of his brother, but he did not think the revolt of Mushy Cohen was particularly dangerous, although he appreciated the fact that with the unruly elements that made up his band, a mutiny of any kind, no matter how slight, was liable to extend until it became a dangerous proposition to handle. But Jesse had a way of coping with situations of this kind, many of which had arisen in his career, and he dismissed the entire matter from his mind with a mental reservation that when the proper time came he would deal a solitary punishment out upon Mushy.

"Have you heard anything of the soldiers?" asked Jesse.

"Haven't heard a single thing of them."

"No one been spying around the camp?"

"Not that I can find out."

"What do you suppose has become of that Captain Forrest and his adjutant, Lieutenant Friend?"

"I haven't the slightest idea. We have kept close watch about the camp against any possible surprise, but no one has shown up, and things have been as peaceful, so far as attack is concerned, as you could possibly imagine."

"It beats me why we haven't been attacked long since this by the Fifth Cavalry."

"Well, Jesse, that's the other man's game. I suppose that Forrest knows what cards he's holding, and he's going to play the game in his own way."

"I know what cards we're holding, and those don't bother me any. What I would like to do would be to learn what cards the other fellow holds."

"Of course that's a good plan, but it seems to me that the best thing to be done is for us to stand pat. We don't want to draw any more cards, and if Forrest does, let him! He has at best, only three troops of the Fifth Cavalry with him, and I'll agree to hold our camp against the three best regiments the United States Army can turn out."

"The Cavalry haven't any artillery with them, and they can't run their horses up among Split Rock. If they tried to come up afoot, there will be more reversed boots in cavalry saddles than you ever saw in all your life, and the band will be playing dirges and nothing else, for the next six months."

"I know all about that. We won't have to dust out of Split Rock until we get ready, I think. All the same, I wish I knew where Forrest and Friend could be found."

Sometimes the wish of a man is gratified immediately. Jesse, as he spoke, was walking back and forth, and with habitual caution, glancing here and there, for in his mind there always lurked the fear of the assassin.

"What's that?" questioned Jesse, as he pointed toward the highway.

"It looks like a man," answered Frank.

"It is a man."

"Can you tell who it is?"

"Too far off."

"It looks to me, Jesse, as if that was Captain Forrest."

"Is he alone?"

"He certainly is."

"On horseback?"

"Yes."

"How far off is he, should you judge?"

"About a mile."

"Then he will be here in about ten minutes. It doesn't look to me as if he was riding fast."

"No, it does not look as if he was in any hurry."

"I have a plan."

"What is it?"

"Let's go up and capture that fellow."

"I don't know. Pretty dangerous, holding up an army officer."

"I don't care if he's an army. I'm going to hold him up."

Jesse and Frank hid themselves in the woods that skirted the road in its most lonely spot. The country round about was of a rural character, dotted here and there by heavy timber and well watered by numerous streams. Jesse James always took advantage of solitary and wooded spots in which to surprise his enemies, and he and his brother lay close to the roadway awaiting the arrival of Captain Percy Forrest, who was riding toward them, not dreaming of his danger. Captain Forrest was at least ten miles away from Split Rock, on another road, and he had no suspicion that the two outlaws were lying in wait for him. If he had known of his danger, he would not have despatched his friend and companion, Lieutenant Oscar Friend, to a high bit of land at his left, with instructions to search the surrounding country with his field glasses.

## CHAPTER X.

### DOOM OF THE BANDIT BROTHERS.

Captain Percy Forrest rode gaily into the ambush and before he was even aware of the presence of his enemies, the two outlaws Jesse and Frank James, a lasso thrown by Jesse from his place of concealment, plucked the army officer from his seat and pulled him backwards as the fatal rope settled around his arms, while his mettlesome steed vanished down the road.

Captain Forrest was insensible when Frank James, with a loud hurrah, dashed to his side. Captain Forrest recovered his senses, however, in a moment, and sat up feebly, and looked about him with a wondering gaze.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"That's an old gag," sneered Jesse.

Captain Forrest knew instantly that he was the prisoner of Jesse and Frank James, but he only smiled slightly at the answer of one of his captors, and continued looking at Jesse as if the outlaw was a new kind of bug.

"What's your name?" asked Jesse.

"You know it all right," replied the army officer.

"Will you tell me what you're doing here?"

"I did not learn anywhere that you have the right to cross-examine me."

Jesse knew that it would be impossible for him to extract any information from the officer, and as it was now getting to be between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, he laughed fiendishly and ordered Frank to

bring the lariat from the pommel of his saddle, as the one that usually swung at his saddle bow was being used for the purpose of confining the army officer.

"I am going to make short work of you," hissed Jesse.

Frank James threw the noose of the lasso around the officer's neck, hurled the end of the rope over the end of the limb of a tree under which they were standing, and with a long pull, the body of Captain Forrest was whirled from the ground and hung dangling in the air by its neck.

Leaving Captain Forrest to strangle to death for all they cared, as rapidly as he wished or as slowly as he desired, Jesse and Frank James mounted their horses and rode rapidly away.

The life of Captain Forrest hung by a thread.

He, fortunately for him, had been strung up to die by the rope so quickly and so bungingly by the outlaws that a portion of the rope had caught in the collar at his throat and thus saved him from instant strangulation. He could not save himself, because his legs and arms were pinioned.

Enduring horrible agony and slowly beginning to lose consciousness, with a tremendous ringing in his head as the rope pressed upon his windpipe, Captain Forrest, who was perfectly conscious, although rapidly fading into the border line of oblivion, felt in his heart that his last moment had come.

Then he felt himself raised by his legs, a knife was inserted between his neck and the rope. The rope parted and a rush of air came to the laboring lungs of Forrest, and he sank, as it seemed to him, from a tremendous height down into a deep valley with the terrible sensation that comes when one sinks beneath angry waves in a tempest at sea.

The next sensible moment that came to Forrest was when he opened his eyes and saw leaning over him the horrified countenance of Lieutenant Friend. Forrest smiled feebly and tried to sit up. His head swam so that he could hardly see. But after a few moments his vigorous frame threw off the effects of his terrible peril, and finally he was enabled to gasp feebly his thanks to his companion for his opportune arrival.

"Don't mention it," said Friend with a feeble attempt at a joke. "It seems to me that you would do as much for me if our positions had been reversed. But I hope I shall never dangle at a rope's end the way you have been doing. How did it happen?"

"I don't know," replied Forrest. "I was riding along looking back for you, when the James boys chucked a lasso at me and pulled me out of my saddle. Then they asked me a few questions, threw a rope around my neck and strung me up to the tree. Oscar, if you hadn't happened along, I'd have been a dead man in a moment more."

"I was riding after you," replied Friend, "and not seeing you anywhere, concluded that you were further ahead, and when I came across your riderless horse galloping down the road, I knew that some disaster had come upon you. I put spurs to my horse and at length happened to spy you hanging to this tree. Say, old man, I nearly threw a fit! I thought you were dead! So I jumped off my horse and rushed to your assistance, cut that infernal lariat with my hunting knife, and luckily, after pouring about seventeen quarts of whiskey, more or less, down your throat, brought you back to life."

"I was pretty near over into the other world," said

Forrest. "I don't remember much after the outlaws strung me up, except at first there was a terrible feeling of choking. Then azure, purple, violet and reddish lights began to flash before my eyes, and there was a distinct and terrible roaring in my head. I began to have a feeling of intense lightness, as if I were soaring away somewhere, where I did not know. Then I heard the sound as if many bells were tolling, and then there came absolute oblivion. I remember no more until I came back to consciousness with a shock and found you bending over me."

"If that's the way it feels to be hanged, not any for mine, thank you!"

"It seems to me," said Forrest, "that I've got to take this impromptu execution of me out of Jesse James in some way or other. I've been working along here on this matter doing my duty in the past, but I'm out now for Jesse James's scalp. I don't propose to let any outlaw on earth hang me up by the neck without getting back at him."

"Look here, Forrest. What would you do with Jesse James if you had him here?"

"Hang him!"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

"Precisely!"

The officers decided that even if Jesse James and Frank James had personally wreaked their vengeance on Forrest, that it was not time to call out the troops and try to capture Jesse in the Split Rock camp.

"You see, Oscar," said Forrest, "I can hardly call out our men to attack the Split Rock camp, because entrenched as those scoundrels are, we could gain a victory only after a bloody battle. I believe that I could force my way into the haunts of those outlaws, but when I got in there, I would only find myself in possession of a barren victory. Jesse James's tactics are to fight in force only when he has the best of it and in an entrenched position. For me to sacrifice a lot of men to gain an empty camp from which the outlaws have scattered like a flock of frightened pigeons, would only end in my court-martial."

"I'm afraid you're right, Forrest. The outlaws have so entrenched themselves that it would be almost impossible for them to be driven out of those rocks. It might be done if we had artillery, but we haven't got a gun. Charging up against a lot of rocks behind which lay a band of desperadoes would surely end in our losing a great many men."

"I see how you feel about sacrificing your men, and the many 'ifs and ands' that would be asked, after the engagement by fussy old gentlemen in Washington after we get through."

"I think you're right on the fussy old gentlemen part of it, but I wasn't thinking of them. What I was thinking of was my own reputation as an officer. To fruitlessly throw away the lives of my command and at the end of it to find that I had allowed the outlaws to escape, would end my usefulness as an army man, and I think I may be able to get at Jesse in another way."

"Yes, it's a good deal like attacking a man in a bomb proof house with a front and a rear entrance. He shoots at you a long time from the front, and when you break in the front door, he emerges from the rear door and makes his escape."

"That's just the position that Jesse James is in. I think the best thing for us to do is to stay right on the job as we've been doing, until we get more light. When we have secured it, it will be time enough for us to call

out our command and rip particular Hades out of the Jesse James band. I don't think it would do us a particle of good to return to that outlaw camp at present, and before going any further I think I will pass this whole matter up to my commanding officer, Major General Williamson, and take his ruling in the matter."

While the two officers proceeded back to the village of Nayo, Jesse James, and his companion Frank, who firmly believed that they had murdered their enemy, Captain Forrest, wended their way swiftly back to Split Rock Camp. Cole Younger met them as soon as they had passed the sentries with consternation written upon his face, and told them that Mushy Cohen and another outlaw known as Little Willy McKinney had induced a half dozen members of the band of outlaws, to join them in a mutiny. Jesse hurled a volley of curses at Cole Younger.

"What kind of a ——— commander are you anyway, Cole?" shrieked Jesse. "How the ——— did you ever allow such a cheap, four-flusher as Mushy Cohen to get away with it?"

"Nonsense!" rejoined Cole Younger, cursing Jesse quite as heartily as Jesse had sworn at him, "How the ——— could I help it? I didn't know that Mushy had a look-in with the boys, although I knew that he was a trouble-maker, until the confounded idiot gathered his gang around him and quit the camp."

"Where are they?" howled Jesse.

"They have made a camp in the rear of ours, back there among the rocks."

Jesse's eyes began to gleam and his face was distorted with rage. He drew his revolver from his holster and walked back toward the insurgent camp.

"Where are you going, Jesse?" cried Frank in amazement.

"I am going back to have an interview with Mushy Cohen," bawled Jesse.

Even Frank, who knew Jesse's desperate moods, was appalled at the temerity of the outlaw. Frank knew that it would do no good to attempt to stop the tempest, and he contented himself with trailing after his brother, while still further in the rear came Cole Younger, who had no stomach for getting shot by the outposts of the mutineers, and concluded that the better part of valor was to keep under cover.

Jesse, with his eyes like coals of fire, his teeth clenched and clutching his revolver, reached the insurgents' camp before he was discovered. The mutinous portion of Jesse's band stood around a party of four men, who were gambling at poker dice, and they did not see Jesse approaching.

When they saw Jesse stalk into their midst, his revolver in his hand, the statue of incarnate rage, not a man made a motion to get his gun. Jesse pushed the outlaw back until he reached Mushy Cohen. Mushy's face was the color of white paper, and his teeth chattered in his fear. He made no effort to defend himself. Jesse motioned to him to approach.

"Get in front of me," yelled Jesse.

Little Willy McKinney, who assisted Mushy Cohen in his plans to excite a portion of the outlaw camp to mutiny, tried to shield himself behind some of the outlaws, but Jesse pointed his revolver at him and lined him up beside Mushy.

"Now, you fellows march back to my camp," shouted Jesse, mad with anger.

Like two lambs being led to the slaughter, Mushy

Cohen and Little Willy McKinney marched along and the mutiny melted away like the snow beneath a summer sun. One by one the mutineers stole back into the camp of the outlaws, and, like the French revolution, when it was blown into mist with the rattle of Napoleon's guns in the streets of Paris, the only mutiny ever started against Jesse James by any of his men, had ended.

With his face set and stern, Jesse drove the two ring leaders of the mutineers before him until he had reached a clear spot.

There was no protest from any of the outlaws, but they watched with eager eyes to see what fate was in store for Mushy Cohen and Little Willy McKinney.

"Get me two horses, Frank," Jesse said in his low even tones.

Frank looked at his brother, but when Jesse spoke that way, knew better than to disobey in the slightest particular. Frank started after the horses.

"Get two bucking bronchos," called Jesse after his brother.

Assisted by Cole Younger, Frank soon returned with the animals.

The two men had blindfolded the horses, but their wildness was displayed in every motion as they snorted in terror and plunged and reared. Other outlaws rushed to assist Cole Younger and Frank James, and after a battle of several moments, the horses were further blindfolded, hobbles were placed upon their legs and they were reduced to a state of subjection.

"Tie those curs on the backs of those horses, one on each horse," smoothly said Jesse.

The howling mutineers in a second were trussed upon the backs of the trembling horses.

"Head those horses towards that cliff!" cried Jesse.

Mushy Cohen shrieked in deadly fear.

"Mercy! Mercy!" he howled.

Little Willy McKinney tried to join in a request for mercy also, but his voice made no sound, and with tears streaming down his face, he was bound upon the back of the second horse.

"Stand clear, everybody!" yelled Jesse.

Not a hundred paces in front of the frightened horses, blindfolded as they were, yawned the horrible abyss over which Jesse James had dashed in his effort to save his life from Captain Forrest.

Jesse raised his hand, and as Frank pulled the bridles off each of the untrained horses, Jesse struck the brutes upon their flanks with the butt of his revolver.

Snorting in agony, the horses bounded toward the cliff. Blindfolded as they were, and bearing their human freight, they launched themselves into the depths which lay hundreds of feet beneath them.

There was a scream of terror and fear from each of the outlaws, a murmur of dread from the watchers, a moment of intense silence, and then a grinding crash which echoed from the bottom of the abyss.

"The doom of the dreaded outlaws; death!" cried Jesse. "The next man in my band who dares raise his finger against my authority or even thinks of such action, will meet that fate!"

In the midst of a terrible silence, broken only by the startled cries of the birds within the canyon who flew about the maimed and crushed shapes of what had been Mushy Cohen and Little Willy McKinney, Jesse James walked slowly, with folded arms, into the cabin in which he held his headquarters.

## CHAPTER XI.

JESSE TURNS SCOUT.

On the following morning, Jesse James having asserted his authority once and for all among the evil and turbulent characters that made up his band, issued an early hour from the cabin in which he made his headquarters in the midst of the outlaw camp, and astonished his brother Frank by appearing with a neat black suit of clothes, a pair of varnished boots, a high crowned white felt hat, what was known as a "boiled shirt," and a black tie.

"What's the game, Jesse?" asked Frank. "You look like a Tennessee planter."

"I am one," replied Jesse. "How do you like my make-up?"

"It's great, but what have you rigged up that way for?"

"Oh, I'm going back to Nayo again. I'm not half through with that town."

"Thunder, Jesse! When you get your fighting mood on, you never can have enough. Why don't you keep out of that town? Haven't you trimmed it enough?"

"I'm not going out to trim it. I put my mark on that town and vicinity, and it won't forget Jesse James for many a day."

"Then why are you going back there, Jesse?"

"I've got to find out what that fellow Lieutenant Friend is doing, now that we've hanged the chap that was supposed to be leading the soldiers. If the soldiers follow where he has gone to, they will follow Captain Forrest to a pretty hot place."

"Anyway, Jesse, you sent Forrest ahead to have everybody's rooms ready."

"There was more satisfaction to me in hanging that army officer, than anything I've done in a year."

"There's one thing to look out for, Jesse. Don't let those fellows get onto you, whatever you do. I shudder to think what would be your fate if you were captured in the town of Nayo."

"Don't you be a bit afraid of my being caught. I am somewhat over seven years of age, and I've defended myself so long that I think my defensive faculties have developed into a habit. I wish, Frank, you would get me a gray horse. Pick out one of those horses we stole down in Tennessee a couple of years ago, and see if you can't rake up a saddle that looks like the style a well-to-do planter would use."

"What are you going to do in Nayo? What's the lay? What character are you supposed to take in this little pantomime you are arranging?"

"I am going to be a Tennessee planter up in Missouri on a cattle buying expedition."

Shortly Jesse had rigged himself up in a true Tennessee style and, as he ambled off on a gray horse, he looked the counterpart of a successful and opulent Southern planter.

Jesse proceeded at a slow pace and finally, about two o'clock in the afternoon, reached the village of Nayo. He found the town in a ferment. Armed men were patrolling the streets. At first, Jesse was held up by a sentry, but when he explained in a Tennessee drawl who he was, he was allowed to enter the town. Knots of excited citizens stood about, every man appearing to be bristling with guns.

"In spite of all these walking arsenals," murmured Jesse to himself, "I verily believe that if I should let out

a whoop, fire two shots, and declare myself, every man in this place would climb the nearest tree."

Jesse paid no attention, however, to any one around him, but ambled along on his gray palfrey until he reached the dance-hall in the center of which, in his coffin, lay Roaring Bill Bradley whom the outlaw had killed. Jesse dismounted from his horse and joined the throng in the dance-house. The bar, he found, was doing a flourishing business. Between lamentations for the corpse and threats of vengeance on Jesse James, the crowd gravitated to the bar and the dance-hall never took in so much money in its career as it did when its dead proprietor added to the attractions of the place, by figuring in silent, death-like majesty in his coffin.

Jesse went to the bar and bought a drink, his eyes twinkling with merriment as he looked around the room and saw the havoc his visit had created.

Jesse, all during the late afternoon and early evening, circulated throughout the turbulent town. No one paid attention to the quiet, stalwart but evidently timid stranger, who gasped when Jesse James's name was mentioned, as if in fear, but who often invited all hands to have a drink. Jesse thus ingratiated himself among the residents of the town, and soon bit by bit he had extracted a great deal of valuable information.

He had learned that Captain Forrest had not been hanged as he supposed, but had been rescued by Lieutenant Friend. He learned also that Captain Forrest and Lieutenant Friend were already in the town and were stopping at the only hotel in the place.

Jesse wondered how Forrest could be about in a half-hanged condition, but the information that the two officers were in the town was sufficient to make Jesse know that for the present he stood in no danger of a secret attack on the part of the Fifth Cavalry. Jesse was shrewd and he figured immediately along the same lines that had caused Captain Forrest to decide not to attack the outlaw camp, and came to the conclusion that the reason why the camp was not raided was because of the generalship on the part of Jesse in selecting a vantage ground at Split Rock, from which he could not be easily dislodged.

Jesse was curious and had hoped that he could meet Captain Forrest and Lieutenant Friend, but as the night waxed and waned, and no sight of the enemy was vouchsafed to him, Jesse drifted into the gambling room above the saloon where he engaged in a game of poker with three strangers.

Jesse sat at the round, green baize covered table with the usual little slot in the center for the "kitty," but managed to place himself so he was near a window and could look out into the street up and down which people were passing to and fro, or standing in groups, as they talked over the last fatal visit of the dreadful bandit. Jesse's plan was to place himself near the window so that in case of surprise, he could jump into the street and disappear in the crowd. The outlaw measured the distance from the room in which he had seated himself to the street below, and saw that it was a not impossible jump. Jesse's plan quickly made in his mind was that in case he was discovered, he would jump out of the window, run for his horse which was in a stable down the street, mount the animal, and rush away. While to mystified outsiders, Jesse James seemed to be always taking the most desperate chances, when analysis was made of all his acts, they were discovered to have been the result of complete careful preparation. The outlaw never fought a bat-

tle without having the best of it; never engaged in a gun fight without having the odds in his favor, and never went out on one of his secret and spying expeditions without leaving himself a way out. It was this method of calculation that marked Jesse as a remarkable outlaw.

In this particular case, therefore, he had his opportunity for escape of surprise laid out before him, and at any moment had a man who knew him entered the little poker room, Jesse would have been enabled to effect his escape, unless the person who attacked him had been a gun-man like himself and had shot first and explained afterward.

The little party of poker players dealt and shuffled the cards with varying degree of fortune. Jesse James managing by tricks "that are vain" to occasionally shove an ace or a court card into his hand when his hand needed strengthening, and thus managed to fleece his competitors out of many a stalwart Jack-pot.

Jesse's hand did not tremble in the slightest as he dealt the cards, and he was calm and bland as he played cards close up to his chest in true Tennessee fashion, and skimmed over each hand with agile eye and made his bets as if his entire plan of campaign had been merged in a gambler's greed.

But the furtive eye, sharp as a needle, always darted hither and thither, as he watched every second for a possible surprise, his chief anxiety being to hear something definite about Captain Forrest and Lieutenant Friend. People drifted into the room, watched the hot little game of poker going on, smiled as Jesse raked the coin, every now and then, toward himself. Occasionally some of the onlookers dropped a word or two, and from the isolated bits of conversation that reached the outlaw's ears, he learned that Forrest and Friend had left the village mounted on their horses, and while Jesse could not learn the exact route they had taken, he made up his mind that the officers were going back upon some reconnoitering expedition toward the outlaw camp.

In the center of the room hung a large kerosene lamp, its dismal rays throwing lights and shadows down upon the poker table. This was the only light in the room. The crowds in the street began to thin out, and still the poker game continued. Jesse had made up his mind that it would be well for him to draw out of the poker game, when to his intense surprise a shadow fell upon him, and looking behind him quickly, Jesse saw standing directly at his chair the figure of Captain Forrest. It was a dramatic moment.

The splendid nerve of the outlaw was never better shown than at this time. Jesse was dealing the cards when he recognized Forrest. He made no gesture of surprise but calmly dealt five cards one at a time to each man in the party, including himself, and then hitched forward in his chair, and turned the chair a little toward the army officer, thus throwing forward the pocket of his coat on the right side in which his gun nestled. Jesse also pulled his hat a little further down over his eyebrows so as to shield his face, and when one of his opponents threw a red check into the center of the table, Jesse quietly called the bet and pushed forward a stack of blues, representing a couple of hundred dollars, as if the poker game was the most important thing in the world.

An observant man, when he meets another man, remembers not so much as to a stranger's face, but centers his recognition upon little tricks and mannerisms. Forrest looked sharply at Jesse, for there was



something familiar about the turn of the outlaw's shoulder, and in the tones of his voice, but he made up his mind that he did not know Jesse, although for some reason or other, his inner consciousness told him that there was something about the quiet Tennessee cattle buyer, that demanded recognition. Jesse, however, took care to change the pitch of his voice, as he spoke, and the feeling that he knew this stranger, passed quickly from Forrest's mind.

Jesse had no desire to get into a fight with Forrest under the conditions existing in the town of Nayo. The outlaw had made up his mind to get away as soon as he could, and he was searching for some valid excuse which would allow him to make his escape, when Forrest walked up to Jesse and placed his hand on his shoulder.

Jesse raised his head in a quiet and natural manner, but he slipped his hand quietly down into his pocket and touched his revolver, making up his mind that if any action on the part of Forrest would lead him to believe that he was discovered, he would not draw his weapon, but would fire through the pocket of his coat, hoping thus to kill the officer.

Jesse awaited the next move of his antagonist, but Forrest did not recognize him, the outlaw saw a moment later. His action in placing his hand on Jesse's shoulder was merely due to a desire on his part to see what cards the stranger had discarded.

Like many army officers, Forrest was very much interested in the game of poker, about the only amusement that officers have among themselves when stationed at lonely posts. Jesse carefully turned over his cards and let Forrest see what he had discarded, and how his hand had been strengthened by his draw.

All would have gone well, had it not been for the arrival of Mrs. Leonard Filkins, whose only son Edward, Jesse had killed in the first raid upon the town. She had desired to see Captain Forrest, and learning that he was in the poker room, had hurried thither, and as she entered the doorway, with one glance at Jesse, recognized him. With a shriek of dismay the widow started back, and Jesse knew that he was discovered. The splendid nerve of the outlaw did not desert him. He arose from the table as if steel springs were coiled in his legs, tipped the table over on top of the players, with the same motion hurled a chair crashing upon the form of Captain Forrest, and then with the revolver he had drawn from his pocket, fired one shot at the lamp swinging above the table, and with a crash, the room was in complete darkness.

Jesse made a flying leap through the window, ran forty or fifty feet, darted across a vacant lot, doubled into the stable where his still bridled and saddled horse stood awaiting him, led the gallant beast out into the open, scrambled up into the saddle and with hurrying

hoofs disappeared into the darkness and gloom of the night.

"It was Jesse James!" shrieked Mrs. Filkins. "Why didn't you get him, Captain Forrest?"

Captain Forrest was not particularly injured, except in spirit, by the chair which had been flung at him, nor for that matter, were the other poker players, who scrambled out from under the upturned table. But in the confusion, by the time a light had been brought, the outlaw was so far away that Forrest knew how impossible it was for a successful pursuit. Forrest cursed himself for an addle-pated fool for letting such a chance to capture the outlaw go by, but he could not help admiring the dashing enterprise with which Jesse carried on and terminated his scouting expedition.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A COUNSEL OF WAR.

Baffled once more in his desire to gain information of the James gang and seeing clearly that he was overmatched in craft, Captain Percy Forrest was unable to decide upon any future campaign.

His anger was excessive when he thought of how he had been tricked. As for Lieutenant Friend, he was almost speechless and sat in a blue rage fuming at the hard luck with which he and his companion had met in their scouting campaign.

"Say Forrest," said Friend, "we might as well be monkeys on a painted stick, so far as any success is concerned in our scouting expeditions."

"I certainly have been made a monkey of," remarked Forrest in a dejected tone.

"There is one dear little gleam of light," laughed Friend. "We are no greater monkeys on a stick than other men who have been chasing Jesse since '61."

"That is the trouble. Jesse is a young man yet, but he's old in crime and he has been practicing his profession for many years. I am beginning to think that the only step we have left for us to take is to return to Independence and bring our boys back with us and attack Jesse in his stronghold. I do not feel that our starting expedition has been a positive failure. We know that the Jesse James and the Cole Younger bands are now together, and we feel that we have at least ascertained the strength and the position of the enemy, which is important to us, and it may be that we can accomplish more results now by a direct charge upon the outlaws and can exterminate them in a pitch battle."

"It will be a merry battle, will it not?" replied Friend. "The outlaws in their strongly entrenched position will put up quite a fight!"

"This is what I fear the most. I don't object to taking all kinds of chances with Jesse, but I had hoped to keep it upon a personal basis."

"Possibly I had better make a full report of what I've done to our commanding officer, General Williamson, and get his ruling upon the matter."

Having arrived at this determination, Forrest and Friend mounted their horses and returned to their headquarters in Independence, Missouri. The remainder of that day and part of the next was passed by Forrest in making out his report. In it he confessed the partial failure of his plans to gain a victory through the scouting method, but he pointed out that the trip had been valuable because it had given him personal knowledge of the entrenchments surrounding the outlaws, and also as to their strength. The inaction necessary before a reply could come from General Williamson grated harshly upon Forrest. He knew that every moment that passed gave Jesse greater time in which to prepare for an attack which Forrest knew the outlaw feared would be the ultimate intention on the part of the soldiers. But Forrest knew that it would be impossible for him to avoid the issue of an attack, and believed that when he received a reply from General Williamson, a general advance would be ordered.

General Williamson himself was somewhat startled at the magnitude of the outlaw raid. In common with everybody in Missouri he had underrated the situation. To be told that two bands of desperate criminals had firmly entrenched themselves and were prepared to resist the authority of the United States army, gravelled the veteran commander of the Department of the Missouri, and he ordered that Captain Forrest avail himself of every man possible in his command and to immediately proceed to take the field actively against the outlaws.

"That is all right as far as it goes," remarked Forrest, "but I do not glean from the General's instructions how I am going to run out the outlaws as he has so calmly directed me to do. I am in the position of the man who grabbed the bear by the tail. He had to have assistance to aid him in letting go."

"If I were in your place," said Friend, "I would leave ten or fifteen men here in camp as a guard, and I would at once start upon a campaign that would end in crushing the outlaw forces, and if I were in your place, I would make it the duty of my life to get hold of the two James boys and I would hang them with the same degree of promptitude that they hanged you, only I would make the result more certain."

Forrest pointed out that it was somewhat against the rules obtaining in the United States army to hang a foe after his capture unless a state of organized warfare existed and a captured enemy could be clearly proven to be a spy. While Jesse had turned himself into a spy, he had not entered the ranks of the army, and had contented himself with spying upon civilians, hence the plan of hanging him would hardly do.

"If some of my troopers should happen to kill Jesse

James and his brother during the engagement that is to come, I haven't the slightest doubt but that I would sing 'Hail, Columbia!'"

Some time was spent in getting the men that Forrest designed to take with him, ready for the projected attack. Ammunition was issued to each trooper, the best horses in the command were selected, and Forrest himself examined the accoutrements of each man, thus knowing from personal observation that everything was in readiness for the fight.

In the early hours of the morning following, the troopers, headed by Forrest, with Lieutenant Friend riding at his right, started away upon their dangerous campaign. Forrest knew that his mission was a final one, and that if the outlaws escaped him, they would again break into little bands of two or three men and would fly away over the country like scattered sheep, to meet at some far away spot and that the warfare against them would be prolonged and would take on many of the attributes of the campaign against blood-thirsty Indians in the far West.

As the troop progressed rapidly through the country, Forrest sent three of his most trusted men forward at their best speed for the purpose of acting as scouts, while he detailed six men to act as a rear-guard and to follow the main body of troopers at a distance of about half a mile. This plan was designed to obviate any danger of a surprise, and as the party proceeded up hill and down dale, everybody kept a sharp watch for a possible ambush.

As Forrest proceeded along with his troops, from time to time excited citizens stopped him with new tales of the vindictive depredations of the outlaws. All sorts of stories reached Forrest's ears. Each story bore the earmarks of the imagination of the panic stricken residents of the scattered farm-houses situated along the lines of the march.

Time was lost by Forrest, because in some cases he was told that on various side roads, outlaws had been seen riding along, and so frequent excursions had to be made to ascertain the truth of these stories. In every case they were found to be due to the common rumor that is responsible for so much that is false issuing from the scene of great events.

"We have got to chase all these moon-beams," Forrest explained to Friend, "but I know that all of them, without question, are as flimsy as ghost stories."

"I see that," replied Frank. "If we were told that the outlaws were burning a farmer's house and barn two miles from where we are, and we didn't ride over to investigate, we would be sharply censured in case the outlaws really were engaged in such an active incendiarism. On the other hand, if we were lucky enough to come up with outlaws so engaged, it would be a great thing for us. With the cattle we have under our good boys, an outlaw would have to ride some to get away

from us, and in this open country, we would have no entrenchments to face and we would toast those outlaws on both sides."

"The outlaw leader is too shrewd to allow himself to be tricked into making a raid just now when conclusions are so marked between us. I firmly believe that Jesse has made up his mind to remain in his camp at Split Rock and then in case we attack, escape by some secret way of which we know nothing."

"We know that he can't get down the fissure in that vast rock that makes up the rear of his camp."

"We know he couldn't get down it the other day when he took a chance and made his desperate run across that frail sapling to safety. But when Jesse escaped, it must have come to his alert mind that he could hold his position for a long time against troopers in his front, but that in case our boys rushed his position, that he would have to devastate the forest about him to get enough saplings on which to cross the chasm."

"You think then——"

"That Jesse has fixed up some method of escaping down those rocks?"

"Exactly."

"What strategy have you decided upon to meet such a condition?"

"When we get to Split Rock, I am going to take fifty men and have them steal up under cover and open fire on the outlaws."

"A lot of good that will do you! To hit any outlaw, our bullets would have to penetrate through about eight or ten feet of solid rock."

"I don't expect to hit anybody. All I want to do is to make a tremendous noise, which will have all the appearance of an attacking force. I am going to leave trooper Cassidy in charge of the attacking party along in the front of our advance, and I'm going to see that he is strong enough to check any attempt on the part of the outlaws at rushing through our front."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"You and I and the bulk of our command will deploy along the lines of those rocks."

"I am in hopes that the attack in front will make the outlaws decide to evacuate their position and try to make their escape through the rear down the rocks. If they do that, the things that I am going to do to that outlaw band you can readily imagine."

"That's a great game."

Halting until the shades of night had fallen, for Forrest designed a night attack, the command enjoyed a rest at a spot about three miles from Split Rock. Horses and men were fed, and at last under a cloudy, drifting sky, with no moon, Forrest reached the immediate vicinity of Split Rock.

With caution he placed the outpost in concealment.

Then, by making a half circle through the country, he hid the remainder of his command in the underbrush which skirted the gigantic rocks towering above his head, and which thus put him in the position he had designed to occupy in the battle now ready to begin.

By an arrangement between the two forces under his command, Forrest had named ten o'clock as the hour for which the attack must commence. So the soldiers lay on their arms, their horses hidden out of the line of fire, with five guarding men, each horse having been muffled so that he would not betray their presence to the attacking forces by an unfortunate whinney, and feeling that he had done all in his power to win a victory, Forrest sat down on a log and awaited the hour when the first shot would ring out, announcing that the engagement had begun.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### JESSE JAMES AT BAY.

If there had been careful preparation for the projected attack on the part of the soldiers, equally as careful work was going on in the outlaw camp. The outlaw leader worked like a beaver in getting himself in readiness to repel the troopers of the Fifth Cavalry.

By a singular coincidence, the minds of Forrest and Jesse had run along the same channel. The outlaw chief had done exactly as Forrest thought he would do. He had planned a running fight as soon as he was attacked, and then designed to escape through the rocks, scatter his band in the usual mode he adopted in such exigencies, and then away to meet at some distant point.

A dozen members of the outlaw camp during the daytime, had been sent to find some place in the rocks down which they all might escape. About a hundred and fifty feet from the place where Jesse had made his daring escape from Forrest, the rocks dipped into a sort of gully and by use of pick-axes and shovels which the outlaws stole from a nearby farm-house, rough steps were hewn and it was down this passageway that Jesse designed to flee. The outlaw did not dream that Forrest would attempt to place a force to meet his band when it came down these improvised steps. All of the horses of the outlaws, hobbled and blindfolded and muffled, had been secreted in a point of woods near the place where the steps ended, and Jesse had planned to get to his horses immediately and ride away as soon as the engagement in front had assumed serious proportions.

"My idea," Jesse said to Frank, "is to shoot up as many of the soldiers of the Fifth Cavalry as I can. I would have been out of here so that you could not see me for the dust many hours ago, if it had not been for the boys who have not yet come into camp. I cannot

leave my friends to come back here at my orders to find me missing, for that would mean their utter extermination or capture. I regret the position I am in, but if I don't stand by our boys, our boys would not stand by me, and I've got to remain here and take my medicine."

"It is certainly hard work," groaned Frank, "that we have to risk being cut to pieces this way. Have you called the roll to find how many of our men are missing?"

"Yes, I find that ten are still outlying somewhere. There would be a chance of their not having received word to rendezvous here, but I can't afford to take that chance. I've got to stay here and fight it out to the last gasp. If I am driven out and have to flee, no one of our boys can blame me if they get back here late, to find my camp occupied by soldiers. If, however, I do not go until I am driven out, no matter how many men I may lose in my effort to stay here and help my companions, I cannot be blamed by any one."

"You're getting mighty careful of what the boys will say about you, aren't you?"

"Not a bit of it! So far as I am concerned, I don't really care anything about the boys, but Frank, you see we've got to have help every now and then to carry on our raids. No gun-man will stick by us if he thinks that we will sacrifice him without a strong play to save him. Our scope would narrow down to just you and me. So I'm going to make a grand stand play, probably lose a lot of men, and risk the chance of getting killed or captured myself, so that hereafter every one who comes to join our band will feel that I am square and will go the limit for him or any other of my boys."

This diplomatic remark which showed the character of Jesse James better than anything he had said in some time, was received by Frank with a smile.

"Oh, very well," said Frank. "If you're anxious to put yourself on record as a protector of 'vagrant outlaws,' as the newspapers are calling us, I suppose we will have to stand the racket."

The outlaw leader then took as much pains at a general examination of the conditions in his own camp, so far as men and arms were concerned, as had Captain Forrest with his soldiers.

Jesse suspected that if any attack was coming, it would be started at nightfall, so he ordered that all lights be extinguished early in the evening, after rations had been issued to his men, and he finally felt that everything possible had been done to prepare for the fray.

Cole Younger had looked out after his portion of Jesse's forces.

While the two outlaw bands commanded by these redoubtable desperadoes had been joined together with Jesse in supreme command, Cole Younger still acted as the actual leader of his own men.

"See here, Cole," said Jesse, "I want to have a little talk with you."

"All right," replied Cole, "talk away."

"We are going to be attacked to-night by that—Forrest, I feel pretty sure."

"All right," replied Cole. "My boys are spoiling for a fight."

Jesse explained his plans and Cole heartily acquiesced. He said that he could find no fault in them.

"All right," rejoined Jesse. "Now I want you to circulate among the boys and tell them that when we escape down the rocks, it will be a case of every man for himself. We must all spread out until we get into the open country, and then in knots of two or three, we must all ride about fifty miles away from here to a place known as Hell's Kitchen, where we will camp down again."

"Hell's Kitchen is about sixty miles due south, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is a rocky point along the Missouri River, far removed from any village, the place getting its name from a whirl-pool formed by rocks in the river."

"Don't you think the soldiers will take us there?"

"Not in a month of Sundays. My opinion is that the soldiers will chase us after they drive us out of our camp here. We will rustle around considerable, and we will run off the legs of the soldiers' horses. As we are all going to scatter by the time the soldiers have chased our little bands about, they will be so weary that they will slowly begin to tail off."

"We're liable to lose a lot of men, aren't we?"

"Just as few as I possibly can!"

Jesse went into the reason for his remaining in his camp at length with Cole Younger, placing himself in the guise of a hero who would not desert his friends, no matter what cost it might be to himself. Cole Younger's eyes were filled with admiration, and Jesse winked at Frank, when he saw how easily he had impressed Cole with the idea that he was a leader who stood by all of his men.

"Now, boys, we'll turn in," said Jesse. "——What's that?"

"It's a shot!" cried Frank.

The reverberations of a revolver shot came to the ears of the three outlaws directly in the front of their position.

It was ten o'clock at night, and sharp upon the hour the first gun sounded as had been directed by Captain Forrest.

Other shots followed the first one, and soon a steady roar of exploding weapons told Jesse James that the dance of death had begun.

Jesse showed extremely good judgment and great capabilities as a military leader from the moment that

the first shot sounded. He was here, there, everywhere. He skillfully deployed his forces so that each man lay behind the protection of a rock, and as the soldiers pumped lead at the outlaw camp and Jesse's men returned their fire with hot briskness, smoke soon began to ascend over the scene, and although no one was hurt in the first ten minutes of the engagement, nearly as much noise was made as surrounds a battle in which the list of the dead and wounded is appalling.

"What chumps those fellows are!" bawled Cole Younger to Jesse. "They have been shooting at us long enough to have wiped us all out, and not a man has been hurt."

"It looks to me as if the firing by the enemy was due to a desire to allow a charging party to advance under cover," summed up Jesse.

"No, I don't think so," remarked Frank. "This looks to me like a general engagement on the part of the troops, and is about what a lot of men not used to our style of warfare would engage in."

The firing on the part of the soldiers began to slacken, and Jesse peered out from behind a rock to see if he could ascertain the enemy's position.

"They are lying in the woods," Jesse remarked, "well under cover."

Captain Forrest stole back to the front of his firing line, and after a conversation with trooper Cassidy, and as the result of ten minutes' conversation, ten men were deployed, and they stole forward to attack the outlaw camp. Every man in the attacking party was a trained Indian fighter, and although the outlaws saw them coming, and fired at them frequently, only one soldier was hit, and slightly wounded, as the party advanced up the rise of ground which led to the camp of the bandits.

In a moment the thin line of brave men had engaged directly in a hand to hand fight with the outlaw outposts.

Forrest arose to the occasion.

"Charge!" he roared.

The bugler standing by his side, sounded the brazen notes indicating to the outlaws that the soldiers were charging in force, and as Forrest swept up the hill, a martial figure in his kahaki uniform, he saw coming behind him all of the troopers he had posted in front of the outlaw camp.

"Come fast, boys!" yelled Forrest. "Hold your fire until you get up here."

The celebrated yell of the Fifth Cavalry when going into action, sounded on the air as the brave troopers ran forward.

A burly outlaw took a flying shot at Forrest, but missed him. Forrest let drive, and the outlaw staggered back against a rock, turned slowly to the left, and fell, lying still upon his face.

In a moment, there was a hand to hand conflict. Jesse

James fought hard, and several troopers bit the dust, but the undisciplined forces in the outlaw camp in reality stood no show before the trained fighting men of the Fifth Cavalry. There were a few moments of hard fighting, and then the outlaws broke and fled down the stairway in a disorderly mass. At the bottom of the rock hewn steps with a wild shriek, Lieutenant Friend, with his men around him, rushed from his concealment and dashed down upon the outlaws.

"Hemmed in!" cried Jesse.

"Try to break through them!" bawled Cole Younger.

"It's our only hope!" replied Frank James.

The scene was a dreadful one. Men engaged hand to hand as if forgetting that there were other fighters around them. The air was blue with smoke and through it could be seen the sharp flashes from the ringing revolvers while the howls of the outlaws and the deep yells of the fighting Fifth Cavalry made the scene one of pandemonium.

Many troopers were badly wounded or killed, but the slaughter of the almost unprotected outlaws, hemmed in as they were between two lines of fire, was dreadful. The outlaws could not rush back up the steps, for it was crowded with fighting soldiers. Ahead of them fought another horde of kahaki-uniformed soldiers.

At last, looking only for a chance to escape, the fire of the outlaws became fainter and fainter.

Soon the entire band of desperadoes was intent only upon escape, yet no man asked for quarters, and no man surrendered. It was a pity that such bravery and such almost heroic devotion to an outlaw leader could not have been directed into an honest channel.

Jesse James, Cole Younger and Frank seemed to bear charmed lives. Jesse had been shot through the arm, the leg, and in the groin, but had not been fatally injured. Frank had been wounded in three places, yet not fatally, and Cole Younger had also been shot twice. They stuck together, however, and managed to work themselves far along toward the light of a fire, and then in the darkness, seeing that they could be of no further use to their companions, and knowing what would be the ultimate outcome of the conflict, so far as they were concerned, should they remain, they jumped upon their horses, and while Jesse swayed dimly in his saddle, and looked as if at any moment he might fall from his great bay horse, the three desperadoes rode away.

For a few moments after their disappearance, the remaining outlaws fought on with grinding teeth and glittering eyes, but when they did not hear the encouraging voice of their leaders, they too, broke and fled. A small portion of the band managed to escape with their horses and ride away in scattered bunches, but many had been killed, many fatally wounded,

many injured, and it is a matter often spoken of in army circles, that no prisoners were taken by the troopers.

Forrest raged like a demon of war over the battlefield. A dozen times he had attempted to get into personal contact with Jesse, but each time, other outlaws had thrown themselves between him and their leader, and had forced Forrest to fight them off.

"Have you seen anything of Jesse?" shrieked Forrest to Lieutenant Friend.

"Not a hide or hair of him," replied Friend.

"I wonder if he is killed?"

"I don't know."

"I'd give anything in the world to find that fellow."

"I saw him and two other men run down the line to the right," put in Trooper Cassidy.

"Come on, Friend and Cassidy," shouted Forrest.

"We must not let Jesse escape. I bet that he, Cole Younger and Frank James have got to their horses and are off!"

"Let one of the other troopers take command," howled Forrest. "Follow me to our horses, and we will hit the trail after Jesse."

Soon the three intrepid men, well-mounted, were following after the three outlaws.

It was almost impossible in the darkness, to tell which way Jesse and his companions had gone, but by going slowly in the direction he surmised the outlaws would take, Forrest was soon out into the open country, and at length, coming to a road, they issued out upon it.

"This seems to be a highway," remarked Forrest.

He pulled up his horse and got down on his knees in the dirt, and by dint of striking numerous matches, discovered in the hard road that made up the highway, the sharp unmistakable track of three horses going at high speed.

The other members of his party also lighted matches, and searched the ground with keen eyes.

"Look here!" cried Friend. "I've discovered something!"

In the dust on the roadway was a large, round, moist, sticky bit of crimson fluid.

"It's blood," said Forrest. "One of the outlaws is wounded."

Filled with hope at this discovery, the party followed along, Forrest every now and then dismounting and searching the highway for tracks. He found them and as he saw more pools of blood from time to time, he made up his mind that he was on the right track, and that one, if not all of the outlaws had been injured—how seriously, he could not determine—some time during the fight.

"The man who is bleeding like that," said Forrest, "is shot on the right side somewhere."

"How do you know that?" asked Friend.

"Look here," rejoined Forrest, as he lighted a match. "See, all of the blood spots are on the right side. Here at the left, you can see the marks of a horse's hoofs. The horses are galloping, but not at top speed."

"How do you make that out?" asked Friend.

"By the length between the strides of the animal. The horse is not running his best, or the strides would be further apart. If he was running furiously, the marks of his tracks would be deeper, especially where his hind feet have struck, because it is with the hind feet that a running horse propels himself forward."

"That's pretty good work," replied Friend.

"Any Indian fighter ought to be able to tell how fast a horse is going by looking at his tracks," rejoined Forrest, "and it is usually an easy matter to tell whereabouts a man has been hit, when he is bleeding the way that outlaw is. Of course, I don't know whereabouts in his body he has received the shot, but the blood spots show me which side he has been hit upon."

The party at length came upon a tiny brook which meandered across the road at the bottom of a little hollow. Forrest, by the flickering light of a match, made a discovery which he considered of vital importance. He found a few strips of black cloth, blood soaked, lying in the roadway.

"Here is where the outlaws stopped and tore the lining out of one of their coats, to bind up the wound of their injured companion."

Forrest, after some search, knew that he was right, when upon the opposite bank he found the tracks of the horses, but no marks of blood.

Greatly encouraged, Forrest ordered a continuation of their quest, and about three miles further down the highway, he found, for every few moments he dismounted from his horse and made an examination of the road, that the outlaws had halted again, and then he saw that two of the horses had continued ahead, while the third horse had left the two others and had taken a branch road which led to the right.

"They have separated right here," murmured Forrest.

Two horns of a dilemma were thus presented to the Commander. What did these tracks now indicate? Had Jesse and Frank James gone away together? Had Cole Younger taken the road to the right? Had Cole Younger and Frank James followed the straight road? Had Jesse James taken the road to the right?

Captain Forrest, with knitted brows, tried to solve this puzzle. He wanted to capture or kill the leader of the outlaws. He did not care particularly to capture or kill Frank James or Cole Younger, unless he could

get Jesse James also. Should he follow the straight highway or should he turn to the right?"

For a long time, Captain Forrest thought and studied over the mute evidences that lay in the tracks before him, until the morning broke gray and chill, and then he determined to continue on the main thoroughfare because he felt that the probabilities were that the outlaws would believe that they had escaped undetected, were not being followed, and that Frank and Jesse James, the two bandit brothers, were sticking together, and that Cole Younger had taken the road to the right. Filled with vague fears that in the supreme moment of victory he was going to lose Jesse and Frank James, in spite of all his efforts to capture or kill them, Captain Forrest led his companions forward along the main road, thus following the tracks of the two horses. In the early morning light, they saw that the tracks were becoming sharper and sharper.

"We are getting nearer and nearer," muttered Forrest to Friend.

"No question of that," rejoined Friend. "The outlaws are not far off."

"We're liable to sight them any moment, don't you think so?" asked Forrest.

"I certainly do."

Trooper Cassidy pulled forward a rifle which was hanging over his back, and handed it silently to Forrest.

Forrest's eyes gleamed with pleasure when he received the weapon.

"You may have to take a long shot at the outlaws," Cassidy remarked. "That rifle has a beautiful range."

"Look there!" cried Friend.

Forrest looked ahead where, about a thousand yards down the broad highway, desperately spurring their jaded horses, swept two men.

Forrest dug his spurs into his horse's sides, and darted after the flying criminals, while behind him, hurried at equal speed, Friend and Trooper Cassidy.

For a mile, the desperate race continued. Unfortunately Forrest found the energies of his horse flagging, and when he looked back at his companions, discovered that their horses were equally weary. Jesse and Frank James were mounted on two Kentucky thoroughbreds, and it began to look as if, even yet, they might outstrip their pursuers.

Forrest pulled up his horse, jumped to the ground and lay down upon his back, and sighting through his

upraised feet in the posture usually adopted by long range marksmen, steadied himself for his shot, and as he pulled the trigger of his weapon, when he had quickly adjusted his sights, without stopping to see the result of the shot, jumped up and mounted his horse again.

"Look there! You've got him all right!" shouted Lieutenant Friend.

Captain Forrest saw that his desperate shot had landed better than he had any reason to hope. One of the horses of the outlaws was down in the roadway, feebly kicking, and his rider was just emerging from a cloud of dust, for he had been violently thrown when his horse fell under him.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! We've got 'em," yelled Forrest.

He led the way in a mad rush upon the outlaws, when he felt his gallant beast tremble under him, and he had hardly time to jump from his seat when his horse dropped dead from fatigue. Unfortunately the animal fell directly in the paths of Forrest's oncoming companions, and in a moment, a terrible mix-up ensued.

Trooper Cassidy's horse stumbled over that of Captain Forrest, flung his rider over his head, and the trooper lay stunned in the roadway. Into the mass charged Lieutenant Friend, and he was also violently thrown, but was uninjured. The two horses darted right and left, into adjacent fields, and Forrest saw himself without means of continuing his chase. The gallant officer grabbed the rifle and began running toward the two outlaws, hoping to be able to reach them before they recovered from the confusion in which the killing of their horse had thrown them.

Used to such reverses, Frank James had pulled himself together in a moment. He twitched the uninjured horse which he had been riding with his head pointing down the highway, grabbed Jesse James around his waist, for although Jesse was not fatally hurt, he was weak from the loss of blood, vaulted upon the back of his horse, put spurs to the jaded animal, exciting it to a feeble gallop, and thus the two outlaw brothers disappeared down the white roadway.

"Escaped!" murmured Captain Forrest. "Was there ever such luck! I am horseless and cannot follow them!"

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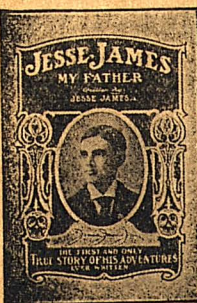
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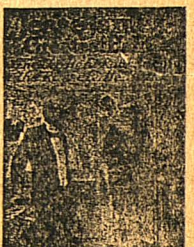
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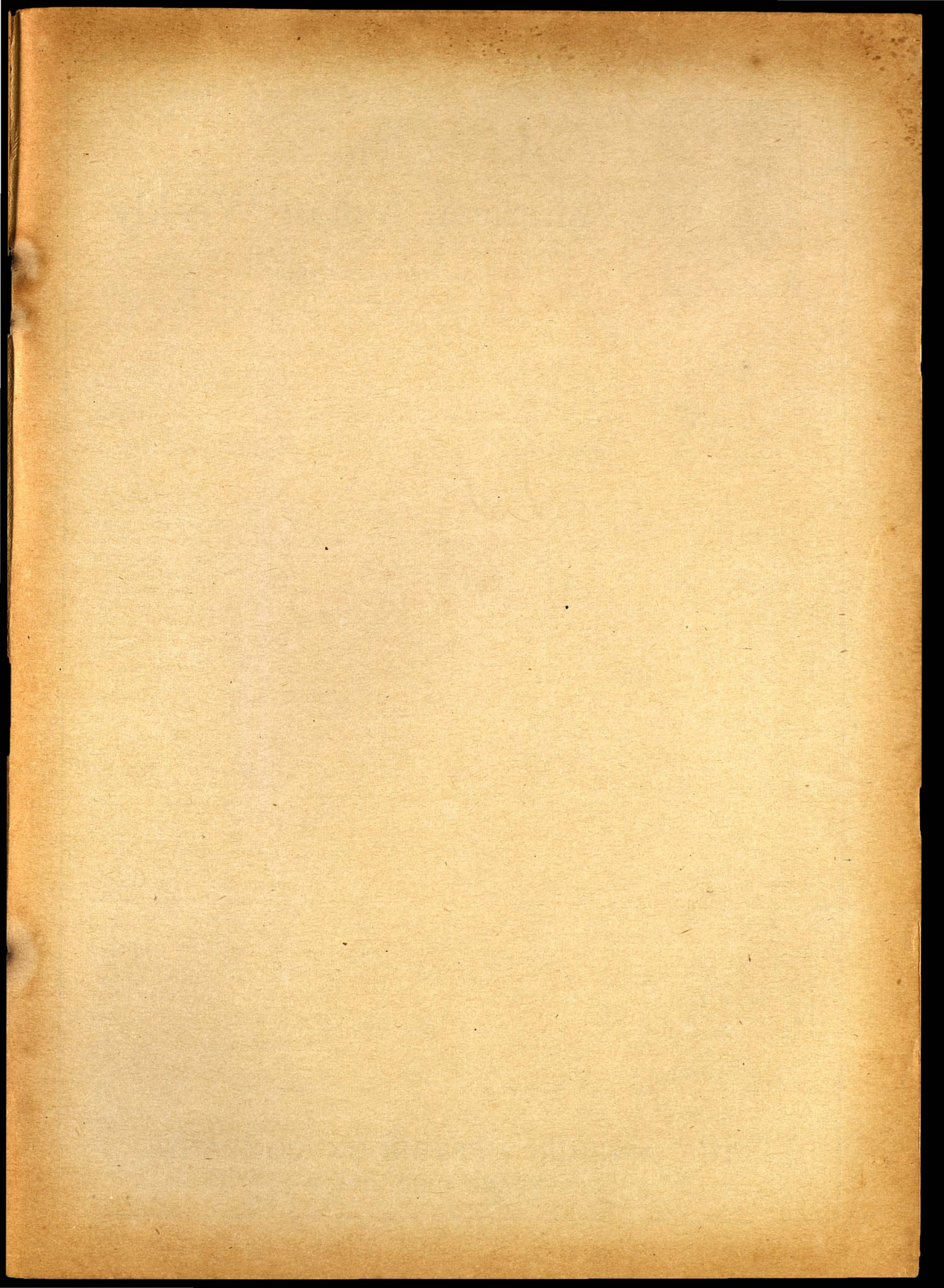
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- Feb. 10—137. A Dash for Millions; or Old Ironsides Trail of Mystery.
- Feb. 17—138. The Trail of Three; or The Motor Pirates' Last Stand.
- Feb. 24—139. A Dead Man's Hand; or Caught by his Own Victim.

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No. 2. TRACKED TO HIS LAIR .....or The Pursuit of the Midnight Raider  
No. 3. THE BLACK DEATH .....or The Curse of the Navajo Witch  
No. 4. THE SQUAW MAN'S REVENGE .....or Kidnapped by the Piutes  
No. 5. TRAPPED BY THE CREES .....or Tricked by a Renegade Scout  
No. 6. BETRAYED BY A MOCCASIN .....or The Round-Up of the Indian Smugglers  
No. 7. FLYING CLOUD'S LAST STAND .....or The Battle of Dead Man's Canyon  
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No. 9. THE DECOY MESSAGE .....or The Ruse of the Border Jumpers  
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No. 11. THE MASKED RIDERS .....or The Mystery of Grizzly Gulch  
No. 12. LURED BY OUTLAWS.....or The Mounted Ranger's Desperate Ride  
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No. 14. THE TRAGEDY OF HANGMAN'S GULCH.....or The Ghost of Horn Mountains  
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No. 23. NIGHT RIDERS OF THE NORTH-WEST.....or The Vigilantes' Revenge  
No. 24. THE SPECTRE OF THUNDERBOLT CAVERN.....or Tricked by Midnight Assassins  
No. 25. RED HAND OF THE NORTH-WEST.....or The Pirates of Hornaday River

## TO BE PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY

- May 25—No. 26. THE HERMIT BANDIT'S REVENGE.....or The League of the Fur-Stealers  
June 1—No. 27. THE CURSE OF CORONATION GULF.....or The Outlaws of Blue Waters  
June 8—No. 28. THE DOOM OF THE BANDED BROTHERS.....or The Demon Renegades  
June 15—No. 29. THE WITCH OF DEVIL WHIRLPOOL.....or The Gun-Men of Split Lake  
June 22—No. 30. TORNADO BESS THE KIDNAPPER.....or The Outlaws of Rabbit Island  
June 29—No. 31. THE WRECKERS OF CARIBOU REEF.....or Border Bandits at Bay  
July 6—No. 32. THE PLAGUE SPREADERS OF HUNGRY TRAIL....or The Robbers of Little Wind

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