

READ THE BEST—STREET & SMITH'S MAGAZINES

Every Week

Feb. 15, 1930 ★

Western

Story Magazine



15¢
20¢ IN CANADA



KING COLE & HOT ROCKS by Robert Ormond Case

Think of it! **Genuine**
UNDERWOOD
 Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ Mfg's. Price

**Greatest Value
 Ever Offered**



Your chance of a lifetime to own and enjoy a genuine Underwood No. 4 at the most sensational, low price and easiest terms ever offered. Think of it—only \$1.00 brings the world's most famous Underwood Typewriter for 10 days' Free Trial. Pay only 10c a day on easy monthly payment plan. Do not confuse this Genuine Underwood 4-row standard office model with inferior or frail machines worth only one-half as much. This is the full size standard Underwood with 4-row keyboard, manufactured to sell for \$100. **Fully Guaranteed.**

**World Famous
 UNDERWOOD No. 4**

This late model Underwood, specially priced at \$39.50 (cash), is the lowest price ever quoted; has modern improvements, including 4-row keyboard, two-color ribbon, back spacer, ribbon reverse, tabulator, release, shift lock and many other improvements. Beautifully refinished and renewed. Looks and operates like brand new.

Send At Once!!

This exceptional bargain offer is for a very limited time only. Remember, every typewriter is fully guaranteed and sold on 10 days' Free Trial. Send at once.

International Typewriter Exchange,
 221 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill., De

State



NOW ONLY 

This world-famous Underwood at the unbelievably low price surely is a **real bargain!** The Underwood is without question the leader of all typewriters. For general all-around personal and business correspondence this typewriter has no equal.

10 Days' FREE Trial

Send for a 10 day Free Trial and be convinced that here is the greatest value for all times. See how perfect it works—how beautiful and new it looks. If you are not absolutely satisfied in every respect, simply return the typewriter and your deposit will be returned in full. This is the greatest value for all times—act at once.

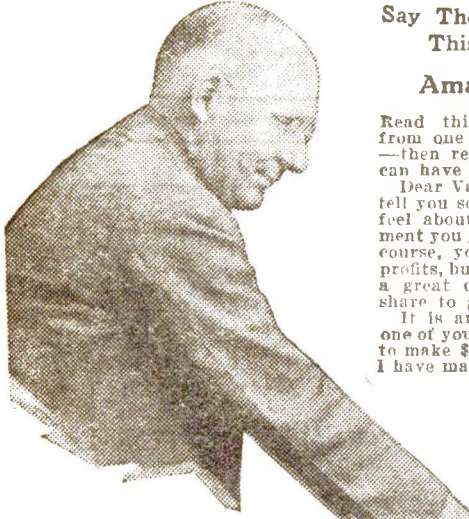
**FREE Complete 9-Piece Office
 Supply Set and
 Typewriting Course**

We teach you speed typewriting Free. Complete Home Study Course of the Famous Van Sant Speed Typewriting System, fully illustrated, easily learned. We also give complete office supply set free during this sensational sale.



**International Typewriter Exchange
 221 W. Monroe St. Chicago**

"Thanks to You, Van"



Say Thousands of "Van's Partners" Who have Found This Amazing Easy Way to Financial Freedom

Amazing New Way to Financial Freedom

Read this letter of gratitude from one of my many Partners—then read how easily you too can have plenty of money.

Dear Van: I feel that I should tell you something of just how I feel about the wonderful treatment you give your Partners. Of course, you always go 50-50 in profits, but, besides that, you take a great deal out of your own share to give to your Partners.

It is an easy matter for any one of your sales representatives to make \$15 a day, clear money. I have made \$15.23 in two hours

in one afternoon on personal sales in my territory.

You have presented me with \$1457.00 worth of gifts, checks and prizes, in addition to the commissions that I have made on my sales. I consider you the most generous, straight-forward, fair and considerate sales manager and Partner that I have ever been associated with. You have assisted me in obtaining an additional musical education. Do you wonder that I am thankful?

Very truly yours,
Wilbur A. Skiles.

20,000 Partners Thank Van for Freedom from Money Worries, More Money for Luxuries, More Time for Pleasure, and for an Easier Way to Make a Living



C. W. Van De Mark, President

Nationally known as "The Man Who Pays Men's Bills" and as the "Man Who Always Keeps His Promises." In a confidential book sent only to his Partners, he reveals his famous secrets. By simply following his instructions you can easily learn how to make \$15 in a day.

YOU CAN Pay Your Bills NOW AND HAVE MONEY TO SPARE

I want a good honest man or woman to look after my established business in your locality in spare-time or full-time. Distribute teas, coffees, extracts, things people eat and use every day. Call

on regular customers and take their orders. Simple, easy, pleasant. Meet people, make friends. NO EXPERIENCE OR CAPITAL NEEDED. I furnish everything and tell you exactly what to say.

My Solemn Promise To You I will make you my business partner!

I will pay you half of all the money we take in. You and I will go 50-50 on everything. As soon as you qualify I give you a brand new Chrysler coach FREE. I will advertise you and furnish your merchandise. You can get your own groceries at wholesale. I take all the chances—DON'T SEND ME A SINGLE PENNY. I

know you can make more money my easy way than you ever thought possible. I am so sure of it that I give you a written guarantee by which you can't lose. Many make \$15.00 in a day steady income. ALL THIS IS TRUE—THIS IS MY SOLEMN PROMISE TO YOU.

CHRYSLER COACH



I offer a Chrysler Coach FREE to every single one of my partners, as soon as he comes with me. No strings attached—no contest. Yours to keep the very day you qualify. Send coupon at once for details.

Free Feed Products Coupon

C. W. Van De Mark, President
The Health-O Quality Products Co.,
Dept. 1094-BB, Cincinnati, Ohio

Have Cash in Your Pocket in 10 Days

I will prove to you, with money, that my promises are true. I will show you how to have cash profits in your pocket ten days from now. But you must act at once.

Others in your neighborhood may be reading this offer right now—Clip the Coupon NOW—Send it today.

Send Coupon For Free

C. W. VAN DE MARK, President
The Health-O Quality Products Co.
Dept. 1094-BB, Health-O Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio
© 1930 by C. W. V. D. M.

Your how you groceries at wh...

Name

Address

City State

WESTERN STORY

MAGAZINE

This Magazine U. S. Patent Office

EVERY WEEK

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

Vol. XCIII Contents for February 15, 1930 No. 3

ONE NOVEL

King Cole Of Hot Rocks *Robert Ormond Case* 1

TWO SERIALS

Twelve Peers *Max Brand* 66
 A Six-part Story—Part Three
 Riders of the Breaks *Russell A. Bankson* 92
 A Six-part Story—Part Four

FOUR SHORT STORIES

The Fire Spotter *Kenneth Gilbert* 57
 Hungry *Guthrie Brown* 88
 Bud Tuttle Misses A Steer *Seth Ranger* 111
 Dead Men Do Tell Tales *Ray Humphreys* 124

ONE ARTICLE

Chips from the Big Sticks *Howard J. Perry* 119
 (Highclimbing)

MISCELLANEOUS

Three Singers (Poem) *C. Wiles Hallock* 123
 Nickel Refined Without Use Of The Ghosts Of Pikes Peak 91
 Chemicals 56 Alaska Gets Its Buffaloes 110
 Saved By Toboggan And Plane 56 The Unprofitable Jack Rabbit 110
 Isolated Rangers Get Their Daily Ore-dressing Processes 118
 Papers 65 Birds of the West and North Amer-
 Summer Homes for the Nation's Wild ica (The Loggerhead Shrike) 133
 Life 87

DEPARTMENTS

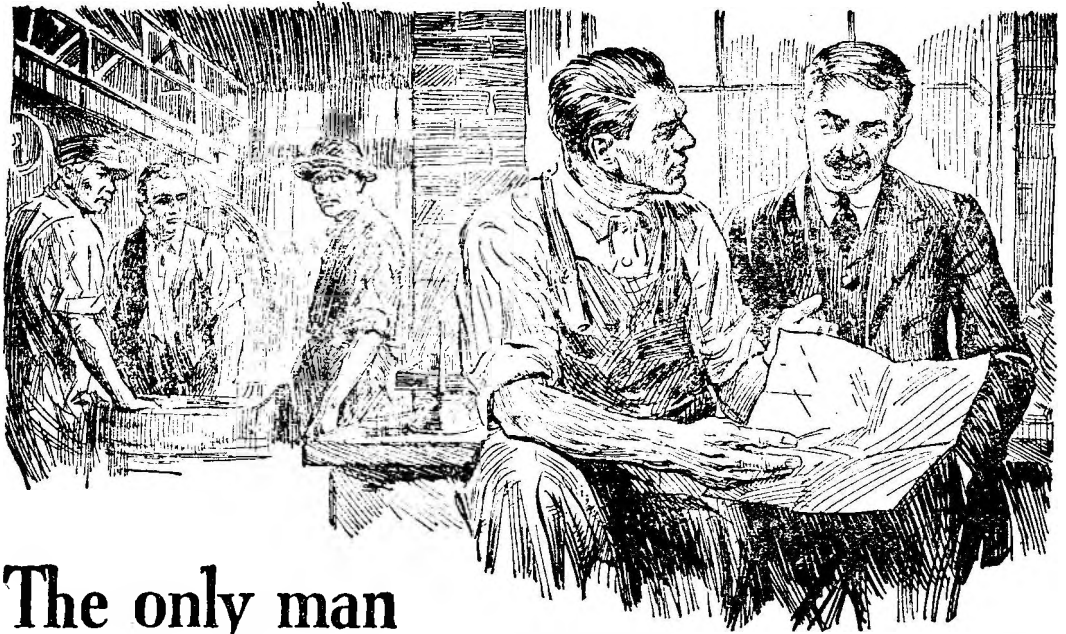
The Round-up *The Editor* 134
 The Hollow Tree *Helen Rivers* 137
 Where To Go And How To Get There *John North* 140
 Missing 143

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1930, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1930, by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 4, 1917, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, \$7.50. Foreign, \$8.50.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.

All manuscripts must be addressed to the Editors.

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



The only man who could talk to the Superintendent

FOR several years, he was just like a score of other men in the plant—a good, honest, fairly capable worker, but only that. There was nothing distinctive about him or his ability—nothing to make him stand out from the crowd—no reason, as a matter of fact, why he should ever receive a raise in salary.

Then one fortunate day he decided that the reason he wasn't getting anywhere was because he lacked special training. He searched around a bit—asked a great many questions—and then enrolled for a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools.

"Soon after I began studying," he wrote to us the other day, "we had a change in management at our plant. The new superintendent said that only men who had really studied their work were in line for positions as foremen.

"I certainly was glad then that I had decided to study in my spare time. For, thanks to my I. C. S. course, I was the only man in the organization who could talk to the superintendent in his own language. As a result, I was promoted over men who had been here from ten to twenty years. My salary has been increased 90% in the last ten months."

THAT'S a true story of what just one I. C. S. student has done. There are thousands of others. Every mail brings letters from men and

women telling of promotions and increases in salary due directly to spare-time study.

What are *you* doing with the hours after supper? Can you afford to let them slip by unimproved when you can easily make them mean so much?

One hour a day, spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home, will prepare you for success in the work you like best. *Yes, it will!* Put it up to us to prove it. Mail this coupon to-day.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
 "The Universal University"
 Box 4906-B, Scranton, Penna.

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

- TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES**
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Architect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Architects' Blueprints |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Draftsman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Positions | <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coal Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing and Heating | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Engines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio |
- BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES**
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card and Sign Lettering |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting and C. P. A. | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching | <input type="checkbox"/> English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secretarial Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |

Name.....
 Street Address.....
 City..... State.....
 Occupation.....
 Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Win \$3,500.00

Prizes from \$1800.00 to \$4245.00 each have been won through our unique advertising plan. In our last ad old man of 69, out of world, won over \$5000.00. A boy, only 13, won \$900.00. In next 3 or 4 months thousands of dollars will be awarded to fortunate persons who solve our puzzles and win our prizes.

FIND THE TWIN FLYERS

Watch out! These twelve pictures of a famous woman flyer all look alike—BUT—two, and only two, are exactly alike. Find these twin flyers! Some pictures are different in the collar, helmet, goggles, or tie. Remember, only two of the twelve are exactly alike. Find them, and send the numbers of the twin flyers on a post card or letter today. If correct, your answer will qualify you for this opportunity.

\$7160.00 IN PRIZES GIVEN THIS TIME

Over 25 prizes, and duplicate prizes in case of ties. It's up to the winner whether he or she chooses \$275.00 in cash or a new Water airplane, a big automobile, or a new home. A gorgeous prize list! ANYONE WHO ANSWERS THIS PUZZLE CORRECTLY MAY RECEIVE PRIZES OR CASH.

\$625.00 ADDITIONAL FOR PROMPTNESS

Be prompt! It pays. Find the real twin flyers, and I will send Certificate which will be good for \$625.00 if you are prompt and win first prize. Imagine, a first prize of \$5000.00! NO MORE PUZZLES TO SOLVE. Any man, woman, boy, or girl in the U. S. A.—anyone at all, except residents of Chicago, Illinois, and other major prize winners. 25 of the people who take up this offer are going to win these wonderful prizes. Be one of them. Send the numbers of the twin flyers. Send no money, but be prompt.

J. B. SNYDER, Dept. 154, 54 W. Illinois St., Chicago, Ill.



TRUSS USERS

Learn how to close the rupture opening, so the rupture can't come down. Get a Ten Day Test of the herbal muscle-tonic "Plapao", and 48 page illustrated book describing the effective home treatment used by satisfied thousands without delay from work. Awarded Gold Medal, Rome, Grand Prix, Paris, and other proofs of merit. You can make this test which started many others on the road to better health without cost—FREE. Write TODAY to Plapao Co., 860 Stuart Building, Saint Louis, Missouri.

MORE PA

FREE SHIRTS TIES CASH BONUS GIVEN

QUAKER FREE OUTFIT

Earn big money right from the start. Let Quaker help you. Wonderful free Sample outfit gets orders everywhere. Men's Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery. Unmatchable values. Unique selling features. Ironclad guarantee. You can't fail with Quaker. Write for your Free outfit NOW.

QUAKER SHIRT CORPORATION
Dept. Y-2 1107 Broadway, N. Y.

WHAT EVERY ELECTRICIAN WANTS TO KNOW!

is easily found in AUDEL'S NEW ELECTRIC LIBRARY. Electricity made simple as ABC. Up-to-date, trade dope for the expert and ALL electrical workers.

Questions, answers, diagrams, calculations, underwriter's code; design, construction, operation and maintenance of modern electrical machines and appliances FULLY COVERED. All available at small cost, easy terms. BOOK A-MONTH service puts this NEW information in your hands for 6c a day. Write TODAY for Electric Folder and FREE TRIAL offer. Theo. Audel & Co. 65 W. 23rd St. New York, Dept. 22

Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

Only 4 Motions used in playing this fascinating instrument. Our native Hawaiian instructors teach you to master them quickly. Pictures show how. Every thing explained clearly.

Play in Half Hour
After you get the four easy motions you play harmonious chords with very little practice. No previous musical knowledge needed.

Easy Lessons
Even if you don't know one note from another, the 52 printed lessons and clear pictures make it easy to learn quickly. Pay as you play.

GIVEN when you enroll
— a sweet toned

HAWAIIAN GUITAR, Carrying Case and Playing Outfit— Value \$18 to \$20
No extra anything included

WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. ACT!

OTHER COURSES | Tenor Banjo, Violin, Tiple, Tenor Guitar, Ukulele, Banjo Ukulele. Under well known instructors.

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC, Inc.
8th Floor, Washburn Bldg., Dept. 239 New York, N. Y.

Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York - Member National Home Study Council

CORRECT! Your NOSE!

Improve your appearance with the Anita Nose Adjuster. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 68,000 users. Write for 30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.

ANITA INSTITUTE, 254 Anita Bldg., Newark, N. J.

Home-Study Business Training

Your opportunity will never be bigger than your preparation. Prepare now and reap the rewards of early success. Free 64-Page Books Tell How. Write NOW for book you want, or mail coupon with your name, present position and address in margin today.

<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Corres.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mod. Salesmanship	<input type="checkbox"/> Credit and Collection
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/> Rail. Station Mgmt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship
<input type="checkbox"/> Law: Degree of LL.B.	<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Mgmt.
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping
<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Mgmt.	<input type="checkbox"/> C. P. A. Coaching
<input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Business English
<input type="checkbox"/> Telegraphy	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Spelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Mgmt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accounting	<input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy—Stenog'y
<input type="checkbox"/> Paper Salesman's Training	

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 265-R, Chicago

They gave me the "ha-ha" when I offered to play *... but I was the life of the party after that*



THE first day of Dorothy's house party at the shore had been a huge success. After swimming, boating and golfing all were ready for the wonderful dinner that followed.

"Well, folks," said Bill as we left the table, "I'm all set for a good dance."

"Fine!" cried Dorothy, "Dick can make the banjo hum. Who'll play the piano?"

All looked at one another foolishly.

"Jim, you play, don't you?" asked Dot.

"Yes, I'll play 'Far, Far Away,'" laughed Jim.

"Well, then, Mabel, will you help us out?"

"Honestly, Dot, I hate to admit it, but I can't play a note," she answered.

It certainly looked as if the party were going flat.

Then I Offered to Play

"If you folks can stand it," I offered shyly, "I'll play for you."

The crowd instantly burst out into laughter.

"You may be able to play football, Jack, but you can't tackle a piano."

"I've never heard you play a note and I've known you all your life," cut in another.

As I strode to the piano I chuckled to myself: I had a surprise in store for them.

No one knew what to expect. They thought I was about to make a fool of myself.

Then—I struck the first snappy chords of that foot-tossing fox-trot, "St. Louis Blues." Dick, dumfounded, almost dropped his banjo. But in a flash he had picked up the rhythm and was strum-

ming away like mad.

The crowd was all dancing in a jiffy. Fox-trots and waltzes—with rests few and far between.

After a good round of dancing I decided to give them some real music and began a beautiful Indian love lyric.

The couples were now seated quietly about the room, entranced by that plaintive melody.

No sooner had the last soft notes died away than I was surrounded by my astonished friends.

"How wonderful, Jack! Why haven't you played for us before?"

"How long have you been studying?"

"Why have you kept it a secret all these years when you might have been playing for us?"

"Who gave you lessons? He must be wonderful!"

I Reveal My Secret

Then I explained how I had made up my mind to go in for something besides sports.

I wanted to play—to entertain others—to be popular. But when I thought of the great expense and long study and practice required, I hesitated.

Then one day I ran across an announcement in a magazine telling of a new, quick and simple way to learn music at home, without a teacher.

I was a little skeptical at first, but I sent for the free booklet and free demonstration lesson. The moment I saw it I was convinced and sent for the complete course.

When the lessons arrived I started right in, giving a few minutes of my spare time each day. And what fun it was. No monotonous scales—no tedious exercises—no tricky methods—just a simple, common-sense system that even a child could understand. And

I was playing my favorite numbers almost from the start. * * * * *

Anyone can learn to play this easy, no-teacher way—right at home. The piano, if desired, or any other instrument that you may choose. Over half a million people have learned to play by this simple system, in less than half the time it takes by the old-fashioned methods. And the cost averages only a few cents a day.

Send for Free Booklet and Demonstration Lesson

To prove how practical this course is, the U. S. School of Music has arranged a typical demonstration lesson and explanatory booklet which you may have free. So if you really want to learn to play—if you want hosts of friends—to be popular—write for this free booklet and free demonstration lesson.

Don't delay, act at once—fill in and mail the attached coupon today—no obligation whatever.

Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 3592 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

U. S. School of Music,
3592 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane, Free Demonstration Lesson and particular of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Have you
..... Instr. ?
Name
Address
City State

PICK YOUR INSTRUMENT

Piano	Hawaiian Guitar
Organ	Drums and Traps
Violin	Harmony and Composition
Piccolo	Sight Singing
Clarinet	Ukulele
Flute	Trombone
Harp	Coronet
Cello	Saxophone
Guitar	Veils and Speech Culture
Mandolin	Automatic Finger Control
	Piano Accordion
	Italian and German Accordion
	Banjo (Plectrum, 5-String or Tenor)

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



Amazing growth of Radio is opening hundreds of fine jobs every year

paying \$50, \$60 and \$75 a week

Get one of the many fine jobs for yourself that are opening every year in broadcasting stations, Radio factories, with dealers, jobbers, on board ship which gives you world-wide travel, a good salary and expenses paid, commercial land stations and other branches of Radio. Why stick to a no-future job when Radio pays its well-trained men \$50, \$60, \$75 and even as high as \$200 a week.

Many N. R. I. Men make \$10 to \$25 a week extra almost at once

My book, "Rich Rewards in Radio," points out the money-making opportunities in Radio and explains how I show my men to begin making good money in their spare time, right in their neighborhood almost at once. G. W. Page, 107 Raleigh Apts., Nashville, Tenn., made \$985 in his spare time while taking my course. I'll show you how to make good money, too.

I Will Train you at home in your Spare Time

Keep your job. I have trained hundreds of men and young men at home in their spare time—have doubled and tripled their salaries. High school or college education is not necessary. My Money-Back Agreement protects you fully.

Get my NEW 64-page book Free

It points out where the good jobs are, what they pay, how to get one. A copy of my Money-Back Agreement comes with it. My unlimited Employment Service to Graduates, Eight Outfits of Radio Parts for a home experimental Radio laboratory and many other features are explained in it. It is free to anyone who wants to make more money.

J. E. SMITH, President

NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE

Dept. OBD

Washington, D. C.

Clip and mail this coupon at once

J. E. Smith, Pres.,
National Radio Institute, Dept. OBD
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send your book, "Rich Rewards in Radio."

Name

Address

City State

START to PLAY Very First Day!

Pleasant, Easy Lessons Show You How!



Extra Money--Hosts of Friends--Loads of Fun Within Your Reach

HAPPY DAYS are in store for you if you will only act on this suggestion! Cheery evenings playing catchy musicals alone or with sweetheart, wife or sister; proud moments as center of interest at gatherings; nights of joy making \$8 to \$28 for work that is "play."

The Deagan Xylorimba is your opportunity! Wonderful for home, in demand at dances and entertainments, yet easiest of all instruments to play. No teacher necessary—you actually play simple melodies the very first day even if you cannot read a note of music right now!

Earns \$60 a Week—Ralph Smith, Chicago, says: "Played 20 minutes at wedding. Received \$20." L. E. Hallmann, Reading, Pa., writes: "Made \$300 in 5 weeks, spare time. Had never played instrument before."

Send for Big Free Book! Our new book tells all about the delightful, free trial that removes risk, the wonderful Deagan easy-payment plan. No obligation—simply fill in and mail the coupon.

J. C. Deagan, Inc., Dept. 1862, 3770 Berntau Avenue, Chicago

Send me, without obligation, full details of Free Trial offer and easy-payment plan of the Deagan Xylorimba.

Name

Address

QUIT TOBACCO



No man or woman can escape the harmful effects of tobacco.

Don't try to banish unaided the hold tobacco has upon you.

Join the thousands of inveterate tobacco users that have

found it easy to quit with the aid of the Keeley Treatment.

KEELEY

Treatment For Tobacco Habit Successful For Over 50 Years

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

THE KEELEY INSTITUTE

Dept. D-813

Dwight, Illinois

EXTRA STRONG IMPROVED MODEL COPPER BOILER

Catalog Free



SAVE 20% NOW!

Most Practical Boiler & Cooker

Made with large 5-inch Improved Cap and Spout. Safe, practical and simple. Nothing to get out of order, most substantial and durable on the market. Will last a lifetime, gives fast service and satisfaction.

Easily Cleaned

Cap removed in a second; no burning of hands. An extra low pressure boiler and pressure cooker for home and farm.

Save 20% by ordering direct from factory. No article of such high quality and utility ever sold at such amazingly low prices. Prices quoted are cash with order or one-fourth cash, balance C. O. D. Send check or money order; prompt shipment made in plain strong box. The only boiler worth having. Large Catalog Free.

HOME MANUFACTURING CO.
Dept. 5863
18 E. Kinzie St.
Chicago, Illinois

5 Gallon \$ 6.50
7 8.85
10 11.90
15 14.20
20 18.50
25 22.50
30 27.50

GREAT NEWS

If You Want a Real Pay Job

IN DRAFTING!

A New Easy Method Doubles The Earning Possibilities For Ambitious Men In This Great Field. Now—Right At Home—You Can Receive College Training In Drafting—From An Old Established College Known and Recognized Throughout The World—Chicago Tech. Yet The Cost Is Only A Fraction Of Ordinary College Training.

Chicago Tech Now Brings College Training in Drafting To You—At Home

HERE'S great news for every wide-awake man who wants to get into a big-money drafting job! An easy, practical home-study method has been developed which enables you to get the famous College-Training-In-Drafting as taught at Chicago Technical College—without leaving your home. This is the kind of training that employers are looking for in the men they hire. Training from a school that has real prestige wherever you go. Now you, too, can master professional drafting in your spare time and quickly prepare yourself for a position paying up to \$7,000 a year and more!

New Easy Practice Method

Realizing that many ambitious men cannot afford to go to college, this famous school, noted for its plain, practical, easily-mastered instruction, has worked out a plan whereby everyone can get actual College Drafting Training at home. As a result the top-notch jobs of this profitable profession are now within your easy reach. Think of it! The same fine drawing outfits, the same simple lessons and the same practical training as prepared and taught at the college!

Fascinating—Simple As A. B. C.

It's just like playing a fascinating game. No hard textbooks—no involved problems to solve. This astonishing new course is so different from ordinary "schooling" and so easy to master that you will be surprised and delighted with your progress.

Drawing Outfits FREE of Extra Cost

A full set of fine drawing instruments in handsome pocket case, special drawing table and valuable drawing outfit are included without extra cost. You are furnished with everything necessary to big-pay training.

Don't Delay—Act Now!

If you are sincere in your desire to get out of the rut and step into a high-salaried drafting position, investigate this new home-study method at once. The coupon brings the free trial lesson and full details that will prove to you that here is just the certified training you want. Mail it now—no obligation.

CHICAGO TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Dept. B-248, Home Study Division
118 E. 26th St. Chicago, Ill.

If you live nearby, visit the College. See how we train Draftsmen for Big Pay Jobs. More than 1000 attend every year.



NOW FREE
Sample Lesson and Book

If the news of this wonderful home study College Training in Drafting sounds too good to be true, mail the coupon below for free trial lesson and interesting literature. Convince yourself of the merits of this approved training that will prepare you for a top-notch drafting job in a short time. No obligation—no cost at all.

Mail
The
Coupon



CHICAGO TECHNICAL COLLEGE,
Dept. B-248, Home Study Division,
118 E. 26th St., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me at once the sample lesson and complete facts about your new system that enables men to master College Drafting Training at home just as you teach it at College in Chicago. This does not obligate me in any way.

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

() Check here only if you prefer to come to Chicago for our short course in Drafting at Chicago Tech. Opportunities to earn while learning.



\$ 3100⁰⁰ IN PRIZES!! HUDSON 6
1ST PRIZE

Find the Dollar Sign that is different

Because it will mean money to you. Every person who finds the different Dollar Sign (\$) and takes an active part will absolutely receive a handsome reward. You can't lose. And besides, some one who mails in this announcement is going to receive a LATEST MODEL HUDSON COACH, first prize. One of the Dollar Signs is different. Mark it and send this ad to me at once. If your eyes are sharp you may be the first to solve the puzzle correctly. Look closely—examine each \$—they are all alike but one. Rush your answer with your name and address.



217 OTHER WONDERFUL PRIZES

Besides this luxurious Hudson we are going to give Absolutely Free 217 other prizes! Don't delay a minute. **THIS IS NOT A MAGAZINE CONTEST!**
\$675.00 Extra for Promptness

Everyone answering this advertisement will receive a valuable award. Win the Hudson and I will give you \$675.00 Cash Extra if you're prompt. Every prize guaranteed and will be paid promptly. Think what it means if you win!

Name

Address..... Town.....

BEAUVILLE CO., Dept. A 49700 East Sixth Ave., Des Moines, Iowa

10 Inches Off Waistline In 35 Days

"I reduced from 48 inches to 38 inches in 35 days," says R. E. Johnson, of Akron, O., "just by wearing a Director Belt. Stomach now firm, doesn't sag and I feel fine."

The Director Belt gets at the cause of fat and quickly removes it by its gentle, kneading, massaging action on the abdomen, which causes the fat to be dissolved and absorbed. Thousands have proved it and doctors recommend it as the natural way to reduce. Stop drugs, exercise and dieting. Try this easy way.

Sent on Trial

Let us prove our claims. We'll send a Director for trial. If you don't get results you owe nothing. You don't risk a penny. Write for trial offer, doctors' endorsements and letters from users. Mail the coupon NOW!

LONDON & WARNER
332 S. La Salle St., Chicago, Ill.

Landon & Warner, Dept. C-33, 332 S. La Salle, Chicago
Gentlemen: Without cost or obligation on my part please send me details of your trial offer.

Name.....

Address.....

TOBACCO Habit Overcome Or No Pay

Over 500,000 men and women used Superba Remedy to help stop Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipe, Chewing or Snuff. Write for full treatment on trial. Contains no dope or habit forming drugs. Costs \$2.00 if successful, nothing if not. SUPERBA CO A-10, Baltimore, Md.

AUTO RUNS 59 MILES ON GALLON OF GAS

Automobile engineers who worked for years in an effort to reduce gasoline consumption have found the solution in a marvelous invention that fits all cars. An actual test made by one of the engineers showed 59 miles on a gallon of gas. Thousands of car owners have already installed this new invention. They not only report amazing gas savings but are also surprised to find quicker pick-up, instant starting, smoother running motors and disappearance of carbon. E. Oliver, 999-104A Third St., Milwaukee, Wis., for a limited time is offering a free device to those who will help introduce it. He also needs men everywhere to make over \$100 weekly in their own territory taking care of local business. Write him at once for free sample and big money making offer.—Adv.

R. T. I. R. T. I. QUALIFIES YOU TO MAKE MONEY AND ITS SERVICE KEEPS YOU UP-TO-THE-MINUTE ON THE R. T. I. NEWEST DEVELOPMENTS IN RADIO, TELEVISION AND TALKING PICTURES



RADIO TELEVISION-TALKING PICTURES
BIG MONEY NOW!
More to Come

Radio now offers ambitious men the greatest Money-Making Opportunity the world has ever seen! Hundreds of trained service men are needed by radio dealers, jobbers, and manufacturers!

GOOD JOBS are open in all branches of Radio, and where qualified men easily earn \$60 to \$100 per week and even \$10,000 a year jobs are plentiful.

BIG MONEY for spare-time Radio Work is easily made in every city and village. You can now qualify for this Big-Pay work quickly through R. T. I. Get the Big Money Now and go up and up in this Big Pay field. The Radio industry calls for More Men, and R. T. I. supplies what the industry wants you to know.

Supervised by Radio Leaders

R. T. I. training is prepared and supervised by prominent men in radio, television and talking picture engineering; distributing; sales; manufacturing; broadcasting, etc. These men know what you must know to make money in Radio. You learn easily in spare time at home with the R. T. I. wonderful combination Testing Outfits, Parts, Work Sheets, Job Tickets. It is easy, quick and practical—covers everything in Radio—includes Talking Pictures and the latest in Television.



\$60—\$70—\$80—PER WEEK AND UP. That's what R. T. I. training leads to. Send for the R. T. I. Book.

No Experience Needed

ALL YOU NEED is the ambition and the ability to read and write. The Radio industry needs practical trained men. Remember, R. T. I. makes it easy to earn spare time money while you learn at home.

More to come

THE MEN who get into this Big-Money field now will have an unlimited future. Why? Because this billion dollar Radio industry is only a few years old and is growing by leaps and bounds. Get in and grow with it. \$10 to \$25 per week and more is easily made in spare hours while you are preparing for Big Money. TELEVISION, too, will soon be on the market, so the leaders say. Be ready for this amazing new money-making field. Remember, R. T. I. "3 in 1" home-training gives you all the developments in Television and Talking Picture Equipment, together with the complete Radio training.

Warning

Do not start R. T. I. training if you are going to be satisfied to make \$15 or \$20 per week more than you are now. Most R. T. I. men will make that much increase after a few weeks. There is no reason to stop short of the Big Money Jobs or the Big Profits in a spare time or full time business of your own. No capital needed. Get started with R. T. I. now. Make money while you learn at home.

R. T. I. Book Now FREE

The thrilling story of Radio, Television and Talking Pictures is told with hundreds of pictures and facts—thousands of big money jobs and spare time money-making opportunities everywhere. Send for your copy now. **USE THE COUPON.**



Let F. H. SCHNELL and the R. T. I. Advisory Board Help You

Twenty years Radio experience. First to establish two-way amateur communication with Europe. Former Traf. Mgr. of American Radio Relay League. Lieut. Com. U. S. N. R. Inventor, designer, consulting Radio engineer.

Assisting him is the R. T. I. Advisory Board, composed of men prominent in the Radio Industry. These men know Radio and will help you succeed in their field.

RADIO & TELEVISION INSTITUTE
 Dept. 802
 4806 St. Anthony Cl. Chicago

RADIO & TELEVISION INSTITUTE
 Dept. 802, 4806 St. Anthony Court, Chicago
 Send me Free and prepaid your **BIG BOOK "Tune In On Big Pay"** and full details of your three-in-one Home Training (without obligating me in any way).

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

THE R. T. I. ADVISORY BOARD. These men are executives with important concerns in the radio industry—manufacturing, sales, service, broadcasting, engineering, etc., etc. They supervise R. T. I. Work Sheets, Job Tickets, and other training methods.

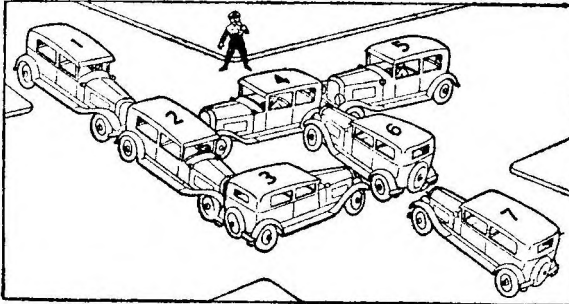
R. T. I. R. T. I. TRAINS YOU AT HOME FOR A GOOD JOB OR A PROFITABLE PART TIME OR FULL TIME BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN



Win Nash and \$500 or \$1,845 Cash

Seven Brand New 6-Cylinder Cars Given

For advertising purposes I am going to give absolutely free a brand new six-cylinder "Special Six" Nash four-door Sedan, an Oldsmobile two-door Sedan, a De Soto two-door Sedan, a Pontiac two-door Sedan, an Essex two-door Sedan, a Whippet two-door Sedan, and a Chevrolet two-door Sedan, all six-cylinder latest model Sedans; also 4 splendid new console type radios, a Victor Orthophonic Victrola and other valuable prizes. Any person living in the United States outside of Chicago may enter an answer to this puzzle except employees of the W. D. Boyce Company or members of automobiles or first prizes in any of our previous offers, or members of their families.



Solve This Traffic Puzzle

In the picture there are 7 cars in a bad traffic jam. None of them can move forward, for each car is blocked by the one in front of it. One of these cars will have to be backed out. Which one? The traffic policeman seems to be stumped. Can you straighten up this tangle for him? Only one car may be moved backward, and if you pick out the right one, you will see that it is not necessary to back up any of the others. Send the number of the car which when backed out will relieve this traffic tie-up, and if your answer is correct you will be qualified for this opportunity.

\$500.00 for Promptness We are not only giving the Sedans, radios and so forth in our big prize list amounting to over \$6,300.00, but are also giving an additional \$500.00 in cash for promptness to the winner of first prize if he or she has been prompt. Thus, the first prize winner will receive the Nash Sedan and \$500.00 in cash, or \$1,845.00. Find the car which when backed out will relieve this traffic tangle and send the number of it in a letter or on a post card, or you can mark the car on the picture and send it to me. Be sure to write or print your name and address plainly. All who answer correctly can share in the prizes or cash. Duplicate prizes paid in case of ties, ANSWER TODAY. G. W. ALBERTON, Dept. 286, 510 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.



AGENTS! Sell Shirts

Many salesmen making Big Profits each week selling Bostonian nationally known high-grade, broadcloth shirts, 3 for \$6.98

Wonderful Selling Outfit FREE
POSTAGE PAID, \$1.50 cash commission for you, \$9.00 value. Quick sales. Write today for free sample outfit.
BOSTONIAN MFG. CO., Dept. B-243, 89 Pickford St., Boston, Mass.



\$1260 to \$3400 YEAR

Men—Women—18 Up
STEADY WORK
NO "LAYOFFS"
Paid Vacations
Common Education usually sufficient

COUPON

Franklin Institute

Dept. F-192, Rochester, N. Y.

Gentlemen: Rush to me FREE of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay positions now obtainable. Send me FREE 32-page book describing salaries, hours, work, vacation and giving full particulars on how to get a U. S. Government position.

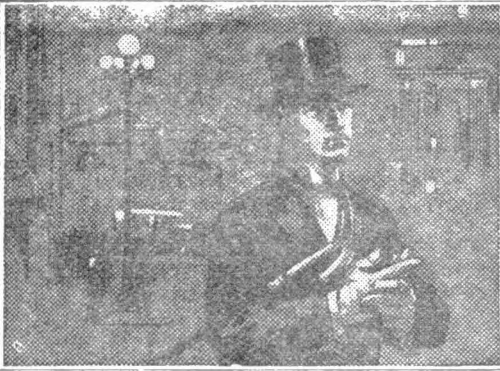
Mail Coupon today—**SURE**
Name
Address
Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Have You Ever Read

Picture Play

Bubbling Over With Screen News

Price, 25 cents per copy



Follow This Man

Secret Service Operator No. 38 is on the Job!

FOLLOW him through all the excitement of his chase of the counterfeit gang. See how a crafty operator works. Tell-tale finger prints on the lamp stand in the murdered girl's room! The detective's cigarette case is handled by the unsuspecting gangster, and a great mystery is solved. Better than fiction. It's true, every word of it. No obligation.

FREE The Confidential Reports No. 38 Made to His Chief

And the best part of it all is this. It may open your eyes to the great future for YOU as a highly paid Finger Print Expert. More men are needed right now. This school has taken men just like you and trained them for high official positions. This is the kind of work you would like. Days full of excitement. Big salaries. Rewards.

WRITE and I'll send the Free Reports—also a wonderful illustrated book telling of the future awaiting you as a Finger Print Expert.

Institute of Applied Science
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 27-72 Chicago, Ill.

LET US HELP YOU Quit Tobacco

No human being can escape the harmful effects of tobacco. Don't try to quit without assistance. Our simple inexpensive remedy help you. A complete treatment costs but \$2.00. Every penny promptly refunded if you do not get desired results.

Guns is a harmless preparation, carefully compounded to overcome the condition, that will make quitting of tobacco pleasant, and easy. It comes with a money back guarantee.

Anti-Tobacco League P. O. Box B-2, OMAHA, NEBR.

ASTHMA CAUSE DISCOVERED

Free Booklet Mailed on Request

Indianapolis—Those who suffer from bronchial asthma and hay fever will be gratified to learn that at last science has succeeded in discovering the basic cause of these two stubborn maladies.

This discovery disproves the old theory that asthma is due solely to climatic conditions and hay fever entirely to pollen. The discovery of the real cause of these diseases has proved that these are merely aggravating factors and that the basic cause lies in the individual himself.

Fortunately for all who suffer from these diseases a way has also been found to overcome this basic cause in the individual instead of merely treating the surface symptoms, as has been done in the past.

For full information write for important booklet on the discovery of the cause of bronchial asthma and hay fever. It will be sent free to readers of this magazine who will write to Department 5368, Fugate Company, 126 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind.



Amazingly Easy Way to Get Into ELECTRICITY

Don't spend your life waiting for \$5 raises in a dull, hopeless job. Now . . . and forever . . . say good-bye to 25 and 35 dollars a week. Let me teach you how to prepare for positions that lead to \$50, \$60, and on up to \$200 a week in Electricity — NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing way to teach right here in the great Coyne Shops that makes you a practical expert in 90 days! Getting into electricity is far easier than you imagine!

LEARN WITHOUT BOOKS — In 90 Days
By Actual Work—in the Great Coyne Shops

I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake — I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have! That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers.

Earn While Learning

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses I'll help you get it and when you graduate I'll give you lifetime employment service. And, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained . . . on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations . . . everything from door bells to farm power and lighting . . . full sized . . . in full operation every day!

No Books — No Lessons

No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training . . . all real actual work . . . building real batteries . . . winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc.

GET THE FACTS Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 30 years old—Coyne training is tested—proven beyond all doubt—endorsed by many large electrical concerns. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book of 150 photographs . . . facts . . . jobs . . . salaries . . . opportunities. Tells you how many earn expenses while training and how we assist our graduates in the field. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

BIG BOOK FREE!

Send for my big book containing 150 photographs telling complete story—absolutely FREE

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 20-45, Chicago, Ill.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, H. C. Lewis, Pres.
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 20-45, Chicago, Illinois

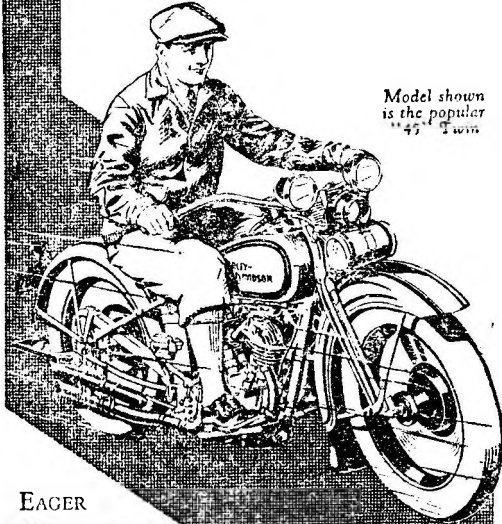
Dear Mr. Lewis: Without obligation send me your big, free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, Radio, Airplane, and Automotive Electrical Courses, and how I may "earn while learning."

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

SPORT OF A THOUSAND THRILLS



Model shown is the popular "45" Twin

EAGER power under instant control—speed that leaves the car-parades behind—lightning response to throttle and brakes

—these are just a few of the thousand thrills of motorcycling. Ask any Harley-Davidson rider — he'll tell you of dozens more. And they are all yours at low cost, in a Harley-Davidson "45"—the wonderful Twin at a popular price.

Let your dealer show you the 1930 features of this motorcycle — try the comfortable, low-slung saddle — get the "feel" of this wonder Twin. Ask about his Pay-As-You-Ride Plan.

Mail the Coupon!

for literature showing our full line of Singles, Twins, and Side-cars. Motorcycle prices range from \$235 f. o. b. factory.

RIDE A

HARLEY-DAVIDSON

HARLEY-DAVIDSON MOTOR COMPANY
Dept. S. S., Milwaukee, Wis.
Interested in your motorcycles. Send literature.

Name.....

Address.....

My age is 16-19 years, 20-30 years, 31 years and up, under 16 years. Check your age group.

CHELSEA HOUSE

The Brand of



Good Books

IMPULSIVE YOUTH

By Vivian Grey

She was rich. And he was poor. She gave him up because she didn't want to break his mother's heart, the heart of the woman who had saved and scrimped so that he might go to college and get away from the manual labor that seemed destined for him.

It was an impulsive act, the sort of thing she was always doing, for at the start she had acted on impulse when she left her luxurious home to cast in her lot with the humble folk on the other side of the creek. It was impulse that sent her out at midnight to make her own way in the world, alone, with no money in her purse. And when Phil Rhoades found her and would bring her back, she refused, for she was determined that she would not stand in the way of the career of the man she loved.

In a way, it is true that most of us act on impulse at one time or another, trusting somehow to the hidden voices within us that our actions may be for the best. The author of this absorbing story tells what may happen when we make impulse the guide to life. It is a story of youth in the grip of a great love that is here before us, a book that we do not lay aside until the last page is read, and one that we take up again, for it is well worth the rereading.

75c

75c



70-89 SEVENTH AVE.
NEW YORK CITY

\$3750.00 REWARD

CAN YOU FIND THE KEY TO THIS PRIZE BAG OF GOLD?

There are 20 keys pictured below. To be sure, they all look alike BUT, examine them closely. 19 of them are exactly alike but "ONE" and only one is DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHERS. It is the key to OPEN THE PADLOCK on this \$3750.00 prize bag of gold. SEE IF YOU CAN FIND IT. Hurry! Win this \$3750.00. A number of new 6-cylinder 4-door sedans and cash prizes too will be given. This offer is open to all and it costs nothing to try.



THESE CLUES WILL HELP YOU TO FIND THE DIFFERENT KEY!

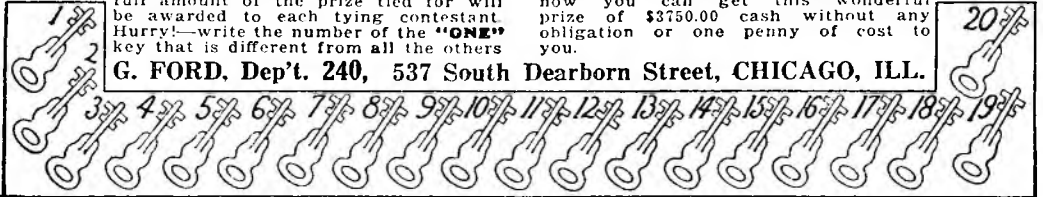
The difference may be in the size, the shape, or even in the notches. So, STUDY EACH KEY CAREFULLY and if you find the "ONE" key that is different from all the others, SEND THE NUMBER OF IT with your name and address TO ME AT ONCE on a post card or in a letter. You may become the winner of a \$2,000.00 Special Buick Sedan and \$1750.00 cash extra, or \$3750.00 all in cash—without one cent of cost to you.

\$1750.00 CASH—EXTRA FOR PROMPTNESS!

Absolutely, I will pay \$1750.00 cash extra to the first prize winner just for promptness. In the event of a tie for any of the prizes offered, the full amount of the prize tied for will be awarded to each tying contestant. Hurry!—write the number of the "ONE" key that is different from all the others

and your name and address on a post card or in a letter and MAIL IT TODAY—sure. I win that \$3750.00! As soon as I get your reply, I'll tell you how you can get this wonderful prize of \$3750.00 cash without any obligation or one penny of cost to you.

G. FORD, Dep't. 240, 537 South Dearborn Street, CHICAGO, ILL.



NERVE FORCE

Lack of Power or Energy, Weakness or excessive drains on the Nervous System. The Specific Pill, and Winchester's Hypophosphites. \$1.00 per box or bottle, postpaid, literature free.

Winchester & Co., Est. 72 Years P. O. Box 233, Mount Vernon, N. Y.

DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and dependable, easy way to relieve the craving many men have.

FREE BOOK

Newell Pharmacal Co. Dept. 892, Clayton, Mo.

Sousa

says: "Complete Equipment of Conn Instruments enhances musical value of any band at least 50%."

More than 50 years of experience, and exclusive patented processes make Conn instruments superior. FREE Trial. Easy payments if desired. Write for FREE book. Mention instrument.

C. G. CONN, LTD.
216 Conn Bldg. Elkhart, Ind.

CONN
WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURERS OF BAND INSTRUMENTS

WANT A GOVERNMENT JOB?

**RAILWAY
POSTAL
CLERKS**

\$158 to \$225 Month

Mail Coupon Before You Lose It

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. F-196, Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge copy of 32-page book, "How to get U. S. Government Jobs," list of positions now obtainable and full particulars telling me how to get them.

Name

Address
Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



City and Rural Carriers—Postoffice Clerks—General Clerks
Steady Work—No Layoffs—Paid Vacations
Many Government Jobs Open to Women
Common Education Usually Sufficient



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

How Strong Are You? Can You Do These Things?

Lift 200 lbs. or more overhead with one arm? bend and break a horseshoe? tear two decks of playing cards? bend spikes? chin yourself with one hand?

CAN you do any of them? I can and many of my pupils can. It is remarkable the things a man really can do if he will make up his mind to be strong. I have taken men who were ridiculed because of their frail make-up and developed them into the strongest men of their locality.

I WANT YOU FOR 90 DAYS

These are the days that call for speed. In older days it took years to develop a strong, healthy body. I can completely transform you in 90 days. Yes, make a complete change in your entire physical make-up. In 30 days I guarantee to increase your biceps one full inch. I also guarantee to increase your chest two inches. But I don't quit there. I don't stop till you're a finished athlete—a real strong man. I will broaden your shoulders, deepen your chest, strengthen your neck. I will give you the arms and legs of a Hercules. I will put an armor plate of muscle over your entire body. But with it come the strong, powerful lungs which enrich the blood, putting new life into your entire being. You will be bubbling over with strength, pep and vitality.

A DOCTOR WHO TAKES HIS OWN MEDICINE

Many say that any form of exercise is good, but this is not true. I have seen men working in the factories and mills who literally killed themselves with exercise. They ruined their hearts or other vital organs, ignored themselves or killed off what little vitality they possessed. I was a frail weakling myself in search of health and strength. I spent years in study and research, analyzing my own defects to find what I needed. After many tests and experiments, I discovered a secret of progressive exercising. I increased my own arms over six and a half inches, my neck three inches and other parts of my body in proportion. I decided to become a public benefactor and impart this knowledge to others. Physicians and the highest authorities on physical culture have tested my system and pronounced it to be the safest means of acquiring good health. Do you crave a strong, well-proportioned body and the abundance of health that goes with it? Are you true to yourself? If so, spend a pleasant half-hour in learning how to attain it. The knowledge is yours for the asking.

Send for My New 64-page Book "MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

IT IS FREE—Don't Send One Penny—Your name and address on a postal will do

It contains forty-eight full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over and marvel. This book will prove a real inspiration to you. For the sake of your future health and happiness do not put it off. Head today—right now before you turn this page.

EARLE LIEDERMAN, 805 Broadway, Dept. 3002, New York City

Earle Liederman, Dept. 3002, 805 Broadway, New York City
 Dear Sir: Please send me, absolutely FREE and without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name Age
 Street
 City State

(Please write or print plainly)



If you like to draw, test your natural sense of design, proportion, color, perspective, etc., with our Art Ability Questionnaire. Learn if your talent is worth developing. You will be frankly told what your score is. Many Federal Students are making \$2,000, \$4,000, \$5,000 and \$6,000 yearly—some even more. Students and graduates of the Federal Course are recognized everywhere by art employers and buyers of commercial art. Learn at home in spare time, without previous training. Personal, individual criticisms on your work. Get this art questionnaire.

Send this coupon for Free Test Now!

Federal School of Commercial Designing,
 88 Federal Schools Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.
 Please send me your free Art Questionnaire.

Name
 Present Occupation
 Age
 Address

SONG WRITERS!

STANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES are paid on work found acceptable for publication. Anyone wishing to write either the words or music for songs may submit work for free examination and advice. Past experience unnecessary. New demand created by "Talking Pictures" fully described in our free book. Write for it Today. **NEWCOMER ASSOCIATES**
 722 Earle Building, New York

STOMACH ULCERS

Thousands of sufferers, many cases of years standing, after using the Udga Treatment report amazing recovery. Rids you of pain, vomiting and other discomforts at once. No diet. Improvement steady and rapid. The Udga Treatment is highly recommended for Ulcers, severe chronic Gastritis, Acidosis, Dyspepsia, Indigestion. Guaranteed Satisfaction or No-Pay Trial and \$1,000.00 Reward Offers. WRITE for FREE book on Stomach Sicknesses and letters of praise from former sufferers. **UDGA LABORATORIES** 1375 Dakota Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

SELL ROSECLIFF SHIRTS

Make Steady Money

Showing Samples Men's Shirts Ties, Underwear brings you big cash commissions. One Year Guarantee. No substitutions. Free silk initials. More exclusive Rosecliff features establish leadership. Write for your FREE Outfit NOW!

ROSECLIFF SHIRT CORP.
 Dept. K-2
 1237 Broadway, N. Y.

YOUR OWN SHIRTS and TIES

Outfit Free



Must Men Suffer *after 40?*

A WELL-KNOWN scientist's new book about old age reveals facts which to many men will be amazing. Did you know that two-thirds of all men past middle age are said to have a certain seldom mentioned disorder? Do you know the frequent cause of this decline in health?

Common "Old Age" Symptoms

Medical men know this condition as hypertrophy of the prostate gland. Science now reveals that this swollen gland—painless in itself—not only often cheats men of health, but also bears on the bladder and is often directly responsible for sciatica, back-ache, pains in the legs and feet, and dizziness. When allowed to run on it is frequently the cause of cystitis, severe bladder inflammation.

65% Are Said to Have This Gland Disorder

Prostate trouble is now reached immediately by a new kind of safe home hygiene that goes directly to the gland itself, without drugs, medicine, massage, or application of electricity. Absolutely safe. 50,000 men have used it to restore the prostate gland to normal functioning. The principle involved is recommended by many physicians. Amazing recoveries often made in six days. Another grateful effect is usually the immediate disappearance of chronic constipation. Usually the entire body is toned up. Either you feel ten

years younger in six days or the treatment costs nothing.

Send for FREE Book

If you have gland trouble, or any of the symptoms mentioned, write today for scientist's free book, "Why Many Men Are Old at Forty." You can ask yourself certain frank questions that may reveal your true condition. Every man past 40 should make this test, as insidious prostate disorder often leads to surgery. This book is absolutely free, but mail coupon immediately, as the edition is limited. Address

THE ELECTRO THERMAL CO.

7626 Morris Ave. Steubenville, Ohio

If you live West of the Rockies, mail your inquiry to
The Electro Thermal Co.
303 Van Nuys Building, Dept. 76-G
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

The Electro Thermal Company,
7626 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio
Please send me Free, and without obligation, a copy of your booklet, "Why Many Men Are Old at 40." Mail in plain wrapper.
Name
Address
City State

Who Wants an Auto FREE? STUDEBAKER—BUICK—NASH! Your choice! OR \$2000.00 CASH

Thousands of dollars in new autos and grand prizes will positively be given free to advertise and make new friends for my firm. Choice of Studebaker or Buick or Nash new 4-door sedan delivered free, or \$2000.00 cash. Also Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Chevrolet, Fords, diamonds, other fine prizes and cash will be given free. No problems to do. No fine writing required. No words to make. No picks to add. Bank guarantees all prizes.

Pick Your Lucky Star!

All the stars in the circle are exactly alike except one. That star is different to all the others and it may be a lucky star for you. Can you pick it out? If you can, mark the different star and send the circle to me at once along with your name and address. A prompt answer can start you on the way to win the great \$2000.00 free prize.

BE PROMPT—WIN \$650.00 EXTRA

Someone like you who writes me at once can get \$650.00 cash just for being prompt, so you may thank your lucky stars if you send your answer right off. No risk. Nothing to buy. Nothing hard to do. Over \$7000.00 in valuable prizes will be given free of cost. Send today and I will show you just how you can get your free choice of these grand old new sedans or \$2000.00 cash, without cost or obligation of any kind. All win plan! A reward for everybody! SEND NO MONEY. Answer AT ONCE.

Address GEO. WILSON, DEPT. 52, AUGUSTA, MAINE



READ this Important NEWS ITEM!

New Form of Insurance Protection Sweeping Country

Both Sickness and Accidents Covered at a Cost of Only \$10 a Year

Newark, N. J.—A new type of insurance policy, covering both sickness and accident, has been announced by The North American Accident Insurance Company of Chicago, with offices at 608 Wallach Building, Newark, New Jersey. This amazing policy, which costs less than 3c a day, is meeting with enthusiastic acclaim from men and women throughout the country.

This unique protection costs but \$10.00 a year. Men and women between the ages of 16 and 70 are eligible. No medical examination is required and there are no additional assessments of any kind. The sum of \$10,000 is paid in case of accidental death, \$10,000 for loss of hands, feet or eyesight, and \$25.00 weekly benefit for stated accidents or sickness. Doctor's Bills, Hospital Benefit, Emergency Benefit and other liberal features that help in times of need are all clearly shown in the policy.

This is a simple and understandable policy—without complicated or misleading clauses. You know exactly what every word means—and every word means exactly what it says. Thousands of men and women have already taken advantage of this inexpensive insurance protection.

No one should neglect protecting themselves and family now that it has been made so reasonable. The daily newspapers are filled with hundreds of accounts of sudden tragedies and misfortunes. Floods, fires, epidemics and violent storms take a startling toll of human life and limb. Trains and the ever-increasing automobiles with their hurrying to and fro, are growing more dangerous every day. It is unwise to gamble with fate when the next moment may bring disaster.

The North American Accident Insurance Company is the largest and oldest exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company in America. Its resources are guaranteed; under the direct supervision of 48 state insurance departments. Over \$13,000,000 has been paid out in claims.

Men and women who are interested in this new form of insurance should write a letter or post card for Free Booklet, entitled "Cash or Sympathy." There is no obligation involved. All information will be mailed to you direct. You will not be solicited by any agents. Write to North American Accident Insurance Co. of Chicago, 608 Wallach Building, Newark, N. J.

MAIL COUPON TODAY!

North American Accident Insurance Co. [of Chicago]
 608 Wallach Building, Newark, New Jersey

GENTLEMEN: At no cost to me send copy of your booklet "Cash or Sympathy."

Name

Address

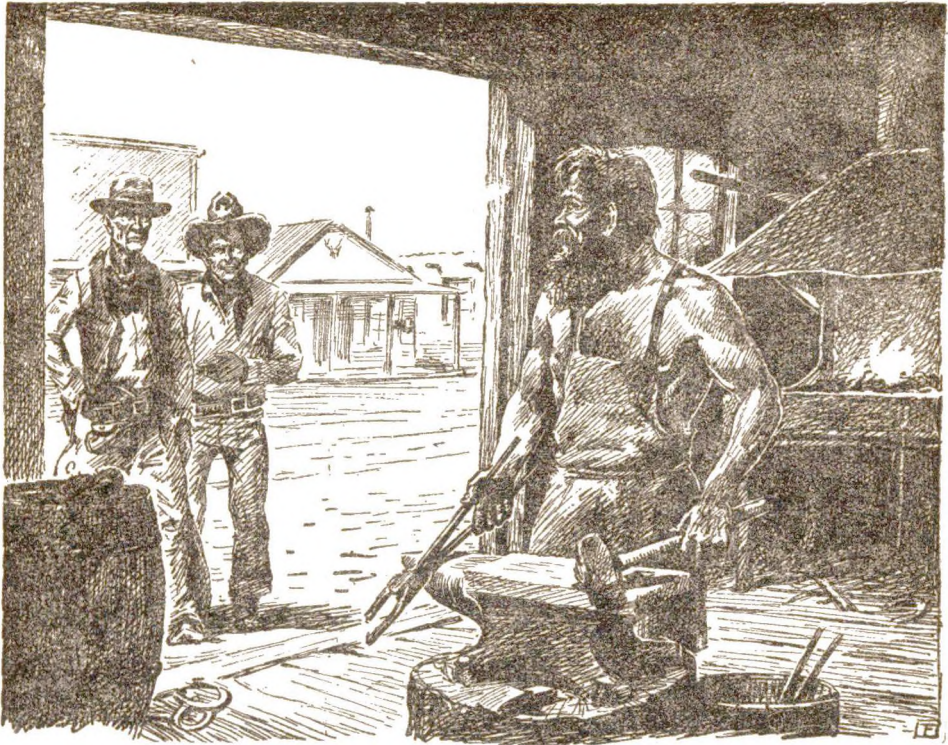
City

Mail the Coupon Today!
 Mail the Coupon before it's too late to protect yourself against the chances of fate picking you out as its next victim.

Largest and Oldest Exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company in America
 Under direct Supervision of 48 State Insurance Departments
ESTABLISHED OVER 43 YEARS
 North American Accident Insurance Co. [of Chic.]
 608 Wallach Building Newark, New Jersey

AGENTS wanted for New Territory

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



King Cole Of Hotrocks

By Robert Ormond Case

Author of "That Blasting Maverick," etc.

CHAPTER I.

MR. WILLIAM "JOKER" SHEA.

THE witching interval that precedes dawn in the high country was upon the land when Mr. Hogan and Mr. Shea, partners, rode into Hotrocks. To the west the sky still arched in jeweled splendor above boldly etched mesa and pinnacle, but eastward a rising tide of color harmony was dimming the twinkling stars. The night winds were dying in the whispering sage, and the shadows were draining from the gorges. The crystalline air had in it a cool, exhilarating quality, like old wine; and from

afar off came the silver lilt of songbirds bursting their lungs to inform those who understood that a new day and a new deal was at hand, and that the world was good to look upon.

Mr. Hogan and Mr. Shea, on more than one occasion, had ridden the stars from the sky, and under a variety of circumstances that form no part of this record, had greeted the flaming dawn. They were not unconscious of the beauty of their surroundings. The fact that deep within them something stirred only sluggishly in response was no key to warped and inartistic characters. For appreciation of the esthetic is a product of leisure, and the youthful pair, in their own parlance, were "dog tired."

Thus they did not pause to speculate on the majesty of their surroundings. Subconsciously they knew that here was splendor, but they looked neither to the right nor the left. From their shadowed sombreros, their eyes were fixed yearningly on the lights of the desert metropolis of Hotrocks, and their splendid mounts ambled wearily forward with the dogged perseverance of range-bred mavericks loping toward a beckoning water hole where there are rest, grass, and shade.

There was also, in the pose of the riders, more than a suggestion that here were men who were loping rapidly away from hostile and perhaps regretful circumstances. They did not look back, indicating that pursuit, if any, lay far in the rear. Yet there was an awareness upon them, a species of alertness despite their weariness of body that spoke of lurid events not yet forgotten. The very avidness of their appraisal of the haven before them hinted that their enjoyment of forthcoming rest and peace was intensified by the memory of an immediate and explosive past.

In point of fact, the circumstances from which they had just emerged had been literally explosive. These had revolved around the personality, the genial and reckless disposition, the singular ability to surround himself with much bizarre and ingenuous grief, of Mr. William "Joker" Shea.

Seeking diversion the previous day, the youthful Mr. Shea had ridden blithely toward Cayuse City, rival metropolis of Hotrocks. It had been the Fourth of July, and in celebration thereof a mammoth carnival had been staged in the energetic village. Arriving at sundown, when festivities were on the upward trend that reached a climax at midnight, Mr. Shea speedily had become embroiled in troublesome events.

Knowing nothing of the aims, ambitions, and fiery civic pride of Cayuse

City, and, according to his artless point of view, caring less, Mr. Shea had blazed a spectacular trail. Briefly chronicled, it had begun with a battle at a gambling house, a fistic imbroglio that had culminated in the persons of himself and his antagonists being propelled violently into the street by certain gorrillalike persons in the pay of the house, technically known as "bouncers." This had been followed by an extremely unfortunate episode occurring in a very public place—namely, the principal and crowded corner of the main thoroughfare—as a result of which Shea had become a marked man.

On this public forum certain leading citizens had assembled for the purpose of exchanging compliments on the quality of civic achievement, the economic opportunities, and general desirability of Cayuse City as compared to the den of reptiles, morons, and physically unfit known as Hotrocks. Sensing immediately that a species of jealousy, if not downright animosity, existed between the rival towns, Mr. Shea's active sense of humor had led him into grave error. With singular lack of tact, during a dramatic lull in the forensics, he had announced in stentorian tones:

"Whoop-ee for Hotrocks!"

This unfortunate utterance resulting in a riot of no mean proportions, Mr. Shea might have suffered grave physical consequences but for the timely intervention of the gaunt and lugubrious Hogan. That towering youth had attached himself to Shea earlier in the evening, attracted to his standard by a melancholy awe for the other's very ability to surround himself with troublesome events. Together they had loped from the danger zone and lost themselves in the carnival crowd.

Ignorant of the fact that his brazen announcement of "Whoop-ee for Hotrocks!" had marked him as an alien enemy within the gates, Shea had proceeded blithely to the Opera House,

trailed by Hogan. Here that soul-searching drama, "Tribby," was being offered by veteran troupers of the one-night stands; and here again Shea's unchastened spirit speedily threw off its bonds. A loud groan unloosed at a highly tragic interval had figuratively brought down the house; and the incensed troupers, enraged at the ruins of their dramatic structure, had ejected him forcibly from the premises and into the grasp of the town marshal.

En route to the jail, and faced by the depressing vision of an indeterminate stay in the local house of correction, Hogan had once more come to the rescue. Appearing buzzardlike on the scene, the melancholy one had diverted the attention of the grimly humorous peace officers sufficiently to permit both to make their escape. Bullets had pursued them in this instance, but by a circuitous route they had found temporary sanctuary in the rear of the livery stable.

Persons less downright of creed might have paused at this point, and after due deliberation have decided that Cayuse City was too small a field of endeavor, and departed forthwith. Hogan, in fact, in his gloomily apologetic manner, had suggested that very course. But Shea had set his heart on witnessing the mammoth and stupendous fireworks advertised as the closing event of the epoch-making carnival; and at this exhibition of pyrotechnics began a chain of humorous events whose climax was anything but humorous. It came within an ace, in fact, of terminating Mr. Shea's energetic, reckless, and colorful career.

One of the giant bombs intended to bring the mammoth and stupendous display to a close had failed to explode, a circumstance that had instantly caught Shea's attention. The endless possibilities for amusement and robust pastime bound up in that behemoth bomb had wrought upon his active imagination.

The more he pondered it, the more intriguing the idea had become: and as he passed through the darkened field he had seized upon the innocent-appearing but dynamic package and concealed it within his shirt.

But Hogan, as usual, had appeared at his side; and almost immediately Shea had been overcome with doubts as to the wisdom of his course. The bomb, reposing in such close proximity to his heart, was a temperamental creation in which vast and explosive potentialities slumbered. The slightest sudden shock, and after the resultant upheaval he, Shea, would undoubtedly be numbered with the missing. But how to get rid of the now unwelcome plaything?

The answer to this question had presented unlooked-for problems. He had attempted to abandon the behemoth in a dark alley adjacent to a massive brick wall and had been industriously shot at by a vigilant night watchman, the brick wall being the southern façade of the local bank. Wrapping the sinister plaything in a paper sack, he had left it casually behind him on a café table, knowing that the waiter, with whom he had had a brief altercation, would examine the package before destroying it. But the waiter had pursued him into the street and tossed the terrific parcel to him carelessly over the heads of the crowd.

In despair, he had decided to follow directions appearing on the paper covering of the bomb. Should it fail to explode, these advices informed all who read, the bomb should be thoroughly soaked in water and the contents scattered in some area remote from travel. There was water in plenty in the huge reservoir located above the village. This area was also remote from travel. Accordingly, Shea had turned his steps in that direction.

Certain facts of which the reckless youth was ignorant had paved the way

for the staggering climax. There had long existed, between Cayuse City and Hotrocks, a feud over water rights. Shea, in the popular frenzy, was a marked man within the city, a Hotrocks spy. A vigilante committee, hastily organized, and armed with rifles, had been sent up to guard the dam. Thus, as Shea appeared, he had been harried from the scene. He had made his escape back to the livery stable only by virtue of the cloaking darkness and his own fleetness of foot, with rifle bullets whistling literally about his ears; and he had still clutched the bomb.

Hogan, waiting at the livery stable, had assumed command at this point. The procedure, as outlined, appeared simple. Shea, being the object of an intensive search by the aroused populace, could no longer appear in public. He, Hogan, would ride forth with the bomb beyond the city limits and summarily bury it, leaving Shea to make his escape from the city when events permitted.

All might have developed as planned, but that Shea, with returning confidence, had varied the method of escape. Instead of stealing forth surreptitiously with his horse from the rear of the livery stable, he had decided to thunder defiantly up the main street, trusting to the element of surprise and the fleetness of his mount. But he had underestimated the caliber of Cayuse City riders. He had been surrounded, taken prisoner, and with staggering rapidity of events, had found himself with a rope around his neck, the central figure in a lynching party.

Thus the stage had been set for Hogan's greatest gesture. Arriving at the scene of the proposed hanging in the very nick of time, and representing himself to be a bloodthirsty citizen intent upon Shea's doom, the melancholy but lion-hearted youth had assumed command of the mob. By a plausible pretext he had shifted the planned execu-

tion to a huge juniper tree farther out along the road to Hotrocks. Beneath this tree, it developed later, he had buried the bomb. At a psychological moment he ignited it; and in the confusion resulting from the terrific explosion, he and the prisoner had escaped.

This had been at approximately one o'clock. An hour's hard riding had shaken off pursuit. Another hour at an easy lope had brought them into view of Hotrocks.

Even an unprejudiced observer, upon analysis of these facts, might have leaped to the instant conclusion that the youthful Mr. Shea was a born trouble-maker. On more than one occasion, when a riot had been disentangled, the wounded and maimed checked off, and inquiry made into the source of the imbroglio, bystanders had loudly affirmed that they needed but a glance at Shea's freckled, genial, square-jawed features, the reckless glint of his blue eyes, and the flaming color of his hair, to fix not only his Celtic origin but also his ability to attract grief as a magnet attracts steel.

Mr. Shea himself was prone to deny such allegations with vast and shocked surprise. For each of the many lurid episodes of his career he found persuasive and logical explanation, on the score of circumstances, or Lady Luck, or fate. He had the ability to forget quickly, to revive instantly, to come up smiling. His spectacular trail at Cayuse City, for example, had already been charged off mentally as a snarl of hostile events that had moved in upon him through no overt act of his own.

The towering Hogan was not so sure. He suspected that from the very nature of things spectacular developments must follow Shea's trail as closely and inevitably as that genial youth's shadow, and he faced this prospect with foreboding.

Not the least of the forces that had drawn the pair together was the fact that they were opposites in type. **A**

turning point in the gaunt Hogan's existence had come on the previous evening in Cayuse City, when he had stood in the shadows of the livery stable and Shea had ridden blithely into his life, grinning. A slender youth mounted on a magnificent horse, sitting the saddle with careless ease, the twinkle in his eye and the set of his jaw proclaiming that here was one for whom life, in a manner of speaking, was but a joyful tour of exploration and before whom the world of adventure unfolded like a Promised Land.

It was as though, for Hogan, a phase of existence forever denied to him was here personified; and with the true humility of the lionlike of heart, he yearned only for the privilege of "trailing along." That the business of following where the spectacular youth led was a prospect bristling with grief was a matter of no moment. Life was full of trouble, and with privileges come responsibilities. Being self-deprecatory by nature and conscious of his own shortcomings, he would never have had the temerity to suggest such a course; but with awed and unbelieving exultance he had agreed when Shea, with an outwardly magnanimous gesture that hid a growing respect for the sterling qualities of his elongated and melancholy protégé, had suggested that henceforth they should "make it two."

Thus in the chill splendor of early dawn they rode down into Hotrocks. As they entered upon the deserted main street, where the sound of their progress raised up hollow echoes, Shea squared his shoulders like one who sheds troubling memories of the past and looks about him with reviving interest.

"Cowboy," he admonished, grinning upon his partner, "snap out of it! All ain't yet lost. It's daylight in the swamps. We park our critters and find us the best feather bed the local Ritz-Waldorf has got to offer. We crawl in an' sleep for a week. Then we rise

up an' look over the ace-high pay rolls of this woolly region. When word gets around that two tophands like us has lit in their midst, them cattle barons will be standin' in line with their hats in their hands. Is that a pleasin' prospect, or ain't it?"

"An' whilst we're honorin' this hard-boiled village with our presence," Hogan reminded gloomily, "we ain't undertakin' to dazzle the natives with our wit, manly beauty, and interest in world affairs. From what they told us up to Cayuse City, this enterprisin' crossroads is a reg'lar gold mine for a gent that's lookin' for trouble. But havin' done turned over a new leaf, we're watchin' our step regardless, huh?"

"You're burnin' me to a crisp," Shea accused. "Bearin' down brutal. It gripes me. But just you forget that Cayuse City business, ol' son. I've had enough grief to last me for some considerable spell. World affairs don't interest me none whatever. Just observe me steppin' around this village dainty an' dignified an' you'll admit they was never a shrinkin' violet that shrunk so fast as me. Earthquakes, riots, an' sudden death could bust loose all around me an' I'd only yawn. Yore well-wishin' side-kick has done acquired wisdom. All I crave is rest an' quiet."

But Hogan listened to this statement of new-born principles with morose disbelief. As they left their horses at the livery stable and turned toward the welcoming portals of Hotel Hotrocks, he sighed heavily, like one who, expecting nothing, is thereby steeled against disappointment.

CHAPTER II.

SHEA ACQUIRES A GRUDGE.

BECAUSE of their weariness of body, Hogan had mentally placed the middle of the coming afternoon as the earliest moment in which his energetic partner could possibly become embroiled

in what the gaunt one was accustomed cynically to term "world affairs." They must sleep, he reasoned, well into the forenoon. Then they must eat. Thereafter, it could be expected, would follow an interval of pleasant reflection. In the heat of the day it would be natural to doze for a space in uptilted chairs in some quiet rendezvous of pastime and refreshment before stirring abroad on the business of interviewing prospective pay rolls.

In point of fact, it was less than two hours after they had settled themselves in their comfortable hotel bed, with orders to the yawning night clerk that they were not to be disturbed under any pretext, that an insistent forerunner of coming events began to register on Shea's sleep-drugged consciousness.

Between the smoke-blackened walls of a familiar bunk house, or snug in his blankets with the jeweled ceiling of the sky overhead, the energetic youth's slumber was invariably deep, dreamless, and unbroken. The whisper of the night wind, the rustle of sagebrush, the far-off silvery chorus of coyotes, the stamping of his hobbled horse in the gloom, all fitted into previous memory channels and could cause no ripple on the lethargic sea in which he was immersed.

But the unaccustomed softness of the hotel bed—second floor, corner front, two fifty with bath—the luxury of rustling linen, and perhaps some aftermath of his late lurid experiences, made him restless and somewhat ill at ease. He slept fitfully, despite his weariness; and through the misty imagery of his dreams strange processions moved, ghostly events unfolded. Once more he rode at the head of a grim column, bound and with a rope about his neck. Once more, as in that midnight hour at Cayuse City, he looked his last upon the high stars and steeled himself against that terrific instant when his soul would

hurtle, reeling, into eternity. And again there was confusion about him; he was spurring through darkness blacker than a tomb, bound still, calling loudly for Hogan, and as in that other moment, came the gaunt one's voice, ringing with triumph: "This a way, cowboy!"

It had been approximately three o'clock when they had arrived in Hot-rocks. At five, or thereabouts, Shea's disordered dreams were pierced by a sudden, harsh, clanging sound, like the beating of a discordant gong, that jerked him into instant wakefulness. He arose on an elbow, alert and scowling.

Again it assailed his ears, a metallic tintinabulation that was singularly unmusical. Peering out the window at the street below, he identified the source of the uproar. It came from a squat, dilapidated blacksmith shop across the way. He could not see the early worker who thus had shattered the quiet dignity of the sunlit morning. But black smoke was pouring from the yawning doorway, and he could hear the growling of the forge. As he glared, muttering, sparks flew from a shadow-shrouded anvil, and the brazen sound once more profaned the hush of early dawn.

He threw himself back on the pillow and composed himself again for slumber. It was now broad daylight. Hogan snored peacefully at his side. Shea told himself that having determined the cause of the disturbance, he would promptly forget it, relax in comfortable lethargy, and sleep for a week.

But though he closed his eyes, he could not close his ears. It was as though the clanging protest of the anvil below was pitched in a key fiendishly designed to fray his taut nerves. Time after time his consciousness sank into luxurious depths, only to rise up, quivering, as at the unemotional insistence of a toothache. He found himself waiting, even in half dreams, for the next resounding blow.

Now the youthful Mr. Shea, as he

himself would have been the first to admit, was of cheerful and sunny disposition, generous and sympathetic of instinct, and prone always to interpret human motives in the best light. Yet, as he lay in his comfortable bed, from which sleep had departed, while the coolness of morning dissipated slowly before the encroaching heat of day, he found himself in the grip of a vast and growing animosity. This speedily degenerated into a more searing and primitive emotion. It was directed against the unknown worker at the anvil below.

Gloatingly, he pictured this callous toiler whose misdirected energy had thus infringed upon the rights of those who craved to sleep. A burly fellow, no doubt, massive and arrogant in his fancied security of physical size. In imagination, he could see him plainly, bulking beside his anvil, leering in spiteful glee as he produced his fearful din, chuckling aloud as he found some pretext for adding more piercing notes to the brazen uproar, laughing outright as he came by chance upon an iron bar that revealed new and more nerve-shattering possibilities.

The picture enraged the youthful Mr. Shea. In his own parlance, as he pondered it, he felt himself slipping. As a peculiarly shuddering and discordant clamor burst upon him like a defiant challenge, he leaped savagely forth and pounced upon his clothing.

"Now what?" demanded Hogan, rearing up. "What bit you, cowboy?"

"They's a mean, rattlin' sidewinder is going to get exterminated pronto," stated Shea ominously. "Don't you hear that blasted blacksmith?"

"Sure, I hear him. What of it?"

"Plenty," said Shea. "I aim to light on him like an avengin' angel an' ride him plumb into the ground. For which said purpose I'm right now pullin' on my spurs. Havin' ruined my beauty sleep, I've turned ugly an' done it right. Leave him laugh that off."

"Sho!" said Hogan. "Don't tell me you've acquired a grudge against that lowly maverick just because he done started to work early in the morning? Get a holt of yoreself. Maybe he's got a family to support. He's got to struggle along. He'd ought to have a medal hung on him on account of bein' so industrious."

"I aim to hang something on him," Shea promised, tightening his belt. "An' it won't be any medal. If he's got a family, they'll yell for the police when they see him comin'. Just you sit tight, ol' hoss, while I provide this village with an A-1 funeral. It's a public service that ain't to be avoided."

"Wait!" Hogan detached himself from the bed with a groan. "I'll trail along. When the coroner's jury meets, they got to have an onprejudiced witness. Son of a gun, cowboy"—the gaunt one's tones were plaintive as he drew on his lengthy chaps—"you shorely get action pronto. We ain't been in this crossroads more than three-four hours, an' already you're headin' for grief!"

"That's aplenty," said Shea. "Less talk an' more speed. Don't wait to part yore hair, or think up beautiful thoughts with which to start the day. Facts is facts, an' the way is plain. That hefty bull snake can't make a boiler factory out of this cuckoo's nest an' get away with it. Even a lowly cowboy's got rights, an' I aim to maintain 'em."

On the way down the street, however, the gloomy one persisted in his attempt to soften the promised tempest.

"Listen!" he admonished. "Give the lowly buzzard a chance to explain how come. If you wasn't riled up an' hostile you'd admit that he had a license to wrassle with his anvil at any time the spirit moved him. They's no law against it."

"S'all right," said Shea darkly. "He's run smack into the said law of self-preservation. I'll gamble the citizens here-

abouts has been puttin' up with his gymnastics for quite a spell. Maybe he's got 'em buffaloeed. But an adjuster of things that ain't right has done popped up. This bulgin', sleep-destroyin' Napoleon has done met his Waterloo."

They emerged upon the quiet thoroughfare where the freshness and coolness of morning yet lingered. The scene breathed of tranquillity. Rectangles of brilliant sunlight lay athwart the ancient dust. Shopkeepers along the way were lowering awnings, sweeping areas of board sidewalk before their establishments, or leaning on brooms, engaged in chuckling conversation. From a café hard by came the pleasing odor of frying bacon and the sound of a cheerful and not unmelodious voice raised in song. In that moment, it was not the Hotrocks of legend and unquestioned history that met the eye—a primitive outpost of the high desert where, on occasion, so its admirers affirmed, rattlesnakes foregathered and wild cats squalled in unison—but a sleepy village, rousing from its lethargy in early morning to take up again its routine and peaceful pursuits.

"Look it over, cowboy," persisted the gloomy Hogan. "Ain't this a restful layout? Just because you missed yore forty winks ain't any excuse to start a riot. What say we call off this more or less justifiable homicide an' take on a load of vittles? You can't start no riot worth mentionin' on an empty stummick."

"No," said Shea, pulling his sombrero lower over his eyes. "I got to have my li'l work-out before breakfast. It'll give me an appetite. Now just lay off yore noble ideas, cowboy. You could coo all day an' still you wouldn't take rank as a blasted dove. I'm some hostile an' set in my ways. I've lost sleep, an' nothin' less than a blacksmith's hide is goin' to foot the bill. Yeah, with the ears missin'."

As a matter of fact, the youthful and

belligerent Mr. Shea was not of the iron purpose his resolute words were intended to indicate. He was, rather, a creature of impulse, prone to react to the mood of the moment. The savage pinnacle of his rage had already passed. That which had loomed up as a monstrous wrong while he had tried vainly to sleep had now, under Hogan's persuasiveness and the benign environment of the village street, diminished to a vastly irritating circumstance whose injustice was open to debate.

Nevertheless he strode purposefully on, striving to gather about him his late armor of truculence.

"Maybe I won't cripple him for life," he conceded. "He's prob'ly entitled to struggle along. But I shorely aim to parley with the maverick. Just why he's got to make that ongodly hullabaloo when folks is sweatin' blood tryin' to sleep, is one of them mysteries that has got to be explored."

They had now reached the smoke-blackened entrance of the shop. Shea walked in without ceremony, trailed by his partner. He moved somewhat circumspectly in the shadowed interior, to protect his gorgeous mohair chaps from contact with the soot and grime that encrusted all objects about him, and paused to survey the scene, thumbs hooked in his belt.

A dingy chaos of wagon wheels, heavy parts of farm machinery, iron bars, huge barrels, and sacks of coal stood hard by or leaned against the gloomy walls. At the back was the forge, where sullen fires glowed. In the center was the anvil. Here bulked the blacksmith, a bearded giant of a man; and his helper, a slender, thin-chested youth obviously not yet out of his teens.

This mismated pair were busied with a distorted length of iron bar, a segment of which glowed cherry red. With a pair of heavy tongs, the giant was holding the bar in position, his hairy features

ruddy with reflected light, and scowling. The youth was swinging a ponderous sledge hammer, a task which obviously required the utmost of his frail strength. His thin shoulders writhed as he heaved the behemoth hammer aloft. Teeth set and features glistening, he strove to bring it down with force; and the resultant impact shook him to the fingertips.

"Lean on it!" growled the giant. "Attaboy! Once more, an' she's jake."

With an effort, the boy delivered a last resounding blow. The giant swung the bar back to the forge and thrust it into the glowing core of the fire. His helper stood trembling, leaning on the sledge. His narrow chest heaved, and with a thin, grimy hand that shook a little, he flung back the dark, manelike hair that hung over his eyes.

The giant leaned on the lever attached to the dusty bellows. He extended a huge, corded arm, naked to the shoulder, and heaped up more coal on the glowing fire. He began a rhythmic sweep on the bellows lever, a motion born of long experience that seemed as unconscious as the act of breathing. Settling his bulk restfully, he bent shaggy brows on the partners, his manner indicating that, having reached a temporary lull in his activities, he could now turn his attention to trivial affairs.

"Yeah?" he growled. "What you gents lookin' for?"

"Trouble," said Shea.

"I've got plenty to spare," said the giant. "Name yore brand."

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED DIVERSION.

IT was obvious that here was one of nimbler wit than his bulk would seem to indicate. It was also apparent that the bulky one, being neither bashful nor retiring, was willing to meet truculent overtures more than halfway. Shea grinned and pushed back his hat.

"I had a hunch you was an obligin' critter," he opined. "This here's my lucky day. Big boy, I got a bone to pick with you. If you'll just step outside for a minnit, maybe we can get together an' growl in unison. When we get more light on the subject, I'm gamblin' I ain't going to like yore looks a-tall."

The giant stared, and a sardonic twinkle crept into his sullen eyes. He studied the belligerent youth from head to foot in leisurely fashion, and daintily stifled a yawn with a huge and hairy hand.

"Tut, tut!" he admonished. "Don't tell me it's so gosh-awful important I got to quit the forge? It ain't reasonable. I'm a workin' man, you savvy, an' can't take time out to listen to the idle chatter of every Shasta Daisy that springs up underfoot. Just you speak yore piece, cowboy. I'll promise to listen polite an' attentive."

"If what I got to say is idle chatter," averred Shea, "I'm no judge of fightin' talk. Just detach yoreself from yore humble toil for a second, mister. It won't make no difference to yore income tax, an' it'll be a plumb enjoyable experience you can look back on. You need a rest, anyway, an' just think how refreshin' it'll be in one of them nice, soft, hospital beds!"

"Go on, dad!" spoke up the blacksmith's helper eagerly. He had listened to the interchange open-mouthed, and now his thin, boyish features were flushed with loyal rage. "It'll only take a second, just like he says. I'll keep the iron hot while you bust him in two."

"Attaboy!" the giant approved. His sullen eyes softened as they rested on the frail youth. His bearded features split in a tolerant grin. "You got the heart, even if you ain't got the heft, huh? But don't get all steamed up about this roarin' lion, Buddy. When you've lived as long as me, you'll learn that the world is full of a number of

folks. Some tend to their own business regardless, an' others rush in where them angels fear to tread. We'll find out what ails him before we get hostile."

"An' by the same token," said Shea, beaming upon the boy, "it ain't right to gang up on me so enthusiastic. With a wild cat like you on my neck, I'd be licked before I start. Mister, it's kind of beside the point, but this lad hadn't ought to be in no blacksmith shop. How come you load such hefty work on a half-grown stray like him?"

"That," said the giant with sudden fierce grimness, "is my business." It was as though the question had touched upon something that was neither casual nor amusing. "Shoot the works, young feller!" he growled. "What's on yore mind, if any?"

Shea stared, his synthetic belligerence momentarily pushed into the background. He glanced at the boy, who leaned on the sledge, pale and intent, and back at the father. The giant's reaction to the half-careless query had been out of all proportion to the point involved. Something savage and aroused had flamed in his gaze at mention of his son, like that of a grizzly, helpless despite his strength, peering forth from his lair upon a hostile world; and suddenly, to his inner chagrin, Shea felt his own carefully nurtured animosity fading.

He scratched his flaming head, somewhat at a loss, and searched in vain for the weighty reasons that had caused him to embark upon his warlike campaign. Instead, his late grievance seemed trivial, his bone of contention absurd. He told himself that his resentment should be kindled anew by the glowering truculence of manner the other had assumed so swiftly. But the giant's smoldering bitterness was not directed toward him personally, he knew. It breathed of hostile circumstances long arrayed against him; and Shea was troubled by a growing convic-

tion that here was one who needed help rather than persecution.

As he hesitated, a shadow darkened the doorway at his back. The giant's gaze shifted beyond him, and Shea saw his great bulk stiffen. His bearded features set into impassive lines, but his sullen eyes were intent and apprehensive. The boy, too, drew more erect, glanced half fearfully from his father toward the door, and his thin fingers gripped the handle of the sledge convulsively.

Shea whirled to face the newcomer, and at first was unable to fathom the sudden and almost panic-stricken reaction of the pair.

A small, dapper, smiling individual was strolling into the shop. He was clad in the dignified Prince Albert and broad-brimmed hat of the Southern colonel, and a choice cigar was clamped between his thin lips. He was carrying a cane, with which he struck carelessly at objects in passing. As he advanced with mincing gait through the dust of the shop, he avoided contact with grime and soot; and the burly blacksmith, forsaking the forge, advanced hesitantly to meet him, wiping his toil-scarred hands on his leather apron with an unconscious gesture.

At first glance there was nothing impressive about the newcomer. Merely a pompous little man, leaning on his cane, flicking the ash from his cigar with a well-manicured finger as he looked about the gloomy environs in leisurely fashion. But these affectations of dress and manner, Shea speedily saw, were no index to his caliber. His eyes were singularly cold and unemotional; and with an odd shock of surprise, the youth realized that his smile was fixed and mirthless, a habitual and faintly supercilious mask.

He swept the buckaroos with a brief, impersonal survey that appeared to catalogue them among the other uninteresting fixtures of the shop, glanced at the

grime-streaked boy with fastidious distaste, and faced the ponderous blacksmith.

"Good morning, Hank." He spoke with half-contemptuous tolerance, as one might have addressed a huge and unintelligent mongrel. "At it early, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. Cole," said the giant almost eagerly, as though hopeful of approbation. "Got a heap of work ahead of me. Figger to get it out as fast as I can. Me an' Buddy here," he added. "He's helpin' me."

"So I perceive," said the other dryly. "Good exercise for him, no doubt. It should serve to keep his mind off the ambitious ideas he's been entertaining of late, eh? But Hank, my good fellow, why do you insist on beginning your activities at such a blasted inconvenient hour of the morning? I swear I've heard your infernal racket since sun-up."

"A feller's got to pound 'em on the tail to make a go of it," said the blacksmith. "Figgered to stack up as much as I could. Before to-morrow."

"Industry," said the little man, waving his cigar, "is a cardinal virtue. But it can become obnoxious. Not only this morning, but other mornings, you've been waking the dead with your dashed uproar. Just what did you hope to gain by it? Come, now, Hank, make a clean breast of it. Er—figuratively, of course."

"Well——" The giant hung his head and shuffled his enormous feet. "I figgered maybe if you seen I was as busy as a beaver all the while, it would—kind of help out. Showed I meant business. Maybe when the show-down come, you'd give me a white man's chance."

"You simple-minded yokel!" said the little man, and Shea was aghast at the contempt and deliberate goading in his voice. "So you thought it would kind of help out when the show-down came, eh? Bah, my good fellow! Let me

point out the error into which you have fallen. I had an enjoyable session of poker last night. Thoroughly enjoyable, but fatiguing. I needed sleep this morning; and my sleep, you understand, is of far more importance in the scheme of things than your lowly labor. So instead of creating a favorable impression by your fiendish din, you've irritated me, Hank. Yes, you've irritated me. I'm in a vile temper. What do you think of that, eh?"

"Didn't aim to," muttered the giant. "Just doin' the best I could." He peered down at the other, desperation smoldering in his sullen gaze. "That means I'm through, huh?"

The little man appeared to beam, cigar uptilted; but his hard eyes were gloating.

"Now, now," he admonished. "Mustn't jump at conclusions. Perhaps, let us say. Perhaps not. In this troublous world, Hank, there is a law of compensation as inevitable as time and tide. Let us put it this way. You have stolen two hours of precious sleep from me. I must be repaid. During the past months you have dreamed that I would be lenient when the hour struck, eh? Well, then, in return for the fact that you have irritated me this morning, you may torture your oxlike imagination on what may happen to-morrow. Perhaps I will be lenient. Perhaps not. Who knows?"

"Listen!" the blacksmith burst forth. "Talk straight! It ain't me only that's the goat, but likewise Buddy here, an' the woman. Don't leave me nailed this a way, Mr. Cole. If you got it in for me, I might as well hang up my apron now an' call it a day."

"You're squirming," said the other smilingly. "Already the demons of doubt are eating your heart, eh? That's fine. That's as it should be. A day of mental anguish will be good for the soul, Hank. Yes, indeed." He turned away, stifling a yawn. "Heigh-o! It's

turned out to be a cheerful morning after all, what? Well, I must trot along. Meanwhile"—he paused in the doorway and shook his cane warningly—"no more noise so early in the morning, old fellow. If you please."

As though the interchange had put him in genial and expansive mood, the little man strode jauntily away, humming a sprightly melody beneath his breath.

For a space the giant stood, staring at the empty doorway where a golden rectangle of sunlight lay athwart the ancient dust. Then he seated himself heavily on an empty keg, his bearded jaw resting in his hands.

"Well, I'll be danged!" breathed Shea in awe. "I've seen some spineless monuments in my time, big boy. But you shorely stand at the head of the class. Why didn't you slap that stingin' lizard clean off the face of the earth?"

The blacksmith peered at him dejectedly, as though becoming aware for the first time that the youths were still on the premises.

"He's got the bulge on me," he muttered. "An' he knows it. They's somethin' about that feller that I can't figger. He ain't human."

"Who is he, anyway?" demanded Shea. "I never seen a gent strut his stuff just like that before. What's the world comin' to when a underfed bozo like him can slide in here an' make a moose like you sweat blood? Just like a grinnin' cat playin' with an overgrown mouse, by gravy! It ain't reasonable. An' all because yore enterprisin' industry waked the 'Great Mogul' up earlier than he was accustomed to. The maverick's loco! He'd ought to have had that cigar pushed clean through the back of his head. I was itchin' to do it, big boy, an' me only a spectator; but I figgered all the while you was goin' to come to life, grasp him by the face, an' make him snap like a whip. What was holdin' you back?"

"When you've lived as long as me," said the blacksmith, "you'll learn that they's some jack pots where heft don't count. The designs follered by that snake charmer is too deep for a lowly gent like me. I'm just naturally out of my depth. He's got me buffaloed. Yeah," he added morosely, "an' others hereabouts. The woods is full of 'em."

"Sho!" said Shea. "You don't have to understand a machine to throw a large-size monkey wrench into the works. They's somethin' about this struttin', smooth-talkin' maverick that riles me. For two cents I'd go snarlin' on his trail just to see what it's all about."

"Don't do it," advised the giant. "You're young an' got yore own life to live. Get tangled up in his web an' you'll age fast." He arose and approached the forge, his ponderous frame moving with the shambling gait of one in whom springs of energy and hope have died. "Well, Buddy, we might as well hit the ball. We're sunk, I reckon, but they's nothin' else to be done."

The ancient bellows wheezed. The fire glowed anew. The giant bestowed upon the youths a half-apologetic glance.

"It plumb slipped my mind for the minnit. You lads craved somethin' from me, huh?"

"Nothin'," said Shea hastily. "Nothin' a-tall. Just dropped around to pass the time of day. Hogan, let's drag along an' find some vittles."

CHAPTER IV.

WORLD AFFAIRS.

HOMBRE," said Shea to the lanky and cynical waiter who placed ham and eggs and coffee before them in the Hotrocks Café, "me an' my side-kick is strangers hereabouts. We crave a little information on matters of public interest. You're undoubtedly in a position to furnish it, bein' a fixture in these parts."

"I ain't boastin' about it none," said the other. "An' I ain't guaranteein' the quality of the information. But such as it is, you're welcome to it."

"Takin' in the sights of yore more or less favored region this morning," said Shea, "we got an eyeful of one of yore leading citizens. A gent who don't cast much of a shadow, but evidently makes up in meanness what he lacks in heft. I'm referrin' to a fire-spittin' stuffed shirt who passes by the name of Cole."

The waiter eyed him in mild astonishment, cast a furtive glance about him, and grinned.

"It's plain you're a stranger here, cowboy. Shorely to goodness you ain't applyin' such undignified an' irreverent language to 'King' Cole? Folks who harbor disrespectful thoughts like them in this land of the flea an' home of the slave generally speaks 'em in a whisper. Yeah, an' then dive into the nearest cyclone cellar an' set there quakin'."

"Well, I'm hanged!" averred Shea. "How do they get that way? What ails em?"

"Since I'm only a lowly hash slinger in this ritzy beanery," said the other, "with no family to support, an' havin' only one life to lose, I'll tell you. King Cole's the big squeeze in these parts. What he has, he holds; an' what he ain't got, he gets. He owns the hotel an' the bank and the leadin' store. He runs the saloons, the dance halls, and gambling halls. What he don't own, he's got mortgages on, includin' the souls of some of the local gorillas who're so hard they pick their teeth with railroad spikes an' bed down by choice on cactus. He's got a mortgage on the roof over yore head and the table you're settin' at. The aigs in which you're sinkin' yore teeth was prob'ly laid by his special permission. Yeah, an' if the lowly hen which laid 'em hadn't cackled to suit him, her name would be noodles."

"H'm," said Shea. "All that, huh?"

What you're aimin' to say is, in this enterprisin' puddle, he's the big toad."

"The great warty reptyle himself," agreed the other. "In person. He's got a yen for power, and has done acquired it. He's got all the citizens buffaloed. When he cracks the whip, they dance. When he frowns, men faint. Onnatural mothers in these parts scare their young ones by tellin' 'em King Cole'll get 'em if they don't watch out. Yeah, he's one of them ogres, an' no mistake."

"Funny," Shea ruminated, "that somebody ain't taken a fall out of him. Just on general principles. Seems like he's tromped these lowly citizens under-foot long enough."

"He's the kind of gent," said the other sagely, "whom you take a fall out of when he's a long ways off. More than once I've said to myself: 'Feller, you ain't nobody's pet. Give yoreself a new shot of self-respect by tellin' the gilded sidewinder where to head in. It'll be one of them memories to cling to.' Yeah, an' what happens? When that pint an' a half of poison strolls in an' gives me the eye, supercilious, I ain't a roarin' lion no more. I dash around pop-eyed an' full of business, as much as to say: 'I'm only the dust under yore feet, Mr. Cole. Haywire dust, at that. Excuse it, please.' An' that's the way it goes. I dunno why I stick around this village. They's other hash houses down the line where I could spend my declinin' years. I reckon I'm just waitin' hopeful. Maybe it'll rain some day. There'll be a big puddle in the street. King Cole'll fall in it, an' I'll see him splash. I'll laugh—an' then run like blazes."

The pair chuckled at this eloquent picture; but a speculative gleam was kindling in Shea's blue eyes.

"Hogan, ol' son," he said thoughtfully, "I've always had an ondemocratic ambition to hobnob with royalty. Something tells me I'm going to get better acquainted with this said King Cole be-

fore leaving Hotrocks. It's an idea that's growin' on me at a great rate."

"It would," agreed Hogan gloomily. "I could see it startin' down to the blacksmith shop. The way you done transferred yore affections from that overgrown son of toil to this gilded sidewinder is one of them mysteries. You rolled down there breathin' fire an' brimstone, aimin' to slaughter that be-whiskered monument like nobody's business. Then this said King Cole pops up an' you stagger away gnashin' yore teeth on account of him gettin' hard-boiled with yore late victim!"

"I done had a change of heart," Shea defended himself. "Anybody with half an eye could see that that alfalfa-trimmed moose was so bore down with responsibilities he was walkin' bow-legged. Made me feel like a danged hoss-fly that was buzzin' around a big, hard-workin' critter who was just ploddin' along. Him an' that ganglin', underferd boy! Yeah, an' then this stingin' lizard Cole minces up like he was castin' pearls before swine, an' prods the lowly maverick just for the pleasure of seein' him squirm! It's plain he's on their necks like the old man of the sea. Detachin' him therefrom appeals to me as havin' all the earmarks of a noble deed."

"They don't come no nobler," agreed Hogan. "No doubt of it. But if you get down to cases, what's it to us? I got the milk of human kindness in me, you understand, but the world's full of grief. If we undertook to straighten out all the kinks in this vale of tears an' had the stayin' qualities of Methuselah, folks would point us out, tolerant. 'Look at them rickety ancients,' they'd say. 'Been at it a thousand years, an' they ain't got started yet.' No, no, cowboy. Get a holt of yoreself. We got only one life to live. Right now we're lookin' for a job, not rearrangin' the pattern of world affairs."

"Just the same," persisted Shea, "I

aim to inquire a little farther into this little layout. They's somethin' about the way that hefty blacksmith looked at that grinnin', undersized Simon Legree that got under my skin. Like he was backed into a corner with his lad beside him, desperate, an' no help in sight. This a way, Ulysses!" He beckoned to the cynical waiter, who was leaning in a jaundiced pose on a near-by counter. "We've done assimilated yore late esteemed information. They's a few more dark corners on which we crave light."

"We strive to please," averred the cynical one. "What'll it be?"

"Down the street a piece we met up with a hefty blacksmith," said Shea. "What's his status quo, casus belly, an' tipsy facto? In other words, since you ain't acquainted with them fancy legal terms, give us the low-down on his family tree, personal tastes, and sundries."

"I'll tell you a story about him," said the other, grinning. "It'll bust you in two. A couple days from now, when you're still laughin', way out in the desert where they ain't any chest protectors, just recall you brought it on yourself."

"We'll take a chance," said Shea. "Fire when ready."

"As a blacksmith, that there Hank Slocum shorely knows his rutabagas an' roasting ears," said the waiter. "He's one industrious citizen, law-abidin', an' with a family to support. But he wasn't always that law abidin', an' industrious; an' only a generous-hearted an' near-sighted spectator would claim he supported his family. Fact is, he was a gamblin', drinkin', fightin' son of a gun on wheels."

"A wolf, huh?"

"From the tall timber," averred the other. "He was blacksmithin' in the mines over yonder on Copper Ridge. They's plenty mountain dew up there, an' once a month on the average he'd

come smokin' for town, the wind whistlin' in his hackles, an' bellerin' for gore. When they seen him comin' they'd clear the streets, swear in a couple deputy marshals, put a new padlock on the jail, an' the gamblers on King Cole's pay roll would get ready for a clean-up.

"But 'bout six months ago he turned over a new leaf. His woman gets the credit, mostly. How she done it was one of them miracles, but she done it right. Got a couple of his hefty pay checks away from him an' come into town herself. The blacksmith that had previously held forth here had just kicked off in a free-for-all down to Grogan's, so she bought the shop, an' bought a shack with a garden out on the gulch to live in. Then she fetched Hank into town an' put him to work. He's been a good Injun practically ever since. Folks wouldn't believe it at first. But after he'd tossed a couple gorillas out of the shop on their ears, an' dang near busted in two a still-faced feller on King Cole's pay roll who come slidin' in with a bottle of square-face, they come to the conclusion that he'd done laid his war paint aside."

"H'm," said Shea. "Not so bad. But what's so gosh-awful funny about a gent straightenin' up, gettin' a holt of himself, an' settin' out to be a stalwart citizen?"

"I was comin' to that," said the other. "His foot slipped once, in a manner painful to witness. He'd worked here a couple months an' never touched a drop. No gamblin', no nothin'. Just tendin' strictly to business. So his woman probly figgered it was safe to leave for a day or two, an' take the stage for a visit down to the county seat, where that spindlin' lad of theirs was goin' to high school.

"Well, sir, she done so. Took the evening stage, an' she was hardly out of town when Hank strolls down the main drag with a far-away look in his eye, like a gent who hears them distant

voices callin'. It was the said call of the wild; an' when Hank bounces out of Grogan's a little later an' turns loose the kind of a war whoop that makes yore scalp crawl, it was plain to all beholders that he'd sprouted tufts on his ears an' thumbs on his feet. He was wild, folks! Lit like a Christmas tree, an' rarin' to blaze a trail.

"I ain't goin' to weary you with them sordid details as to his trail-blazin' enterprises. Ruin an' desolation follered him. Cripples sat up in the dust after he'd passed by an' wondered what tromped on 'em. Takin' the village by surprise like that, he stood it on its ear an' shook it apart to see how it worked. Finally they got him quieted down. Corralled him in a cutthroat poker game where a gent's life wasn't worth a blue chip; an' spectators stood around ten deep to see what would happen when his stack was gone an' he'd turn real peevish.

"But the luck of gents whose judgment is throwin' handsprings amongst the Shasta Daisies was with him. He ran whizzers where no self-respectin' gent would try to bluff, drew to three-card flushes without battin' an eye, an' when them cold-eyed sharps figgered he was out on a limb he had fours. Finally come the big jack pot of the game, when there was a hatful of gold on the table. He calmly fills a straight flush busted in the middle, an' drags it in.

"With all that filthy lucre stacked in front of him an' them gamblers lickin' their chops, pop-eyed, eager to get it back, Hank gets an idea. Like a gleam through the mist that a way. 'Gents,' he says, 'thish lile game is—hic—shtopping for minnit. Got a lile—hic—banking to do. Thiss ain't just iron men, gents. It's mortgage money, schoolin' for the lad, an'—hick—knick-knacks for the wife. Got to drag a lile percentage.'

"So he takes that said gold an' puts it in a can. It ain't a large can—about so big—but she's brimming full. Every-

body seen it. An' he staggers away, headin' out of town to bury it. Couple of tin horns follow him, but in a fit of irritation he grasps 'em by the necks an' knocks their heads together; so they leave him be, an' presently he comes amblin' back, grinnin' like the daddy of twins. 'She's buried, folks,' he says. 'Let the game go on. I've saved out a few bones for the jackals, but the ol' juicy beefsteak's salted away. An' maybe the li'lle woman won't be proud of me!' he says. "'S'all right, Hank,'" she'll say. "'Just you likker up every once in a while. This here's a gold mine.'"

"Now comes the part over which the local jokers has chuckled plenty." The cynical one leered expectantly upon the partners. "When his woman heard down to the county seat that Hank was languishin' in the local hoosegow on account of indulgin' in an oversize spree an' disturbin' the peace, she come smokin' home an' bailed him out. Hank's kind of remorseful an' penitent, but he throws out his chest an' tells her about the can of gold he's got salted away. So he leads her out into them open spaces to look for it. He digs here an' prods there an' makes the dirt fly yonder. But the truth of it is, he's some lazy as to where he's buried it. In fact, he ain't got a ghost of an idea. He don't find it. He can't find it. He gets excited an' roots up the country for miles around, but finally his woman makes him quit an' leads him back to the shop.

"An' that's that," the waiter concluded. "For quite a spell thereafter, all you had to do to start a riot in the vicinity of Hank's shop was to lean against the door an' look out over the desert an' remark, kind of pensive: 'Citizens, thar's gold in them hills.' But only the best sprinter in town could indulge in that said idle humor, on account of havin' to outrun the pair of tongs Hank craved to wrap around his neck.

Yeah, it's one of them things he strives earnest to forget."

"An' he never found it, huh?" Shea ruminated. "That was a horse on him, an' no mistake. Yeah, I can see how yore local humorists would get a laugh out of it."

"They passed out in squads," averred the other. "An' between laughs they sneaked out an' done a little prospectin' on their own account. It was a favorite outdoor sport for quite a spell. But she's a big desert, an' it's still there."

"Listen," said Shea. "how come Hank got into the clutches of this said King Cole?"

"I dunno," said the other carelessly. "That last spree prob'ly upset Hank's financial apple cart. The shekels he spent an' the fine for disturbin' the peace. He was playin' pretty close to his belt, payin' out on the shop an' his shack out on the gulch. I heard he couldn't keep his boy in school no more, which is why he's got him in the shop. Kind of a spindlin' helper, if you ask me. Hank's jamboree prob'ly give him a set-back so he needed money; an' anybody who needs money in these parts is blazin' a trail right smack to King Cole's door. Well, gents, I got to move along. They's some more cash customers moved in, an' the boss is givin' me the eye."

"Here," said Shea. "As a dispenser of information, you're a wolf. Go out and buy yoreself a couple choice cigars."

"I'll do it, an' much obliged," said the other enthusiastically. "Come again, mister, when you've got a yen for gossip. I ain't told you nothin' yet."

"An' that's the way it goes," said Shea, after the cynical one had taken his departure. "Laugh, an the world laughs with you. Weep, an' you beller alone. Long as Hank supplied 'em with amusement, folks stood around chucklin'. When he's all snarled up in hostile circumstances they leave him be an'

turn away, yawnin'. But like you said a spell ago, the world's full of grief."

Hogan seized hopefully upon this latter admission, as they strolled forth into the sunlit street.

"What say we forget King Cole, that hefty an' benighted blacksmith, an' the coil of local affairs," he suggested, "an' bend our mighty intellects to workin' out our own destiny? King Cole's a side-winder who'd ought to have his fangs drawn, they's no question about that. But we ain't pest exterminators, an' what chance has a couple of lowly wranglers to buck a money baron like him in his own billiwhack? Just because you took a fancy to that overgrown blacksmith don't entitle us to try to straighten out his affairs. He struggled along this far without your help an' assistance. Right now you an' me have got to find us a pay roll. Let's have at it!"

"I reckon you're right," Shea agreed with a sigh. "You're a kind of a kill-joy, Hogan."

"We'll go the rounds pronto," declared the gaunt one, hastening to press his advantage. "Then we're on our way. No use coolin' our heels in this village. Pick up a clew here an' there as to short-handed outfits in the vicinity, an' then fog out of town."

"Now, now!" Shea admonished. "Don't you get too energetic, mister. I ain't in the mood to fog nowhere just at the ninmit. It's a long day, an' they's plenty of time. It'll be too blasted hot to ride in another hour. I crave to find me a shady spot in some nice, genteel pool hall, lean back in a restful chair, an' grab a few of them forty winks I've lost in the last day or two. Along in the afternoon, when some of the wranglers from the beef factories begin to drift in for supplies, we'll undoubtedly pick up some choice information. Then, in the cool of the evenin', we'll make dust. That is," he amended, "less something turns up in this King Cole

business. If this ain't a mess of machinery yellin' for a large-size monkey wrench, I'm no judge."

"Which is why I'm rarin' to put this village behind us," said Hogan frankly. "Get you out of town once an' I'd breathe easier. The longer we stick around the closer we're edgin' toward grief. I feel it in my bones."

But the trouble foreshadowed by the gloomy one's sensitive bony system did not develop through the hazy morning or lethargic afternoon. During this interval, however, there was ample evidence of the trend of Shea's stubborn thoughts.

They were seated beneath an awning on the shady side of the street, for example, when King Cole strolled by. The little despot of Hotrocks was immaculate, his linen was spotless. A snowy handkerchief gleamed at his breast pocket. His natty cane swung from a well-manicured hand whose ring finger sparkled. Where others sweltered in the midday heat, he seemed cool and fresh, as though possessed of reptilian cold-bloodedness. Aloof, detached, he strode pompously down the village street, his mirthless smile fixed, his cigar uptilted.

From beneath his lowered hat brim, Shea glowered upon the local symbol of tyranny, power and greed, marking how towering ones turned aside hastily to give the little man room, how bold eyes became uneasy beneath that cold, impersonal, emotionless gaze, and shopkeepers along the way all but fawned upon him in passing. Obvious, too, to Shea, were the glances of fear and hatred bestowed upon the despot's back as he continued on his supercilious way like one moving through milling and unintelligent cattle. Men eyed each other with a species of resentful and half-apologetic awe as though rebellious, but incapable, through circumstance or mysterious throwback to feudalism, of throwing off their chains.

"Son of a gun!" breathed Shea yearningly. "By the signs I can tell they're fed up on this king business. He's got 'em buffaloeed, or they'd heave him out on his ear right now. All it would take to turn loose these slaves would be for some enterprisin' young heathen who don't owe him nothin' an' has only one life to lose to step calmly up an' make a monkey out of him. Then they'll all rise up an' tell him where to head in."

"Forget it!" admonished Hogan. "We ain't in the business of freecin' slaves. Leave 'em work out their own destiny."

At intervals, too, during the lazy afternoon, came the ringing of the anvil from the blacksmith's shop; and Shea's blue eyes would turn in that direction in speculative fashion. But Hogan, sensing that his partner's thoughts were centering again upon the problems of the helpless giant, hastened to divert his attention to other matters.

"That gilded snake charmer done overplayed his hand," said Shea on one of these occasions. "Pickin' on that lowly blacksmith! I'll gamble all that overgrown pilgrim yearns for is the privilege of strugglin' along. Yeah, an' if somebody just pointed the way, he'd snap out of his trance an' do society a good turn by slappin' the King clean off his throne."

"Don't you get all steamed up about that horny-handed son of toil," Hogan soothed. "He brought all his grief on himself, with his carousin' an' gamblin' an' trail-blazin' enterprises. Yeah, an' he's already got a guardian angel, the same bein' his woman. From what that hash-slingin' feller told us, she's standin' right over him all the while, crackin' her whip at reg'lar intervals. Undertake to horn in on the deal an' you'd prob'ly find she's made other arrangements."

Being a pessimist at heart, the gaunt one could not bring himself to believe that they would actually be able to leave

the environs of Hotrocks without becoming entangled in grief-laden circumstances. Yet, as evening drew near, he allowed himself a feeble hope, for the business of interviewing prospective pay rolls apparently engrossed his energetic partner's entire attention.

Most of the larger outfits within trading distance of Hotrocks were full-handed, it developed. But a wrangler from the Lazy Z informed them of a rumor that the Flying Circle to the southwest could use one top hand, perhaps two. The partners agreed that at sundown they would sally forth and follow this clew.

Even when they were mounted and had turned away from the main street, headed south, Hogan did not allow himself the unqualified admission that they were on their way. Time enough to breathe easier, he told himself gloomily, when they had forged past the last house and the lights of Hotrocks were far to the rear.

Yet it seemed that nothing could stop them now. In the cool of evening, the dusty streets of the residential section were all but deserted. Two blocks more and the open prairie would be before them.

Thus, in the calm and quiet of sundown, they crossed the city limits and took the trail that swung westward beside the dry watercourse that was called the gulch. One lone habitation intervened between them and the vastness of the open country. It was an ancient, somewhat ramshackle structure, flanked by a garden that was a patch of luxurious green against the sun-baked hills.

There was nothing pretentious about the establishment. It was humble, yet homelike. The freshness of spotless chintz was at the ancient windows. A climbing rose was above the sagging door. The small but compact garden bespoke of patient hours of skillful toil.

These things Shea noted, twisting in the saddle. It was a mediocre detail

indeed that caught his attention. Beyond the garden was the clothesline, and suspended thereon were certain humble garments, red in hue, and of giant dimensions.

"Let's go!" said Hogan with a start. "It's miles to the Flying Circle, cowboy."

There was a woman in the garden, hoeing industriously, head bowed. She was small, comely, and matronly of figure. Her dark hair, not yet streaked with gray, was brushed neatly back in a simple knot. As the riders drew abreast, not more than twenty feet distant across the weather-beaten fence, she looked at them briefly, then turned her face away, never slackening her energetic toil. In that instant, Shea caught a glimpse of plump, firm features lugubrious as a mask of death, and dark eyes blurred with tears.

"Miles an' miles," repeated Hogan with conviction. "We got to make dust, mister."

But some forty paces distant, Shea pulled up in the trail, pushed back his hat, and scratched his flaming head.

"Sunk!" Hogan muttered beneath his breath. Aloud he demanded: "Now what?"

"Hogan, ol' son," said Shea with an apologetic grin. "they's something about the way she looked at us that haunts me. Hopeless that a way, an' workin' like a beaver to forget her grief. It ain't in me to pass by a gal in tears. Let's pause an' parley."

Hogan shrugged his shoulders in token of defeat. They wheeled their horses and turned back.

CHAPTER V.

A PROMISE.

EVENIN', ma'am," Shea looped his leg over the pommel and removed his sombrero with a graceful gesture. "Nice night, huh?"

The woman nodded and continued her

work with increased energy, her face turned away.

"Now, now, Miss Slocum!" Shea admonished softly. "Don't you high-hat us that a way. Shorely to goodness you're not so busy but what you can waste a minnit or two in a little neighborin'."

She paused at this, wiped her eyes with a corner of her gingham apron, and cast a searching glance upon the pair.

"I'm in no mood for nonsense," she stated, her lips compressed. There was more than a suggestion of rich Celtic brogue in her voice. "What do you want from me, ye heathen? How did you know my name, an' me never layin' eyes on the grinnin' face of ye before?"

"Cinch," said Shea, pointing to the clothesline. "They ain't but one gent in Hotrocks could fill out that there underwear. It's a hefty blacksmith to whom I done took a fancy. But we didn't stop for the purpose of idle chatter, Miss Slocum. I'm Shea. My ganglin' side-kick here's Hogan. We may not look it, but we're a pair of them said knights in shinin' armor." He unloosed upon her a singularly engaging smile. "We're footloose an' fancy free. We know all about Hank's troubles, an' figgered it was none of our business. We seen you cryin' just now, an' it give us a change of heart. So we turned back, wonderin' if maybe there wasn't something to be done."

The genial youth's personality, Hogan realized with a species of gloomy awe, was of the type that instantly touched the feminine heart. The woman's truculence melted a little as she gazed upon him: her black, imperious eyes softened.

"So you wondered if maybe there was something to be done, eh? It's a generous-hearted lad you are. But it's too late."

"It's never too late," said Shea, "till the last dog's hung. Lady, I'm surprised at such talk!"

"It's too late, I tell you," she said

grimly. "I've worked. I've slaved. I've dreamed. I've done my best. An' I've failed. Fifteen minutes ago, an' there was still hope. Now—I'm through. Hank's given up. There's no more fight left in him. He's headin' for perdition. An' my boy, too. The poor, fatherless laddie, what will become of him?" She leaned on the hoe, and hung her head. "I don't know why I'm tellin' you this. What does a reckless heathen like you know about life? Or care?"

"Listen," said Shea, aghast at this outburst. "Talk fast. Where's Hank?"

"Gone to town," said the woman, "to get drunk. He came home this night with one of his black moods upon him. I begged an' pleaded with him, an' prayed. But he's set in his ways. Said he'd tried it my way for six months now. An' failed. Oh, I know what will happen now! We'll lose everything we've gained—the home, the shop. Hank's self-respect. We'll go back to those terrible mines. My boy will be raised in that sink of corruption, an' his father a drunkard——" She wrung her hands. "If only he hadn't given up to-night! But he was desperate——"

"Just a second, ma'am," said Shea. "Get a holt of yoreself an' hang on a minnit longer. Let's get this straight. Why was he desperate?"

"Because Mr. Cole is going to close him out to-morrow, when he thought he had a chance," said the woman. "Because he figures the world's against him, an' there's no use trying to make a man of himself. He's worked like a slave during the past six months. He's been sober and straight. He only weakened—once——"

"That time you went down to the county seat," Shea nodded. "An' he buried the can of gold."

"Which is another thing he brooded over to-night," said the woman. "There's six hundred dollars in the note and mortgage that comes due to-mor-

row. There was more than that in the gold he won in that wild gambling spree when I was gone, an' when he thinks of it, his black rage comes upon him. If only he had it now! But he doesn't realize that if he hadn't weakened that time, an' wasted his money in gamblin' an' fines, we could have paid Mr. Cole to-morrow. He thinks fate is against him, the whole world's against him, an' what's the use? So he's gone downtown. Not fifteen minutes since. My boy followed him, begging him to come back, but he shook him off. I couldn't do anything. I can't do anything. I'm done. All I can do is work in the garden. An'—an' it's getting dark——"

It was given to them in this moment to see a woman in her utter extremity, her cherished plans in ruins about her, her hopes gone wrong. Simple and elemental things had made up the fabric of her dreams, humble but vital things; a home, the future of her boy, the self-respect of her man. All were being lost, irrevocably, while the seconds ticked by. She had fought for these things with unyielding courage. Circumstances had now moved beyond her control. Helpless on the side lines she stood in spirit, wringing her hands.

But only in spirit, for she was working in the garden. It had been a factor in their economic battle, this garden. In it, as she had worked untiringly, she had dreamed dreams. She was working now, as she stood at the black crossroads, when there was no hope left, nor dreams; and of sinister, pathetic, pitiful significance was the fact that it was growing dark. Her work still unfinished, she must presently lay her tools aside.

"Ma'am," said Shea, "bein' lowly wranglers who ain't on speakin' terms with capital, we can't do nothin' about the mortgage money. But if you figger——"

"What do I care about the mortgage money?" the woman burst forth. "Ex-

cept for Hank? We could lose the home and the shop. We could have only the clothes to our backs. We could start again. Somewhere else there's plenty of room. If—if he had faith. But he's lost. He's filling his big, healthy body with poison, an' changing the gorgeous heart of him to black murder. He's on the road to perdition. Now. Right this minute. He'll never come back——"

Shea tightened the reins and pulled his sombrero lower over his eyes.

"Ma'am," he said, "just you sit tight. All ain't yet lost. We'll fetch Hank back."

"What do you mean?"

"I can see King Cole's fine Italian hand," said Shea. "Maybe we can spoil his game. They's two new cards added to the layout. Namely the deuce an' the joker. Each outranks a king. First off, we'll fetch Hank back from town an' persuade him to postpone his heck-raisin' plans till to-morrow."

"You can't," said the woman. She strove to speak with bitter finality, but her dark eyes were fixed upon the youth. "When he's in his cups, he's a roaring lion. He's got the strength of ten men. When he's drinking, he can't be driven."

"Then we'll lead him," said Shea. "Hogan, ol' son, you with me?"

"Shoot the works!" growled Hogan.

"Just keep on workin' in the garden, ma'am," said Shea grinning. "Diggin' a celery bed, huh? Just you keep on diggin', an' don't worry about Hank. Hogan, let's go!"

Their splendid horses leaped forward, fire flashing from steel-shod hoofs. Motionless, the woman watched them her face a white patch in the gloom.

CHAPTER VI.

A SLAVE DEFIES THE KING.

MAGICALLY, it seemed, in the short interval following sundown, a new spirit was abroad in Hotrocks. Street lights flared down the main thorough-

fare, and façades of sundry palaces of amusement, refreshment and chance along the way had sprung into glittering splendor. Men moved more rapidly, laughed more boisterously, as though they had thrown off restraints with the memory of sweltering day. Riders were drifting in from north and east; columns of horses lengthened at hitching rails, and all about, in the tinkling of glasses, the rattling of poker chips, and shreds of pagan music, was evidence that here a sleepy village was throwing off its midday lethargy and awakening as a roaring metropolis of the desert where thirsty ones foregathered.

"I knew dang well we'd never get away from this pestiferous crossroads," stated Hogan gloomily. "But I've done resigned myself to grief. Give it a name, cowboy."

"We'll play 'em as they fall," said Shea. "First, we find that erring blacksmith."

Hogan shrugged.

"Cinch," said Hogan. "Yonder's his boy, waitin' mournful outside the door of that palace of sin. It don't take no Hawkshaw to surmise that his dad's inside."

"You got a great mind," Shea approved. "Let's go."

They left their horses at the hitching rail and swung down. Hogan's Place was before them, so lettering on frosted glass informed. Shea strode forward, with the towering Hogan at his heels. At the glittering doorway, the former paused and grinned down upon the blacksmith's boy.

"Son," he said, "you remember us, huh?"

The youth nodded.

"This mornin', you figgered we was gangin' up on yore dad. Well, sir, we're for him now, savvy? We aim to corral him an' take him home before he gets polluted. That's a noble enterprise, ain't it?"

"Gosh!" breathed the boy.

"So don't get no wrong ideas out of what may develop," said Shea, chuckling. "We may need yore help. But the three of us can round him up. You're with us, huh?"

The boy nodded again, though somewhat doubtfully.

"I was waiting to help him home after he couldn't navigate," he said, with a matter-of-fact manner, born of lurid experience, that was singularly pathetic. "If he doesn't end up in jail, maw doesn't want him to sleep in the streets. But he's pretty hard to handle, mister."

"We'll try," said Shea carelessly, pushing through the swinging door.

The noisy and glittering rendezvous was already crowded. The air, blue with tobacco smoke and reeking of strong liquor, resounded to hoarse shouts and laughter, the boisterous ebb and flow of genial conversation. The north end of the big room was flanked by the bar, where smooth-jowled, sleek-mustached dispensers of liquid refreshment presided. Crowding the area to the south were many green-topped tables from whence came the rattle of cards, the clink of poker chips, and the monotonous voice of a dealer calling his bets. Directly opposite the entrance, a broad stairway, with a landing that was like an observation platform halfway up its height, rose in a long sweep to higher realms.

"Well, I'm danged!" Shea muttered to his partner. "We was in here this noon, an' they was only one citizen snorin' in a chair an' a barkeep battlin' the flies. Now look it over. It's a wild cat's roost, an' no mistake."

It was also obvious that they had arrived at a dramatic moment in the trail-blazing career of the one they sought. A grinning semicircle of spectators arched shoulder to shoulder, and in its center the blacksmith loomed, leaning on the bar. As the partners pushed forward to points of vantage, the giant set down his glass with such force

as to all but shatter it in his gorilla hand, and wiped his bearded lips. His great body appeared to be relaxed, but the tendons stood out on mighty forearm and corded neck, and his eyes were glowing with a savage light, as though within him certain nameless and terrific forces, long held in check, were casting aside their bonds.

"Gather around, snakes," he thundered with a lordly gesture. "The great, ring-tailed boss lobo's about to make a speech."

Men looked up from distant gaming tables as the bellowing challenge resounded. Those not engaged in play moved forward. New spectators joined the circle, in whose front ranks Shea had planted himself, thumbs hooked in his belt.

"When the gaunt ol' he-wolf howls," roared the giant in tones that shook the walls, "strong men dive for their guns an' sinners ponder the hereafter. When he growls, history begins. When he goes on the war path, desolation follows him. Gents, unfold yore quivering ears, remove yore hats in token of respect, an' listen while I announce a declaration of war."

The grinning bartender had obligingly planted another glass at his elbow. The giant tossed down the fiery liquid at a gulp, threw the glass away, and smote the bar with a hamlike fist.

"Cæsar had his Brutus," he thundered. "Napoleon met his Waterloo, an' the whale swallowed Jonah. Them penny-ante jack pots of history is nothin' compared to the ruin about to be unloosed in yore midst. Gents, weak-kneed citizens, polecats, an' others"—he thumped his chest—"here's a slave that's done cast off his chains. Here's a Brutus that's snarlin' on the trail of Cæsar, a lamb that's been turned into a roarin' lion by the dirt that's been done him. You ready for the riot act?"

The spectators waited, grinning with

anticipation. Intent faces were awed, exultant, yet somewhat fearful, like men in the presence of imagination-gripping but ruinous recklessness. For there was but one Cæsar in Hotrocks, and it was obvious that the inflamed one was about to utter treason.

"I'm only a lowly blacksmith," belowered the giant, "but I'm glory bound. Like Samson of old, I been chained to the treadmill, grindin' out sorrow an' misery an' shame. I been blind an' helpless. My neck has groaned under the iron heel. But I got my hands on the pillars now an' aim to fetch down the temple in ruins.

"This garden spot of the desert"—he swung a mighty arm in an oratorical gesture—"which should be flowin' with milk an' honey instead of bad liquor, is nourishin' a viper in its midst. He's a pest which has got to be exterminated, a blight to be shaken off, an itch which has got to be scratched. Yea, citizens, an' I'm the hero that's done rose up from the humble dust to do that chore.

"You know who I mean!" His ferocious eyes flamed contemptuously upon them. "I ain't talkin' in riddles. They ain't a weak-kneed, tremblin', stammerin' slave among you who'd say the word aloud. But I'll give the candy-coated pill a name. I'm referrin' to that scaly, poisonous reptyle, that canker in the heart of the rose, that cooty on the body politic that is called King Cole!"

An audible gasp ran through the spectators. Men looked at each other half furtively, as though expecting the very walls to crash under the impact of the treasonable words. Their gaze returned to the giant. At distant gaming tables the rattle of poker chips had ceased. Players sat rigid, intent.

In the front ranks, waiting for the logical time to step into the picture, Shea sensed that slumbering forces more grim and elemental than the situation would seem to warrant at first glance were rousing about him. The tense-

ness of spectators massed to his right and left was not merely that of an audience about to enjoy a humorous spectacle. Emotions more vital were being played upon by the booming giant. Responsive chords were being awakened as at the beat of drums.

The blacksmith, too, Shea saw, was not as drunk as his first words had indicated. His oratorical phrases, uttered with sardonic facetiousness, were neither maudlin nor disconnected, but cloaked a savage purpose. He was inflamed and reckless, but not from artificial stimulant so much as from the turmoil of inner passion. The fiery liquid he had consumed had merely served to throw off inhibitions of caution and self-preservation built up over soul-deadening months. Later, should he continue to partake at the bar, he would degenerate into a massive and erratic trouble-maker, a disturber of the peace. At the moment, there was something magnificent about the man, and also pathetic, as of one who, having lost all, turns with utter, desperate abandon upon his tormentor.

Thus, at his booming defiance to the despot of Hotrocks, grins became fixed in the intent circle. Faro dealers and bartenders stood motionless and statue-like, their beady eyes roving watchfully over the crowd. During a momentary silence that fell upon the glittering establishment, no sound was heard save deliberate, mincing footsteps descending the stairway from realms above.

"He stole into our midst like a thief in the night," bellowed the bearded one. "An' spun his web. We woke up an' found we weren't men no more, but grinnin' apes who danced when he cracked the whip. He's got gunmen on his pay roll, an' con men an' gamblers an' thugs. With this army he moved in on us, corralled us, put his brand on us, an' made us slaves. Now the banks is on his pay roll, the courts,

an' the law. We eat what he leaves us eat, an' when. We work at what he tells us to work, an' how. Yeah, an' when we've served his blasted purposes, an' ain't of more use in plans which is too deep for ignorant mavericks like us to follow, he turns us out, like lowly, crippled plow hosses whose life's work is done.

"Listen to what he done to me, citizens." With mighty, clenched fists he smote the bar so that that all-but-immovable fixture trembled. "It ain't for purposes of sympathy that I'm tellin' you, but so you hairy-chested, tremblin' critters who once were men will know how come I've throwed my chains aside an' rose up snarlin'.

"I had a shop. I had a home. It wasn't much of a shop, but it was a pay roil. The lowly shack was a castle. My woman had a garden for which she'd yearned out in them blasted hills. My boy was gettin' the schoolin' for which he'd dreamed. I was a citizen an' a taxpayer, an' wore a boiled shirt on Sunday. I'd dang near forgotten what a mangy maverick I'd been in all them previous years. You know what I mean—the booze, the gamblin', an' them terrible sober moments when I knew I was draggin' my woman an' my boy with me to perdition.

"I was only a lowly blacksmith, gents. You'd have thought I was beneath the notice of that grinnin' hyena that is called King Cole. All I craved was to be left alone. But he took time out from his large affairs to look me over, chewin' on his blasted cigar. The shop's on the main street, an' he wanted the lot. He's got all the rest of the property along the main drag, an' where my shop set was also necessary to his schemes. He offered to buy at half what it's worth. I wouldn't sell. I wasn't in his clutches then, an' was as independent as a hawg on ice. But he only smiled, an' begun to spin his web.

"It was simple for a polished sharp

like him, gents. What chance has a dumb maverick like me? My woman left town to visit my boy down to the county seat. I hadn't touched a drop for months, an' had kidded myself that I'd left the dust an' heat of the burnin' desert an' had reached the green valley. I was just in sight of them benefits guaranteed by the Constitution. I was just commencin' to live, taste liberty, an' was bellerin' on the trail of happiness—an' my woman wasn't hardly out of sight of town when a still-faced con man on King Cole's pay roll was standin' beside the forge an' whisperin' in my ear. 'A li'lle drink,' he says. 'On the house. Maybe a half dozen. You're entitled to it,' he says. 'Workin' like a slave this a way. Lap up a li'lle mountain dew, go home an' sleep it off, an' yore woman'll never be the wiser.'

"You know how it goes, you thirsty mavericks. It sounded reasonable. I could take it or leave it alone. It was the memory of them fleshpots of Egypt; an' I turned my back on the Promised Land an' walked straight into King Cole's web. He knew I'd start a riot an' end up in grief. He knew my woman'd have to come back an' raise mortgage money to pay the ante. He could buy the mortgage, secured also by the shack out on the gulch, an' one more hulkin' slave would be chained to the end of the line.

"An' that's the way it went. His schemes are greased an' shock-proof. Yeah, an' luck betters his hand, as witness that can of gold over which you've all chuckled. I might have had the bulge on him, but I buried the critter an' couldn't find it. It wasn't in the cards. That said mortgage is due to-morrow. He kidded me all the while about extendin' the note when it was due. But he ain't. He never intended to. So to-morrow he's got the shop an' the shack. Such penny-ante things as the woman's garden, the boy's schoolin', the hopes an' dreams of a simple-minded

citizen who knew all the while it was too good to last, is all thrown in.

"But sink yore teeth in this, you cringin' slaves, an' if you ain't forgot, ten that you was once a breed of fightin' men, wake up an' growl! It was the said straw which broke the camel's back. It made my hackles bristle an' recalled to me that the said eleventh hour had struck a couple hours ago. He come strollin' down to the shop this mornin', perfumed an' dainty an' smilin. He's pleased an' joyful, like an Injun invited to a torture party; an' what do you reckon he's got up his sleeve? Has he come down to kid me some more about how he aims to extend the note which comes due to-morrow? Is he pattin' me on the back on account of me workin' like a beaver at the shop, comin' early an' workin' late, thereby demonstratin' that I'm strivin' earnest to make good? No, citizens. No, indeed. I've waked him up with my noise at the forge. The King's sleep has been disturbed by the clankin' slave. He's peeved, an' to put him in good humor again, I can sweat blood wonderin' what's goin' to happen to-morrow. He knows dang well he's goin' to close me out. He's already made up his mind. But he craves to see me squirm. He's chucklin' over the spectacle of me still hopin', like a drownin' feller reachin' for a straw. An' all on account of me wakin' up his princely slumber!

"I ask you, you cringin' an' saffron-hued fellow sufferers, if that li'le incident don't point out a public duty from which they's no turnin' aside? Ponderin' it all day, the scales has done fallen from my eyes. I don't amount to nothin'. My ship's already sunk. But I crave to do this ace-high, free-born region a good turn before I pass out of the picture. Answer me this question, an' we'll proceed. Are we fed up on this King business? Has the hour struck to push him off the throne, or ain't it?"

He made dramatic pause for reply. His massive proportions, the savage force of the man that had come to the surface through brooding over his wrongs and the fiery stimulation of liquor, made of him a singularly impressive and dominant figure. The crowd had listened spellbound. The giant had put into words a situation that was secretly mortifying and humiliating to all. He had touched responsive chords. He had dared to name the King; and it was obvious that his frenzied oratory had fanned smoldering rebellion. A leader had risen among the mob.

Yet they made no response to his challenge. Curiously immobile they stood, looking past the orator. Heads had turned slowly during the fiery denunciation. They had listened with terrific intentness, but their gaze was fixed beyond the speaker. For a new figure had come softly upon the stage.

Unknown to the inflamed giant, King Cole had descended the stair. He now stood on the landing. Faultlessly garbed, as always, his stiff shirt front was a patch of spotless white through the gloom of the high stair. As he flicked the ashes from his cigar with a dainty gesture of a slender hand, his ring finger sparkled. Calm, poised, as if conscious of his power, he leaned negligently on the bannister, looking down upon the scene, his thin lips curled in a tolerant, supercilious smile.

Tribute to the iron discipline of the little despot of Hotrocks was the fact that the mob stood spellbound. Rebellion had been roused in their ranks by their new leader, but they were yet chained by the dominance of the old.

"What's this?" bellowed the blacksmith, unaware still that his enemy stood at his back. "Don't tell me you hard-boiled, hairy-chested sidewinders have been turned into cringin' jellyfish? You been ground into the dust under the iron heel, but you claimin' to like it?"

I say it again, an' I aim to make it stick: The hour has struck when we got to ride this blasted King Cole an' his blasted parasites clean out of town. You with me, or ain't you?"

"Hank," came the little man's voice, cool and contemptuous, "you're drunk."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SNAKE CHARMER.

A SPECIES of tremor shook the giant's frame, like a huge and beligerent mongrel who unexpectedly hears his master's voice. He whirled, his bearded face upturned; and the little man smiled down upon him.

"Drunk," he repeated, shaking his head. "And therefore indiscreet. But a little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of us, old fellow. Your antics are providing amusement for me and the rest of these good citizens. Who would have thought such faultless logic, such persuasive eloquence, was to be found in an uncouth, wild, like you? Continue, Hank, old fellow. Pardon the interruption."

But the poised despot of Hotrocks, faced by his first open rebellion, had either underestimated or chosen to disregard the dimensions of the giant's reckless frenzy. The bulky figure seemed positively to swell with rage. He refused to cringe beneath the other's haughty, aristocratic manner. The spell of the cold, unemotional, singularly reptilian gaze of the little tyrant seemed to have been broken.

"No, I ain't drunk!" the blacksmith roared, his eyes flashing. "An' if you figger what I said was nonsense, get set for some real fun. The amusement I'm providin' ain't even commenced." He brandished a mighty fist aloft. "Cole, yore usefulness here is done. You've made yore splash in this local puddle, but the ripples has died away. You're through. You ain't wanted hereabouts. We're givin' you a white

man's chance, right now. This here's the show-down. Pull out or pass out!"

The little man's thin lips tightened on his cigar. His glance flicked over the sea of faces, marking their reaction. He removed the cigar, as if to speak. Instead, he beckoned with a crooked finger.

Immediately, from unobtrusive points throughout the establishment, a number of ill-favored persons elbowed forward, bulky and hard-bitten individuals, truculent of jaw and pugnacious of eye. One of these bore a silver star denoting the authority of city marshal of Hotrocks. They formed in a casual group at the foot of the stair, facing the crowd; and there was also observed, descending from above, to take their stand beside their leader, certain suave and self-possessed gentlemen of the gambling fraternity and other nameless guilds that formed the fabric of the local underworld.

"I can't believe, Hank," said the smiling despot, with a graceful wave of the hand, "that the good citizens about you subscribe to your anarchistic ideas. In fact, I know you are in error. One of the obsessions resulting from—er—overindulgence in the flowing bowl has visited itself upon you. But don't become more obnoxious than usual, or our good marshal will be forced, regretfully, to establish you in the local house of correction. You have languished there before, eh, Hank? The next time you will doubtless enjoy a longer period of rest and meditation as a pernicious disturber of the peace. So watch your step, old fellow. Enjoy yourself, but keep the peace. Keep the peace, by all means."

The skill of the master wielder of mob psychology was revealed in this audacious speech. The gathering of his forces about him momentarily had drawn up two opposing forces in battle array. But this, it was apparent, had been merely a precautionary measure

should he lose his dominance of the crowd. The slightest wrong move on his part, defiance, belligerence, or threats directed toward the spectators themselves, would have precipitated a crisis. But he had boldly singled out the blacksmith for his tolerant yet caustic artillery, and by making him appear to stand alone, placed him at a disadvantage.

"To prove that I hold no malice," continued the little man smilingly, "and that I have already charged off this little flurry to your mental limitations and the exuberance of the moment, let us drown our trifling animosities according to the ancient custom of the high desert. Line up, men!" He spoke with crisp authority. "Drink deep. It's on the house."

"No!" bellowed the blacksmith as the crowd surged forward. He planted himself before the bar, mighty arms upraised. "We goin' to let him kid us with free drinks? Stand fast, you sidewinders! What he's tryin' to do is plain to the eye. Soothin' syrup ain't what we crave, but action. Let's settle this business now, an' we got all the rest of our lives in which to lap up likker."

The mob hesitated, like cattle on the verge of stampede. At an emotional crisis, when the slightest suggestion could have caused them to follow their new leader blindly or yield again to the dominance of the old, the little man spoke swiftly.

"Hank, Hank," he said, shaking his head, "this situation alone is worth the price of admission. Of all the citizens of Hotrocks, I should have picked you as the last man to stand between his friends and good liquor. It's a spectacle to make the gods laugh." He wagged a finger at the giant. "Did you misunderstand me when I said it was on the house? Have you ever in your life failed to take advantage of such an opportunity? Unreasonable, sir! Positively unreasonable. Your tongue is

parched just like the rest of us. Drink deep, and make room for the rest of these thirsty citizens. Don't spoof us, Hank."

Unerringly, the little man had seized upon the lowest but most effective weapon of public debate, that of ridicule. For the blacksmith's weakness for liquid refreshment was written large upon the lurid record of Hotrocks. The crowd moved forward, grinning. Hank had touched upon vital matters, their manner indicated, but these matters could wait. More pressing business was at hand.

Desperately, the giant strove to stem the tide, but in vain. His protests were drowned out by the stentorian tones of the bartenders. These minions of King Cole, hastening to accept their cue, had galvanized into action. They now loudly invited all and sundry to step up and get it, averred that first come would be first served and darkness would overtake the hindmost.

The mob swarmed about the blacksmith, breasting the bar. As the giant, baffled, bewildered, utterly routed in his first skirmish with the enemy, laid hold on the brimming glass placed before him, he felt Shea's grasp on his arm.

"Just a second, big boy!" the genial youth hissed under cover of the din about them. "No more likker. You're playin' right into King Cole's hand. I been studyin' his game. Drag outside with me an' we'll figger a new deal." The giant peered down at him, his bearded features black and forbidding, and shook his head. With a deliberate motion he raised his glass, drained it at a gulp, set it down, and wiped his lips.

"Too late," he growled. The great tendons of his upper arm were as iron beneath Shea's hand. "No use stallin' no longer. I'm ripe for slaughter. If these spineless images won't back me up, I'll do it alone."

He rumbled deep in his chest, like a

bull lashing himself to fury before the charge. Above the heads of the crowd, his smoldering gaze sought out King Cole. The little despot's cool, calculating, sardonic eyes were fixed upon the pair.

"I got a bone to pick with that maverick. Right now. *Muy pronto.*"

"You're outnumbered," Shea pointed out. "His strong-arm squad's waitin'."

"I'll slaughter 'em."

"The marshal an' his deputies'll gang up on you an' throw you in the can——"

"They'll earn their keep first. Leggo."

"Listen," said Shea, between his teeth. "You big monument! Can't you see you're buckin' a stone wall? If you had the sense of a blasted peanut, you'd figger King Cole's play. It's plain as the nose on yore face. He wants to see you polluted. He craves for you to start a riot. With you safe in the hoosegow, you're just one of them inconsequential details. He'll close you out of yore house an' home without no opposition. He controls Hotrocks, but he don't own the county. If you stay on the job, he's got to go through due process of law before gettin' you off yore premises. Have you figgered that?"

"I'm through figgerin'." growled the blacksmith. "To blazes with the house an' home! They're sunk already. What's it to you, anyway?" His rage suddenly burst forth, centered upon the persistent youth who clung leechlike to his arm. "Who dealt you a hand? If I slaughter me a few kings an' polecats, what's it got to do with yore hereafter?"

It was the chance Shea had taken—that the giant's reason was not inflamed beyond appeal; and it was apparent that he had lost. But the genial youth, having put his hand to the plow, was not one to turn back.

"Just this," he said bluntly. "I promised yore woman I'd fetch you home. An' you're comin', big boy."

For perhaps two full seconds the

giant stared down, the light of battle kindling in his bulging eyes. Then he exploded into action, and at this point began the series of events whose ramifications, though the spectators who witnessed the brief but pleasing imbroglio had no inkling of their significance, served to change the checkered history of the metropolis of Hotrocks.

CHAPTER VIII.

DELIVERED ON THE HOOF.

THE youthful Mr. Shea, in moments such as these, had learned through somewhat crowded experience to place great dependence upon his own muscular physique, excellent coördination, and no mean knowledge of self-defense. It had been his opinion, arrived at through thoughtful observation, that great bodies move slowly, and the more ponderous his antagonist, the better were his own chances of survival.

When it became evident, therefore, that the trail-blazing ambitions of the inflamed giant were about to be centered momentarily upon his own person, in a manner of speaking, he stepped back with a cheerful sigh and fell into an attitude designed to protect himself from the forthcoming onslaught.

But he had underestimated the caliber of the burly blacksmith. The latter was standing, thumbs hooked in his belt, and from this position he lunged forward. Only briefly Shea saw the lightning blow coming, an open-handed slap that felled him as effectively as though a bludgeon had bowled him over.

With hoarse yells of delight, the crowd greeted the knowledge that a difference of opinion had broken forth in their midst. The grinning ranks split apart, formed a circle; and Shea rose up to haud and knee, shaking his flaming head.

He crouched thus for a moment, apparently engaged in the business of clearing his mind of cobwebs, shooting

stars, songbirds, and other legendary aftermaths of such abrupt concussions as had been visited upon him. But partially stunned though he was by the terrific blow, his thoughts moved clearly. Above the crowd, on the lower stair, he saw the marshal face questioningly toward King Cole. But the little despot shook his head, smiling; and Shea inwardly breathed a sigh of relief. From the monarch's point of view, the unexpected diversion would serve to turn the attention of the mob to less dangerous channels. There would be no interference on the part of law, which would have been fatal to his task; and Shea leaped to his feet with an exultant whoop.

He charged upon the giant, fainted swiftly with his left, and under the raised guard of his adversary, planted his right to the body with all his weight and force behind it.

It was an impact that might have felled an ox. Shea expected to bury his fist in that huge torso, feel the giant's frame wilt beneath his hand. But the blow encountered band on sheathing band of resistance, a muscular armor built up over years of toil. The burly one merely grunted as he staggered back. Rocking forward on his toes, he charged, bellowing.

Amazed though he was by the knowledge that his supposedly annihilating blow had merely added to the giant's wrath, Shea was quick to take advantage of the headlong return attack. He sidestepped with catlike swiftness, placed a booted foot in the giant's path. The crowd split apart with haste. The burly one's momentum carried him on. Falling, he crashed through the swinging doors, and so hurtled out into the street.

Shea was on his heels, and the spectators poured forth to witness further pleasing developments in the fray. The gaunt Hogan loomed at his partner's side, as the giant struggled up from the

ancient dust, all but foaming at the mouth with rage.

"I got you outside, big boy," said Shea, breathing heavily. "Now it's home for you." To Hogan he whispered: "Fork yore critter an' loosen yore rope!"

He danced beyond the blacksmith's reach, grinning in tantalizing fashion. The giant charged, and the youth skipped nimbly back, turned, and ran. The burly one leaped in pursuit with single-minded enthusiasm that was obviously of homicidal intent. Away Shea flew, disregarding the howls of the crowd, and at his heels the vengeful giant sprinted at ungainly but prodigious speed.

A few of the spectators followed, but turned back, chuckling, when pursuer and pursued were presently engulfed in a dark alley from whence the sound of running feet continued unabated.

"This a way, you big yahoo!" Shea invited from the farther street. "I'm just huntin' for a stampin' ground where they ain't such a pop-eyed crowd. Don't you quit on me, now!"

With a roar of fury, the burly one endeavored mightily to increase his pace. But one of Shea's many and devious accomplishments was an amazing fleetness of foot. With his head on his shoulder, he maintained his position just beyond the grasp of those mighty clutching hands.

A gleam of reason piercing the red mists about him, the giant pulled up abruptly and shook a fist at his elusive quarry.

"You mangy, onprincipled, red-headed polecat!" he bellowed, his mighty chest heaving. "Figgered I'd chase you clean home, huh? Guess again, mister. I got no time to monkey with you now. Go to blazes, with my compliments."

He turned on his heel and plunged forthwith into the alley. A rider was thundering along the gloomy side street. From the tail of his eye, Shea saw that

it was Hogan, his rope circling overhead.

"Come back here, you overstuffed grand stander!" Shea challenged. "Let's get together an' growl in unison!"

"You gonna stand up an' fight like a man?"

"Try me an' see!"

The blacksmith whirled and leaped toward his tormentor, great arms flailing. Shea stood in close, guarding, ducking, lunging forward, retreating. He was striving to lure the giant forth into the open, and in doing so, all but met annihilation. A great blow descended upon his chest. He crashed into the dust and lay, gasping.

Jaw outthrust, his crooked fingers extended, the blacksmith poised for an instant before leaping upon his prostrate victim; and in that instant the loop of a rope slid over his shoulders and snapped tight above his elbows, pinioning his arms.

While he stood in ludicrous amazement, for he had not seen the waiting rider, Hogan's wrist snapped once, and again. Two half-hitches followed the first loop, and the giant was trussed like a fowl.

He galvanized into action, struggling futilely against the bonds. Whereupon Hogan reined sharply away, jerking him ruthlessly to the ground.

"On yore way before we got a gallery!" Shea gasped, coughing. "If he won't lead, drag him."

Dazed and bewildered, the blacksmith struggled to his feet. Hogan spurred sharply away. The burly one followed, lumbering at the end of the rope.

Footsteps pounded to a halt beside Shea. Looking up, he saw that the newcomer was the blacksmith's boy, his face pale through the gloom.

"What you doin' to dad?" he demanded.

"Takin' him home," said Shea, with a feeble grin. "Help me up, son."

"Gosh!" said the boy.

Slowly at first, but with increased speed as the effects of the blow Shea had received wore off, the pair followed the distant horseman.

At the cabin on the gulch Hogan was waiting, still mounted. But his rope was now slack. The giant lay on the ground, obviously exhausted from his enforced run. The woman stood beside him, her hands tightly entwined in her apron. Shea grinned upon her as he drew near.

"Ma'am," he said, "that was a hefty contract we undertook, an' I don't mean maybe. It was considerable of a chore to cut him out of the herd. I hope you don't object to the way we was forced to do it. But here he is, delivered on the hoof, in a manner of speaking."

"Object?" said the woman. "Dead or alive, I'd make no objections. I never dreamed it was possible to take him away by force when he was started on his ruinous path. Is he—bad drunk?"

"No," said Shea. "Only fightin' mad. Is he still nourishin' them tender sentiments toward us, Hogan?"

"I reckon," said Hogan. "Which is why I'm keepin' a rope on him. Bein' winded that a way, he's genteel an' quiet at the minnit. But what he'll crave to do when he gets a holt of himself is one of them mysteries."

"You figger we'd best hawg tie him, ma'am, an' leave him meditate the rest of the night?" questioned Shea. "Seems like we ain't gained nothin' if we was to turn him loose an' he went smokin' back to town. On the other hand, he's free, white, an' of legal age. It's a problem, an' no mistake."

"He's safe for the moment," said the woman, almost fiercely. "We've gained that much. Oh, if he'd only listen to reason!"

"We'll parley," Shea promised. "I got a thought or two I aim to inflict on him as soon as he's organized. R'ar up, ol'-timer!" He laid hold on the

sprawled giant and rolled him to a sitting position. "Nice night, ain't it?"

The blacksmith raised his massive head and peered at the youth. He was still breathing heavily. The maniac light in his reddened eye had changed to something more sullen.

"Ol' hoss," said Shea, tapping him on the chest. "Pay attention. Me an' my pardner have sat into the game, aimin' to better yore hand. That's why we snaked you out of that wild cat's nest back yonder, just in time to save yore scalp. You ain't out of the woods yet, but we'll do our dangedest to see you through. We're with you, savvy?"

"Talk all you've a mind to," growled the blacksmith. "When you're done, let me know."

"Get the fightin' idea out of yore head," Shea reproved. "Yore short-tempered ideas is what King Cole's bankin' on. Also the booze. Things was workin' out just like he'd planned when I fetched you home. Don't you savvy you got to use finesse to cross him up? Like you said this morning, they's times when heft don't count. If you crave to provide him with something more than amusement, ol' son, leave me name the play an' follow me blind."

"I'll foller nobody nowhere," stated the giant with force. "I'm through figgerin' an' usin' finesse an' acting like a blasted sheep. What you polecats up to, an' what in blazes is it all about? Take off this blasted rope!"

"Fine," said Shea. He stooped over the other, affected to fumble at the bonds. "First we turn you loose, ol' hoss. Havin' done so, you won't go smokin' off to town till we say the word, huh?"

"Which I shorely will," growled the giant. "An' I won't even stop to tear you optimists apart. That's a promise. I got a job to finish back yonder."

Shea hesitated, and the woman dropped on her knees beside the blacksmith, placed an arm about his neck.

"Hank—Hank!" she pleaded. "Don't let your black mood get the best of you. They're trying to help us, Hank. You thought there was no help left. But there is! Don't give up. These lads are with us now. They're not afraid of King Cole, or all his hired cutthroats, or all the world. They're at your right hand, backing you up. You're not alone against the world. If there's a chance they can help, do as they say. For my sake, Hank. And—and Buddy's."

The giant bent ferocious brows upon her, looked past her at his son. His sullen, desperate gaze returned to Shea.

"We battled this out before," he told his wife. "You got a rope on me now, an' I got to listen, huh? I've been played for a sap long enough. Life's made a monkey out of me. The only hope I got left is to wipe King Cole out of the picture. I know I can't do it, but I can shorely leave a few cripples behind me. An' how do we know these wild cats ain't King Cole's men?"

"That's aplenty," said Shea. As no mean student of the dramatic, he affected a contemptuous truculence. He laid hold of the bonds, loosed them roughly, freeing the giant. He tossed the rope toward Hogan.

"Coil it up, cowboy!" he directed, dusting his hands. "We're through. King Cole's men, huh? Slope over town an' get my critter. We're on our way. We shouldn't have stopped to take notice of this bewhiskered monument's troubles. We risk our necks bustin' into the game at the precise minnit when King Cole's got him dang near landed. I leave him beat me up just for the privilege of escortin' him home—out of harm's way where he's still got a fightin' chance if he'll listen to reason—an' now he gets plumb insultin'. Sorry, ma'am, but I reckon we'll drag along. Like he said a while ago, he can go to blazes with our compliments. The maverick's loco."

"Wait!" the woman pleaded. "Please,

laddies. Hank, man, are ye blind? Will you turn your last friends against you? Is there no fight left in you at all?"

Freed of his bonds, the giant had leaped to his feet. He had stood, looking with savage yearning toward the city, licking his lips. The woman laid a hand on his arm. At her touch and her words, he seated himself again, heavily, his shaggy head resting on his hands.

"Dunno whether I'm afoot or horseback," he growled. "You lads is on the square. Excuse it, please. But what's to be done?"

"Now you're talkin'!" Shea encouraged. "They's plenty to be done. If you'll listen to reason, we'll figger a play."

"You tell me," said the blacksmith. "I'm one of them blasted pilgrims lost in an impenetrable forest."

"It's like this," said Shea. He spoke with all his old persuasion. "They's two trails to take. The way you was headin' was plumb into King Cole's net. The other way gives you a chance. You know what I seen to-night down to Grogan's? It was the handwritin' on the wall in this King business. They's other citizens hereabouts who are wondering how come they're groanin' under the iron heel. They've been mesmerized for quite a spell, but they're wakin' up. You had 'em with you for a minnit with yore oratory. But that smilin' snake charmer outfoxed you in the show-down. You can't topple him off his throne by usin' force. Not yet. He's got his strong-arm squad an' the marshal with him. Yeah, an' he's got the goats of the leadin' citizens. The only chance you got is to beat him at his own game."

"What's the answer?" growled the giant. "Beatin' him at his own game is the little detail that's got me all crossed up."

"To beat him at his own game," said Shea, "you got to do the thing he don't

expect you to do. When he come down to yore shop this mornin', an' let you know he aimed to close you out tomorrow on the plumb aggravatin' theory that you'd ruined his princely slumber, he knew dang well you'd get to broodin' over it, go downtown to-night, get lit an' hostile, an' end up in the hoosegow. Then he'd take possession of yore shop without no irritatin' details, rush through his foreclosure an' attachment proceedin's, an' when you got out of the hoosegow a couple of weeks or maybe a month from now, you wouldn't have a leg to stand on. You follerin' me?"

The giant nodded. It was plain that the red mists were dissipating from his brain.

"I get you," he said with some bitterness. "An' I performed accordin' to Hoyle. Couple minutes more, if you hadn't showed up, an' I'd been in jail. But what's to be done now?"

"It sounds easy," said Shea softly, "but it'll come hard, ol'-timer. To scatter his hand, an' get set to topple him off the throne, you got to act in a way he don't expect. Which is this: Instead of smokin' for town an' indulgin' in yore thirst for riots an' strong drink, just you roll into yore trundle bed like a self-respectin' blacksmith who's got to work to-morrow an' needs his sleep. In the morning, ease down to yore shop as per usual, spit on yore hands, an' get busy."

"You mean," questioned the other, knitting his brows, "that I got to sit idly by like a blasted toad on a limb while he pushes me clean out of the picture?"

"That," said Shea, "is what I meant when I said it would come hard. He don't expect you to act that a way. It'll look like you're plumb disregardful of his majesty's threats. An' that ain't all, ol'-timer. He told you not to work so early in the mornin', huh? The whole village knows it. It's the precise thing that touched off the dynamite. Well,

sir, you go to work as per usual. At sunup. Just as early as this morning. You make more noise than ordinary. The whole village hears the hullabaloo. Likewise the King. It's just like you thumbed yore nose in his face an' told him politely to go to blazes."

"Well, I'm danged!" breathed the blacksmith, his sullen eyes lighting at the sheer recklessness of this proposal. "An' then what?"

"The noise at yore forge," said Shea, grinning, "rollin' acrost this hairy-chested village at the crack of dawn, will be like the beating of a drum callin' on slaves to rise up an' cast off their chains. At first they'll listen, unbelievin', on account of anybody deliberately flyin' right in the face of King Cole is like tellin' the sun to stand still. But the drum'll roll on, louder an' clearer than ever, an' they'll recall that you're the gent who stood up all by himself at Grogan's an' challenged the King. The only gent in Hotrocks with nerve enough to do it. You wasn't struck by lightnin', an' now you're hammering at the forge. So they'll leap up from their beds and fog down to the shop to see what happens when the King's bluff is called this a way."

"Yeah?" said the blacksmith, enthralled at this picture. "An' what happens?"

"Cinch," said Shea. "They's a big mob waitin' at the street. The King struts through, swingin' his cane, strolls in' an' gets heavy with you. Whereupon, bein' a free-born gent standin' in his own billiwhack, on deeded ground which ain't been foreclosed yet, you order him off the premises. If he don't go," he continued calmly, "heave him out on his ear."

"Gosh!" breathed the blacksmith, aghast. "I couldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"Not 'less I had a couple drinks," said the giant in awe. "He'd give me the eye, smilin' at me that a way, an' I'd

be paralyzed. By gravy, I'll have some hooch in the shop! A coupla snorts an' I'd wring his neck!"

"No," said Shea sternly. "You got to be stone sober. An' a stone-sober crowd has got to see a lowly citizen in his right mind an' standin' on his rights, defy the King an' make it stick. Does it listen good? Question is, have you got the backbone to play 'em that a way?"

"I have," said the giant, speaking resolutely, like one striving to collect his forces. "I'll give it a whirl. But suppose they's a slip-up? When I get set to order him out of the shop, I'll wish I had a couple hefty ones tucked under my belt to strengthen my arm."

"They won't be no slip-up," said Shea. "An' if they is, what of it? It's the chance you're takin', an' fightin' odds is better than buttin' square into a stone wall. An' no likker a-tall. Go to bed. Right now. Get up early. Go straight to the shop. An' when you take the first swing on the hammer, think of the dirt that's been done you, an' put yore back into it! On yore way, ol' son."

"I'll do it," said the blacksmith, heaving himself erect. "It's an idea, an' no mistake. I'll wake the country for miles around, just to show that sidewinder where to head in. An' listen"—he turned back and eyed the youth hopefully—"you lads'll be there, too—to kind of put some iron in me, huh?"

"Would we miss a circus?" Shea chortled. "We'll be there."

The giant strode toward the door, his boy behind him. The latter grinned upon Shea, in passing, hero-worship in his gaze. The woman remained behind.

"I can see what you're doing," she told Shea, fumbling with her apron. "It isn't that anything can be accomplished by crossing King Cole. The shop and the house here are lost. But what of it? You've kept Hank from perdition this night."

"I dunno about the house and shop, ma'am," Shea demurred, scratching his

head. "Out of the ruins to-morrow, who knows what'll come? Maybe some of these citizens that King Cole has buffaloeed will give him a helping hand. But don't you worry none. Get Hank a good breakfast an' start him off early in the morning." He grinned upon her. "Then, just work in the garden. An' wait."

"Bless you——" began the woman; but Shea halted her with a gesture, and backed away.

"Don't bless us yet, lady. Maybe we're bringin' you luck, an' maybe we're Jonahs. To-morrow will tell the tale. Hogan, let's go!"

He swung up behind the gaunt one. Riding double, they turned toward town. Shea twisted in the saddle to wave the woman good night.

"There's a reg'lar gal," he told Hogan. "What's the home an' shop to her, neighbors, an' a garden, and all them things she dreamed about? Nothin', by gravy, compared to battlin' beside her man an' strengthenin' his arm." He sighed. "Well, ol' son, the night is but a pup. We still got a few enterprises before us. No use settin' idly by waitin' for the jamboree to-morrow."

"Where we headin' for?" demanded Hogan.

"Grogan's," said Shea. "I crave to get a little better acquainted with King Cole. Who knows but what we'll find some weakness in his smilin' armor?"

"Son of a gun!" breathed Hogan in gloomy awe. "You're shorely a hound for punishment. But watch yore step, cowboy. Gettin' too close to that stingin' lizard ain't my idea of a pleasin' diversion."

CHAPTER IX.

A GAME OF WITS.

BUSINESS had resumed its usual rollicking pitch in the glittering palace of pastime and refreshment. The tense moments that had climaxed in a near riot under the giant blacksmith's

oratory were already forgotten, it seemed. The mob, disorganized at the disappearance of its leader, had returned to its several activities. If rebellion smoldered, it was again hidden beneath the surface.

When the two youths strode through the swinging doors faces turned questioningly in their direction. Expectant grins were unloosed upon Shea, remembered as the flaming-haired youth whom the blacksmith had pursued into the night. Certain loiterers drew near, beaming; but these latter dispersed, their curiosity unsatisfied. The pair disregarded them utterly, leaned on the bar, and ordered a round of drinks.

"Brother," questioned Shea, toying with his glass, "where's King Cole?"

The bartender silently jerked a thumb upward, his beady, expressionless eyes fixed upon the youth.

"What's he doin'?"

"Poker," said the other tersely.

"With whom?"

"Three or four of the leadin' citizens. Why?"

"Because," said Shea, "I crave to make talk with him. Hogan, let's drag upstairs."

"Wait," said the bartender. "Can't be done, gents. He generally don't like to be disturbed."

"Why not? Ain't it a public card room up yonder?"

"Well, sort of," the other admitted. "But Mr. Cole generally picks his public, if you get what I mean."

"Sho," said Shea carelessly. "Let's go, cowboy."

"You got an ungodly crust," growled Hogan as they mounted the stair. "What's the idea?"

"He's playin' poker, ain't he?" retorted Shea. "Maybe they's room for one more at his table. I got a weakness for poker. An' it's surprisin' how well acquainted you get with a gent when you see how he plays 'em."

"If you get to play," said Hogan,

"with him so persnickety this a way, it wouldn't surprise me none if we come down faster than we're goin' up."

This gloomy prediction seemed to be bolstered up by the fact that a brace of exceedingly hard-bitten persons had appeared as if by magic and were trailing them closely up the stairs. The manner of these individuals was casual, but their conversation was frank to the point of bluntness.

"You figger we better bounce these optimists now?" questioned one. "Or should we wait for a high sign, from the chief? Something tells me he ain't gonna like their looks. We don't want him to slap us on the wrist for leavin' Shasta Daisies like them force themselves on his notice."

"Let's wait," said the other. "Depends on what mood the chief's in. If he gets peevish, we'll have a reg'lar workout. By the time these jaspers hit the bottom of the stairs they'll know they've been somewheres."

Shea winked at Hogan, grinning.

"Don't pay no attention to 'em, cowboy," he counseled. "Wherever the real beef trails, the coyotes is yappin' behind. Long as they remember they're self-respectin' cutthroats, leave 'em be. If they get too close, say 'tut, tut,' an' use yore spurs."

A door was before them, shrouded with heavy draperies. They pushed these aside and paused on the threshold, blinking. Before them, it was apparent, was the favorite rendezvous of King Cole; and the partners were momentarily abashed at the almost barbaric luxury with which the little despot had chosen to surround himself.

It was a large room, softly lighted. A huge rug was on the floor, and lesser rugs of bearskin, mountain lion, and coyote. Portraits of rosy-limbed ladies adorned the paneled walls. At one end of the room was an impressive fireplace; at the other a glistening piano. A species of glittering chandelier was sus-

pending from the center of the beamed ceiling; and in the circle of light below, King Cole and three other players were assembled at a green-topped table. A bucket of ice, from which protruded the tinfoil-wrapped necks of certain aristocratic bottles, was beside the monarch's chair. Also at hand for the further convenience of his favored guests was an ornate smoking stand, whereon cigarettes, choice perfectos and a humidior reposed.

It was, for the partners, a scene whose unexpectedness rendered it the more impressive; but Shea, speedily overcoming his first awe, was enraged anew. For these luxurious appointments, like the adornments of a baron's hall in an olden feudal age, had been builded, in a manner of speaking, upon the heartache and toil of slaves. In sharp contrast to the gilded playroom prepared by the monarch for his idle hours was the humble home of the blacksmith. The cost of the liquid refreshments nestling in the bucket of ice represented more than a year's spending money for Hank's thrifty and courageous woman. The rug upon which the monarch's well-shod foot reposed could have purchased the giant's freedom.

Enraging, too, to the impetuous youth, was the bored and languid manner in which the little despot turned from his game toward the newcomers, arching a supercilious eyebrow. The other players likewise turned, almost with relief. They were business men about town, Shea saw. Constraint was upon them, a species of watchful resignation. It was apparent that they were not enjoying the game; that they were here at the monarch's whim. Theirs was the manner of victims being led to the slaughter. From motives of policy they could not resist, and had prepared themselves with what fortitude they could muster to pay tribute to the vanity of the King.

The latter, it was plain, had just raked

in a sizable pot. The discomfiture of his opponents had put him in blandly tolerant mood. He therefore made no sign to the hopeful "bouncers" looming at the partners' backs, but toyed with his stack of chips and eyed the youths with curiosity.

"Well, well, 'Mugs,'" he addressed one of his retainers, "what have we got here?"

"Coupla jaspers who busted in regardless," growled the burly one. "Dunno what they're lookin' for. Trouble, maybe. So we follered 'em up on suspicion, chief."

"Fools rush in," said the little man smilingly, "where angels fear to tread. No doubt, if they're looking for trouble, we can satisfy them, eh, Mugs? But let us inquire into this first. That is"—with a courteous inclination to his guests—"if you gentlemen do not object to postponing this enjoyable session for a moment?"

It was plain that the gentlemen did not object. They relaxed with obvious relief and beamed guardedly upon the youths.

"Now then," said the King with a gesture, "draw near, young man. And kindly remove your hats, if you please. "Ah-ha," he chortled, as Shea's flaming thatch was uncovered, "it's the red-headed fire eater who interfered with our esteemed blacksmith a few moments ago, and was pursued into the night. An intriguing picture!" But there was no mirth in his voice as he put the blunt question: "Where's Hank?"

"In bed," said Shea, grinning.

"In bed? Surely you're not suggesting that you—er—put him there? That he's recuperating, as it were, from the effects of your late difference of opinion?"

"Oh, no," said Shea. "I just persuaded him that he was playin' right into your hand by riotin' an' what-not. So he figgered he'd just disregard yore playful ideas and turn his attention to

more important matters, namely, sleep. Pore ol' Hank's kind of hefty, you savvy. But he's got to have some one do his thinkin' for him, an' I was happy to oblige."

The monarch studied the youth unwinkingly, as though appraising him anew—not as a mere casual unknown in the ranks of the mob, but as a potential force to be reckoned with.

"Well, well," he ruminated, mouthing his cigar. "Well, well. And Hank will not be back this evening, I take it?"

"Nope."

"You're undoubtedly gifted with unusual powers of persuasion," observed the despot, eying him closely. "But perhaps lacking in judgment. You're a stranger here, eh? How long do you intend to honor us with your presence, if I may ask?"

"Not long. To-morrow, maybe. Why?"

"Because," said the little man, "the climate in the vicinity of Hotrocks, while beneficial to those accustomed to it, is usually unhealthy for strangers. Particularly those who interest themselves too closely in local affairs."

"You know," said Shea, grinning, "it done occurred to me, while Hank was orating a spell ago, that this said climate was unhealthy for some of the citizens hereabouts. Fact is, if you hadn't run in them free drinks——"

"That's enough," the monarch cut in. It was apparent that the late assault upon his power was a matter of venomous chagrin. "This conversation has ceased to be amusing. What can I do for you, young man? At the moment, I mean?"

"Well," said Shea, "I didn't mean to horn in, nor nothin'. But I heard you was having a little session here an' figgered maybe you wasn't full-handed."

"Sorry. We're full-handed. In any event, I'm afraid your limited resources would hardly prove interesting to these gentlemen. It's no limit."

"That's tough," said Shea. "My eighty bucks wouldn't get very far, at that. Well, we'll drag along. Sorry to disturb you, gents."

"Wait!" said the monarch. "Before you go, indulge my curiosity. Why did you stop in this village? Is it mere coincidence that you should arrive on the scene on the same evening that Hank picked out for his nonsensical outburst?"

"No," said Shea. "It ain't any coincidence. It's the said handwritin' on the wall."

"H'm," said the little man. "You're in the lion's den, young man, if you'll permit me to carry the analogy farther. But I'm quite sure you're no Daniel. Nevertheless, for our benefit, suppose you try to interpret the handwriting on the wall?"

"Cinch," said Shea. "Before you're many days older, mister, it won't be just me an' Hank that figgers the same way. It'll be dang near unanimous."

"And after that, the deluge, eh?"

"You said it," said Shea.

"H'm," said the monarch, toying with a sparkling ring on his slender hand. "In response to this impudent challenge, I have a logical course of action before me. It is to permit Mugs and his worthy helper to grasp you by the grinning face and eject you forthwith from the premises. Preferably upon the hardest spot that can be found in the roadway below. But on second thought —" He eyed the youth speculatively. "Your eighty dollars represents two months of lowly toil on the range, no doubt. To detach you from your modest capital easily and painlessly should be an impressive object lesson. From it, you may acquire wisdom. Yes, we'll do it." He turned smilingly to the others. "If you gentlemen will permit, we'll make room for this ambitious young man."

There was no objection from the trio. They nodded, eyeing Shea hope-

fully, as though new forces had been added to their ranks.

The monarch waved his hard-bitten guards away, produced a new deck, broke the seal, and spread the cards on the table. He lighted a fresh cigar and eyed Shea genially as that youth drew up a chair and seated himself opposite.

"I'm the banker," he said. "Whites are a quarter, reds a dollar, blues five."

"Gimme a stack," said Shea, placing his roll on the table.

"Since it's a new deal, it will start with me," said the little man, counting out the chips. "The dealer antes one white. Jacks or better to open. A full deck."

"An' the joker wild," said Shea beneath his breath.

The monarch dealt, his slender fingers caressing the cards. Holding the deck in his left hand, he drew each pasteboard backward with a singularly deft and graceful movement. Unnoticed for the moment, Hogan loomed in the shadow. The dealer looked up suddenly, as though aware of intent eyes upon him.

"Does your friend wish to play?" he inquired.

"No," said Hogan hastily. "This ain't my lucky night. Reckon I'll drag along."

"Wait below," said Shea. "See you later, cowboy."

Thus began the game that was destined to become legend in the stirring history of Hotrocks. Not until long afterward were the facts learned, the significance of the battle of wits appraised; and on that appraisal genial philosophers of the high desert built new evidence of an ancient truth; namely, that the lives and destinies of men, the course of empires, may be swayed, molded, or abruptly terminated by such a trivial event as the turn of a card.

As the game progressed, Shea saw

that he was pitted against a master of the great American pastime. He learned speedily why the victims selected by the little despot for his evening's diversion sat in perspiring discomfort, struggling to conserve their resources as long as possible, hoping to lose little rather than to gain much. And he saw his own slender capital dwindle like a handful of snow exposed to the harsh rays of the sun.

With uncanny intuition, it seemed, the monarch smilingly called all bluffs, laid down his cards with unerring judgment when his hand was topped, passed by the insignificant pots, and drew expertly for the large. It seemed inhuman, this ability to gauge the strength of an opponent's hand with such weird precision; and before long Shea found himself examining the little man almost furtively, striving to quell a rising conviction that the other was gifted with a species of second sight, that those cold, mirthless, merciless eyes were reading his very thoughts.

It was on the monarch's deal that the last of Shea's resources were swept from the board; and the little man regarded him with a lifted, supercilious eyebrow as he meticulously stacked his winnings.

"I'm cleaned," said Shea. "Not a son left. But just a second, mister. I'll get my partner to shell up. He's undoubtedly got a few fish he'll be pleased to donate."

"A noble idea." The little man nodded. "We'll send you both away talking to yourselves. Sleep in the streets, as it were. It will make the lesson doubly impressive. Sit still, my dear fellow. I'll send for him."

Though he had not raised his voice, the door opened, and the gentleman called Mugs strode in. From where he sat, it was apparent, the monarch was able to signal to those below. Perhaps a button concealed in the floor, or some such device.

"Mugs," the little man directed, "send up that lean and hungry cowboy. This gentleman's partner."

Hogan appeared and Shea grinned upon him somewhat ruefully.

"Old son, I'm just gettin' warmed up. But somehow or another my capital's done sneaked out on me. Fork out yore iron men an' pass 'em in review. I crave to get action while I'm hot."

But to his utter consternation, Hogan shook his head.

"Whadd'ye mean?" Shea demanded, the grin fading from his face. "Ain't you got any shekels a-tall?"

"I have," said Hogan. "About seventy berries. An' I aim to keep 'em, cowboy."

Shea stared at the gaunt one, jaw dropping. Being generous and open-handed himself, it seemed inconceivable that his partner should even hesitate when called upon for funds. It added to his chagrin when the little man smiled upon him cynically, shrugging his shoulders.

"Just a second," said Shea. He pushed back his chair and rose, flushed. "Outside, cowboy!" He grasped the gaunt one by the arm and propelled him toward the door. "What I got to say to you ain't fit for these lads to hear. Some of them may be family men."

In the hallway, he faced the other scowling.

"How come you leave me in a jam that a way——"

"Shut up!" Hogan whispered. "Here's the seventy. I didn't have a chance to tell you before. You notice his ring? He turns it inside when he deals."

"Well, I'm danged!" breathed Shea. He flushed a deeper tint, but from a new and more scaring rage. "Got a mirror in that sparkler an' readin' the cards, huh? What a sap I am! I knew he had sharps on his pay roll, but I never dreamed the maverick—— Son of a gun! Tickles his fancy to fleece

them citizens, by gravy! An' me also. Hogan, ol' son, it's the said kink in his armor. He's done overreached himself!"

"What's on the program?" questioned Hogan with gloomy relish. "We start one large-size riot with them citizens backin' our play? Or do we——"

"No," said Shea. "Gimme them seventy berries, cowboy. We'll fight fire with fire."

"You ain't got a chance buckin' a crooked game," protested Hogan. "It'll just be donatin', an' he'll give you the horse laugh."

"Them citizens ain't crooks," said Shea. "It'll be just me against the King. I ain't a sharp, but I'm gamblin' I'll hold my own if I don't ante my life away before the killin'. Listen, cowboy. Drag down below. Wait, an' keep yore ears peeled. No tellin' what'll bust at the show-down. I'll be leanin' back while I play, you savvy. When you hear my chair hit the floor, drift up casual."

"I'll be there," Hogan promised, sighing as he placed the gold representing the last of their capital in Shea's palm. "Adios, iron men! Strength to yore arm, cowboy."

Shea turned and plunged through the draperies. Stifling what purported to be a languid yawn, Hogan sauntered down the stair, drew up with his back to the bar, and fell into an attitude of repose. With bony elbows hooked on the mahogany, and chin sunk on his chest, he studied the sawdust-littered floor with morose disinterest.

Mugs, the faithful "bouncer," descended from upper realms and leered upon the gaunt one in passing.

"Your friend's a hound for punishment," he opined. "But if the chief don't have him out on his feet after a couple more clinches, I miss my guess."

"What of it?" said Hogan, yawning anew. "Life's full of problems."

In point of fact, it was not the pre-

dicted ten minutes but a seemingly interminable half hour later that Hogan's quivering ears were assailed by a muffled thud from above. From beneath his lowered hat brim he cast a lightning glance about him, detached himself from the bar, stretched his gaunt length, and turned languidly up the stair.

From a near-by chair the burly Mugs rose up and made as if to follow.

"Aim to drag that loco side-kick of mine out the game while he's still got his shirt," growled Hogan. "Does he figger he's a pop-eyed Santa Claus?"

The burly one grunted understandingly, waved him on, and resumed his place.

Hidden from view at the top of the stair, Hogan's languid manner dropped from him like a cloak. He pushed the draperies aside and strode in.

It was apparent that he had arrived in that climactic moment that precedes the show-down. Hogan's gloomy eyes bulged as he surveyed the scene.

Shea was disheveled and perspiring. He had cast his gorgeous bandanna aside, and his shirt was open at the neck. His flaming hair was rampant, like a storm-tossed sea. His pugnacious jaw was outthrust, and his freckled fist clutched his cards tightly as he glared across the table at King Cole. Cool, poised, sardonic, the despot stared back, his cigar uptilted at an angle that suggested triumphant and gloating amusement.

The battle obviously was between these two. The trio of good citizens sat immobile, and the tenseness of the moment was evidenced by the fact that they, as mere spectators, mopped their glistening foreheads furtively and ran surreptitious thumbs around wilted collars as they awaited the outcome.

It was the dimensions of the pot over which the battle was being waged that staggered Hogan. Chips had been cast aside. Gold was on the table in a glittering heap, more gold than the gaunt

cowboy had ever owned. There was some currency and silver, but it was the yellow metal—common medium of exchange in the high desert—that outranked the rest by far. A vast, plethoric, staggering pot, by comparison to the usual run of stakes in ranch bunk houses; even in an alleged “no-limit” game; and as Hogan drew near, Shea placed his sombrero on the table and smote that aristocratic headpiece with clenched fist.

“That’s what I said,” he challenged between his teeth. “Twenty bucks at Denver is what this beaver cost. It goes in the pot at ten.”

“Done!” said the little despot. “I’ll call, and hope it rains.”

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and produced a coin. It was a ten-dollar gold piece; and as he tossed it on the stack, Hogan, who had drawn near apparently unnoticed by the players, saw that it was a defective coin. The eagle side, uppermost as it lay in the pot, was marred by a slight indentation, as though it had been struck a heavy blow by a narrow-faced hammer.

“Perhaps you could stand a raise,” suggested the despot maliciously. “Surely you could produce something else of value to add to these souvenirs. Your spurs, perhaps. Or a red-headed scalp would make an excellent trophy to hang on the wall.”

Shea looked up at Hogan at that instant and grinned.

“Nope,” he said. “Let’s call it a day. I’m glad you drifted in. I didn’t ask yore permission, but I done backed my judgment with everything we got. This is a small table, but they’s a couple of ace-high hosses standin’ on it. Saddles also, an’ bridles, an’ blankets. They’re all in the pot.”

“Shot the works, huh?” murmured Hogan.

“And it’s too late to raise objection,” said the little man waspishly. “I have matched the personal property men-

tioned with coin of the realm, as these gentlemen will bear witness.”

“No objection,” said Hogan.

Shea grinned up at him again, and momentarily, in his partner’s reckless eyes, Hogan glimpsed something veiled and exultant that staggered him anew. Was it even remotely possible that the downright youth’s hand could prevail against the King’s? The gaunt one had leaped to the conclusion that all was lost, had resigned himself to the bleak prospect of being afoot in a cattle country, penniless, and with Shea minus his hat. But the freckled hand that clutched the cards was not trembling. Only outwardly, Hogan realized with awe, Shea exhibited the desperate belligerence of one foredoomed to defeat.

“And now,” said the little despot dryly, “comes the show-down. You gentlemen are of sufficient sporting caliber, I hope, to accept the verdict of the cards, from which there is no appeal.”

“In other words, no squawking, huh?” said Shea. “I’m very glad you put it that way, mister. What have you got?”

With his right hand, the monarch flicked the ash from his cigar. He did it languidly, the better to enjoy the dramatics of this climactic moment. With his left hand he spread his cards on the table.

“Two pair,” he said, his smile fixed. “Both queens.”

“And I have two pair,” said Shea softly, spreading his cards. “Both kings.”

CHAPTER X.

THE TRAIL OF GOLD.

DURING a long instant so quiet that the ticking of energetic watches could plainly be heard, all remained as though carved from stone. The monarch sat rigid, his cigar still held aloft, his burning eyes fixed on the cards like one who sees and yet disbelieves. Like

effigies the three citizens sat, mouths open; and Shea poised, grinning.

Then the trio relaxed with explosive sighs. The monarch sat back, clamped his cigar between his teeth, and lifted his gaze to Shea's face. Something transcending rage was in his reptilian eyes, an emotion more devastating than mere chagrin. It was the species of awe with which a master of destinies faces the realization that he has been maneuvered into an impossible dilemma, the doubt of his own resources arising from the ego-shattering knowledge that he has been beaten at his own game, with his own weapons, on ground he himself has chosen.

Greater stakes than the monetary loss—trifling to his resources—were here involved. For the first time in his iron régime as despot of Hotrocks, citizens had seen a plan of his go wrong, had seen him checkmated, humbled, his will set aside. Was it possible that this incident, even as the reckless and triumphant youth had stated so bluntly, represented the handwriting on the wall?

Thus the monarch sat immobile, his eyes like holes burned in a smiling mask, while Shea raked in the pot, placed his sombrero on his head with a flourish, and methodically began to segregate his winnings.

"Come to papa!" chortled the youth with ruthless glee. "Hot dog, cowboy! This pot's the granddaddy of 'em all. You take the paper an' chicken feed, ol' son. It just about stacks up to our original stake. I'll tote this gold, which is velvet. What a start we got in life! Maybe we won't kick up some dust along the Milky Way, what? Mr. Cole, much obliged. Yore generosity is only equalled by yore lack of judgment."

"Four kings," murmured the despot, like one emerging from a trance. "Unusual, young man. Most unusual."

"Surprised, huh?" queried Shea. "You probly had yore own ideas as

to what I held, is that it? Plumb certain, in fact. Well, Mr. Cole, that's one of the intriguin' things about poker. You ain't supposed to know what the other feller's got. Even on yore own deal. All you can do is back yore judgment, which you done noble. It's just that I had you faded. You wear a ring to bring you luck, but it wasn't enough to outweigh my yen for corraling kings."

He spoke banteringly, but his blue eyes were unwinking in their appraisal of his late opponent; and suddenly Hogan grasped certain excruciating aspects of the situation. The monarch's lips were sealed by the very nature of his dilemma. He had known to a certainty the cards Shea had drawn. Based on those cards, his own hand had outranked Shea's by far. But he could not challenge the source of the kings Shea had produced so mysteriously at the showdown without revealing his own nefarious methods.

"Well, cowboy, let's go!" Shea rose, his pockets bulging with his heavy winnings. "Since we agreed that this was to be the last pot, we'll just drag along an' get some action on these iron men. Gents, I thank you." He grinned down upon the trio of citizens. "It was a plumb enjoyable game. I'm gamblin' you got yore money's worth just bein' spectators. Don't let the story get farther than the Rio Grande by morning. Keep it dark. But if you have to tell it, make it plain that the King's luck's played out. His said throne's crumbling. He ain't unbeatable no more. Look at the record! That lowly blacksmith called him a while ago, an' got away with it. We locked horns in this little game, an' he lost. The third time will be the charm. He'll be through in Hotrocks!"

As Shea had hoped; this challenge, uttered in the presence of those who had witnessed his humiliation, pierced the iron self-control of the little despot.

For the first time in the memory of the gaping citizen trio, the monarch's self-assurance deserted him. His smile became a distorted grimace. His features flushed with murderous rage.

"You—you yokels!" he sputtered. "Through, am I? Bah! This picayune game means nothing. I'll crush that blasted blacksmith——"

He broke off, as though realizing belatedly that by yielding to invective and defiance, he had been trapped into error.

"Get out!" he said between his teeth. "Get out, before I have you thrown out! When you hit the street, don't stop. Keep going. This town's too small for you. Don't let the sun rise on you in Hotrocks."

"We're going," said Shea genially. "But not out of town. Our usefulness ain't done yet. See you in the morning, gents. After sunup."

The draperies closed behind the pair. Moving with an appearance of casualness, yet rapidly, they descended the stair.

"Figgered they might be a massacre at the show-down," Shea chuckled. "Was he flabbergasted, old son? He was paralyzed."

But as they threaded through the crowd at the bar, both marked a wall light flicker. Instantly the burly Mugs and his lieutenant, with a suspicious glance at the partners, charged up the stair.

"He's comin' to life now," muttered Hogan. "Son of a gun, but you've got a crust, cowboy! Beardin' a lion in his own den that a way. How was you able to top his hand?"

They pushed through the swinging doors and so into the milling street. Though they appeared to be swallowed up in the colorful crowd, Hogan looked about him uneasily.

"Them kings?" Shea chuckled. "Collected 'em out of the discard over a few precedin' hands. Everything broke right. When his deal come around, he

dealt me the fourth an' caught his own queen. That was the precise layout I was thirstin' for. Never again in this vale of tears will I see a gent's eyes stick out like his when I laid 'em down! He knew I couldn't have 'em, you savvy. An' there they was!"

"You outfoxed him," Hogan agreed. "But now that you got this filthy lucre, what you aim to do with it?"

"Do with it?" echoed Shea. "Such a question for an enterprisin' cowboy to ask! Just you put yore mind to it, big boy, an' try to recall all the ways you've dreamed of dispersin' a li'lle pot like this! Yore share of the same bein' clost to four hundred berries."

"I mean right now," said Hogan gloomily. "They's four or five of King Cole's strong-arm squad trailin' us."

"No!" said Shea. "You're seein' things, cowboy."

They paused before a post upon which a printed notice was displayed and affected to scan this document with interest, but beneath their lowered hat brims they scanned the street behind them.

"You're prone to underestimate the maverick," said Hogan from the corner of his mouth. "See that gent leanin' against the lamp-post an' yawnin' real disinterested? Four seconds ago he was walkin' fast an' was wide awake. Take note of them two gents acrost the street arguin' politics? They shore stopped sudden. Down yonder, lookin' in the drug-store window—the hefty gent. Ever see that gorilla's ears before?"

"Son of a gun!" Shea breathed. "It's Mugs!"

"They's three things they want," opined Hogan. "The loot, an' a brace of lowly cowboy's scalps."

"We'll shake 'em," said Shea. "See that alley up yonder? We walk by casual, turn in sudden, an' run fast."

"Yeah?" said Hogan gloomily. "That's just the kind of layout them cut-throats crave in which to surround us.

In the morning the good citizens wake up an' find one of them mysteries in their midst. Couple of corpses in the alley, beat up, an' not a sou in their jeans. The marshal investigates an' can't find a clew. Unknown miscreants has done this dastardly deed. Son of a gun, cowboy, you shorely got a genius for gettin' snarled up in hostile jack pots! It ain't a question of how we're going to stay in this blasted village, but how in blazes are we goin' to get out."

"Sho!" said Shea. "Fight off them nervous chills, ol' son. We ain't corpses yet. We ain't gettin' out of town. We're stayin' right here till sunup an' watch King Cole's bubble burst."

"Well," said Hogan with a sigh, "here's the alley, captain. We'll hope for the best. Execute a right turn an' then gimme room, or yore army'll tramp you underfoot."

They swung closer to the alley's mouth, merged surreptitiously into its shadow, and then were away, plunging headlong into the enveloping darkness.

No distant street light loomed beyond. By contrast to the glittering main thoroughfare, the blackness about them was that of a tomb. Against the sky to their right loomed the sheer wall of an adjoining building. On their left a high board fence took form. Shea considered this barrier, slid to a stop, and with outflung arm, brought Hogan likewise to a halt.

"Maybe they'll sprint around to head us off," the former whispered. "Let's cross 'em by shinnin' over this fence."

He leaped up, but his clutching fingers failed to reach the crest of the barrier. Hogan launched his lean frame skyward with more success. He heaved himself to the top of the fence, extended a long arm downward, and assisted Shea to follow. Lowering themselves into the farther shadows, they stood, hip-deep, in a jungle of ancient weeds and listened, breathless.

Almost immediately there was evidence that they had executed their maneuver none too soon. Footsteps pounded in the alley, drummed by. These encountered other footfalls coming from the opposite direction, indicating that in the few minutes that had elapsed since their departure from the King's lair, a widespread net had been thrown out. There was a guarded conference among the pursuers, hoarse and profane. Again the alley was traversed, more stealthily and painstakingly. Then the voice of what was apparently the ringleader of the desperadoes was heard not more than six feet from the point where the partners stood.

"Them lobos gave us the slip," this one whispered. "But they can't be far. Don't overlook any bets. They got that roll on 'em, an' the chief's offerin' five hundred bucks for the red-headed one. Scatter, an' keep your eyes peeled."

Their footsteps moved away, dwindled in the distance. The partners eyed each other through the gloom.

"Now ain't that a nice hornet's nest?" whispered Hogan. "A price on our heads, by gravy! Five hundred for the read-headed one. Ho! Sink yore teeth in that, cowboy."

"It's something I can point to with pride," averred Shea. "I'm one of them valued citizens. The ordinary run of lowly wranglers wouldn't fetch more than two fifty in the open market."

"It's one of them things to which you'll point from a long ways off," Hogan predicted, " 'less you get busy. Talk fast, cowboy, an' let's have the next bright idea. These weeds is itchin' me. Where do we go from here?"

"We split up for a spell," said Shea. "Till we're out of the woods. You sneak off south by west, an' I'll bear off in a northerly direction. We meet up at the back of the livery stable. We'll hide out better by trailin' alone. O. K.?"

"O. K."

From a pile of rubbish near by came the gleam of ancient tin cans. Shea stooped and picked up one of these.

"What you aim to do with that?" questioned Hogan.

"Takin' a leaf out of that benighted blacksmith's past," said Shea. "I'm loaded down with this loot. I'll just bury the critter somewheres out yonder an' we'll scoop it up when we fog out of town to-morrow. Yeah, an' what a laugh it'll be if them cutthroats gang up on me an' find I ain't got the gold on me a-tall! Maybe that won't burn 'em up."

"You're a judge of humorous ideas, an' no mistake," averred Hogan. "I'll give you a better one. If you follow in that lowly blacksmith's trail, you won't be able to recall where you buried the blasted gold. As a matter of fact, cowboy, that wouldn't hurt my feelings none. If you get down to cases, it's crooked money."

"Crooked money?" echoed Shea aghast. "When I euchered it out of a sharp like King Cole when he was fixin' to rob me blind? When all the maverick's rotten wealth comes from fattenin' off the citizens hereabouts? You're shorely a stickler for them fine points, ol' hoss! But let's not pause to debate it at the minnit. On yore way, ol' son."

"Keep under cover," Hogan admonished. "Don't take no fool chances when yore guardeen angel ain't at yore right hand. See you at the livery stable."

"I'll be waitin' for you," Shea grinned.

They parted, each proceeding stealthily in a different direction. Shea's spurs jingled softly in the farther shadows. Hogan muttered as he barked his shins on an ancient débris of weed-shrouded machinery; and presently each was lost to sight and sound in the enveloping darkness.

Despite Shea's boast, it was Hogan who first arrived at the rear door of

the livery stable and cautiously slipped inside. During long minutes the gaunt one waited, his gloomy imagination conjuring up all manner of terrific dilemmas in which his energetic partner was doubtless embroiled. As the moments passed, his apprehensions grew. He saw Shea lying, battered and lifeless, in some dark corner, while human vultures, gorged and triumphant, stole off through the shadows. He saw the youth backed against a gloomy wall waging a desperate but losing battle against cutthroats experienced in the devious enterprises cloaked by the night life of a frontier town.

He was about to sally forth in a search that he knew would be futile, when Shea loomed in the doorway. Briefly, in the vague light, Hogan caught a glimpse of his partner's reckless features. They were oddly exultant, all but shining with triumph, his blue eyes sparkling. His manner was that of a master schemer who has added the last bold stroke to the picture.

Hogan hissed guardedly, and Shea moved with caution to his side. He was breathing heavily.

"I salted the loot, old son," he whispered. "Couple of them wolves spotted me back yonder, but I outrun 'em. Hot dog, cowboy! Maybe the stage ain't all set for the blow-up to-morrow!"

"Yeah?" said Hogan, with a somber irritation that was merely a revulsion of feeling from his previous worry. "An' meanwhile, where are we at? Yore blasted enterprises has fixed it so we're in the soup. We can't show our faces on the boulevard, or we're sunk. We can't get our hosses saddled an' out of here without startin' a riot. Maybe you've figgered out a way to topple the King off his throne, but right now him an' his thugs own the town. Question is, where we gonna sleep?"

"Cinch," said Shea. "Nobody knows we're here. We crawl right up in the haymow, loosen our belts, an' call it a

day. Nothin' simpler. Havin' slept the sleep of pilgrims who've done their duty noble an' found a roost, we crawl out at sunup."

"Now that's an idea," averred Hogan, brightening. "Once in a while you show a gleam of human intelligence, cowboy. Let's hit the hay."

Far up in the shadows beneath the vaulted roof, where the hay loomed about them like billows on a storm-tossed sea, each found a lair and cast himself down with a sigh. At intervals, from the depths below, rose the murmur of men's voices, the stamping and munching of animals in their stalls, the more distant murmur of traffic from the glittering main street of the carnival town; but these sounds speedily became but a blur in the background of their lethargic consciousness.

Hogan was almost asleep when Shea stretched forth his arm and nudged him guardedly.

"About that loot, old son," the reckless youth whispered. "Danged if I don't believe you're right. We don't need it, huh? Struggle along without it, maybe?"

"Don't pester me," growled Hogan. "To blazes with the loot! We got our original shekels back, ain't we? That haywire velvet can rot where you buried it for all of me. I'm agin' fast, cowboy. If you got any respect for my gray hairs a-tall, leave me grab some sleep."

"O. K.," said Shea, sinking back with a sigh. "Sweet dreams, little one. Snore once, an' you're scalped."

CHAPTER XI.

THE DRUMS OF WAR.

IT was early dawn, when the silvery, lancelike apertures in the vast roof above were turning slowly to gold, and the dim shadows were dissipating above the billows of hay, that Shea reared up cautiously and wakened Hogan.

"What's the idea?" demanded the latter, rubbing his eyes. "I ain't slept but a minnit——"

"Sh-h," Shea warned. "We got to get going before Hank rouses up the town. Let's saddle our critters an' sneak 'em out the back way."

They stole softly down and made their way toward the stalls. In the shadows of the tack room, hard by the main entrance, they could see the recumbent figure of the night man, snoring on a horse blanket. Outside, the quiet of the tomb was upon the village and the slumbering world.

Shea stood guard while Hogan saddled both their mounts and led them forth, singly and with infinite caution, through the rear door and so into an ancient corral. It was a delicate operation, for the creaking of saddle leather and the footfalls of the animals comprised alien sounds above the munching and stamping of other horses in the gloom; but the night man snored on. Shea left a silver dollar on the shelf by the tack-room door, and exultantly tiptoed forth to join his crony.

They led their mounts through a rickety gate and into an ancient lot beyond. Here they swung to the saddle and proceeded toward the street. Shea halted at the curb, pushed back his hat, and grinned upon his partner. The gaunt one strove to assume his usual somber mantle of gloom; but all about them in the strengthening light were evidences that a new day and a new deal were at hand, and they breathed deep of the freshness, the fragrance, the crystalline air that precedes the dawn.

Both drew forth the makings and rolled cigarettes. Twin spirals of smoke rose in the breathless hush.

"Hogan, ol' son," said Shea, his blue eyes twinkling. "Our haywire work in this enterprisin' village is dang near done. For the past forty-eight hours you been hollerin' yore head off about gettin' out from under the snarl of

world affairs. Well, sir, we're pointin' south. We're on our critters an' nothin' holdin' us back. What say we burn up the dust an' travel?"

"Whadd'ye mean—our haywire work is dang near done?" questioned Hogan, aghast. "Things is all snarled up an' ready to pop. You ribbed up Hank to buck the King. Any minnit now he'll be raisin' an uproar which will rouse up this village like a hornet's nest. How do you know that lowly blacksmith'll make his bluff stick when the show-down comes? We should pull out an' leave him face the music alone? You're loco, cowboy. We got to stick around an' see how it pans out." He broke off suddenly, eyed his partner askance, and hunched his shoulders sheepishly. "Dang yore measly hide!" he growled, achieving a lugubrious grin.

"Ho!" chuckled Shea. "Flesh is frail. You've done acquired a taste for world affairs, huh? Yeah, ol' son, we'll stick around."

Along a side street, a half block distant, came the sound of approaching footsteps—a heavy, ponderous tread and another that was lighter, more active. The partners drew back in the shadows to watch. The blacksmith loomed at the intersection, with his boy all but trotting at his side. The giant's shoulders were slumped a little, his chin sunk on his chest. The boy's grinning, eager face was upturned. They crossed the street, heading toward the main thoroughfare, and so passed from view.

"Flesh is frail," Shea repeated. "Hank ain't so sure this mornin'. The lad's bolsterin' him up. We'll park our critters somewheres near by, ol' son, slide into the shop, an' watch the play. But first let's sprint around by the gulch to see what Hank's woman's got to report."

He spurred forthwith in that direction. Hogan followed. The sound of their progress was muffled in the dust-deadened street.

"What's the idea?" Hogan demanded. "The woman's out of it."

"No," said Shea. "She ain't out of it, Hogan. I wonder now, is she in the garden? Yes, sir, there she is."

From far off they could see her, laboring industriously as on the evening before, when despair had stood at her elbow. It was not desperation now that urged her on, but suspense of a different order. Once more her man had gone forth to face a crisis. Her part was done. Nothing for her to do but wait.

She smiled upon them as they drew up, her eyes dark in contrast to the pallor of her features.

"I see you got Hank started off, ma'am," said Shea. "Was he primed for slaughter?"

"He's no roaring lion at all, poor man." She leaned on the handle of the spade and smiled upon them somewhat wanly. "It's only when he's drinkin' that he's terrible. He groaned in his sleep last night. But after he was to bed I talked to Buddy, an' the lad strengthened his arm this mornin'. So we got him off. Buddy's got courage which needs no liquor. You lads have done a fine thing for us. I know why you're having him defy Mr. Cole. It will give him the self-respect which he needs so that he can start again after he's lost the home an' shop. I couldn't tell Hank so this morning. All I could say was that you upstandin' lads would brings us luck, and he should follow your advice blindly. But suppose he hasn't the heart to stand up to Mr. Cole? Suppose he's persuaded again that all is lost?" She shook her head as her forebodings descended upon her anew. "What will happen then?"

"Sho," said Shea. "Don't you worry, now. Me an' Hogan's going to back his play. Just you keep on diggin' in the garden, ma'am, an' we'll drag back to the shop."

He tightened the reins as though to turn away. But he did not wheel his

horse. He sat in the saddle, statuesque, his unwinking gaze watching the woman's every move. She had grasped the spade again, and suddenly Hogan was aware—though it was not until afterward that he analyzed its significance—that his iron-nerved partner was fairly trembling with some suppressed emotion. Yet Shea's voice was casual as he addressed the woman.

"I see you're still fixin' to stake out the celery, ma'am. Down in the valley, when I was a lad, we dug them celery trenches deeper."

"I'm going deep," said the woman, turning from her anxious thoughts with relief. "It'll make a fine bed, an' no mistake."

The earth was freshly turned all about her. She sank the spade in the rich soil. Metal grated harshly on metal, and an ancient can spilled out of the crumbling loam.

She stooped over this can, to toss it aside. But its weight attracted her notice. Carelessly she brushed the loose soil from its rusty surface, laid hold of the jagged top, and turned it back. She peered inside. Her back was toward the partners, but they saw her stiffen. She rubbed her eyes and peered again.

"It's full of money," she cried unbelievably. "Gold!"

"Well, I'm danged!" breathed Hogan.

She gathered up her apron and emptied the can into this improvised receptacle. It was indeed gold that cascaded forth; heavy pieces, that clanked musically, a double handful or more.

"Ho!" Shea chuckled, slapping his thigh. "This is shorely good! Hank roots up the country for miles around, an' all the while it's buried right smack in his own garden! I'll gamble when you was helpin' him search you never even thought of lookin' here."

"Hank's gold!" The woman barely whispered the words. She had turned toward them, wide-eyed, the spade fall-

ing unheeded to the ground; her face was swept by successive emotions. Dazed uncomprehension was followed by doubt, then hope, then certainty. As realization came, she clutched her treasure to her with an almost fierce exultance. Looking at her, the partners knew that in that moment it was no mere metal, cold and insensate, that she held thus tightly, but such infinitely greater treasures as Hank's self-respect, the future of her boy, the shop, and home.

"What a break!" said Shea, grinning. "Ma'am, now that you got it, what you aim to do with it?"

It was a superfluous question, as both knew. The woman had retrieved the can and was replacing the gold with trembling fingers. She smiled up at Shea, a flush akin to returning life mounting in her plump cheeks.

"Do with it!" she echoed. "Ye heathen! Maybe this won't strengthen Hank's arm when he finally faces King Cole!"

"Let's go," said Shea.

He waved the woman a genial salute as they spurred away. Looking back, they saw her emerge from the garden gate, following in their wake toward town.

"Why didn't you offer to take the gold down to Hank for her?" questioned Hogan.

"Fellah," Shea reproved joyously, "you don't know nothin' about life a-tall. Cheat her out of the pleasure of runnin' to Hank with his hope of salvation? Try to do it. Yeah, try to do it! It's her privilege, an' she's glory bound. It's like she's been eatin' her heart out on the side lines while her man's been neck-deep in the battle, with his weapons busted, an' now she comes runnin' with a sword."

Clearly through the half light they could see black smoke pouring from the distant shop; and suddenly, through the breathless hush that lay upon Hotrocks,

came what Shea had termed the drums of war.

Oddly like a drum it seemed, the rhythmic clanging from the forge. Out and out the echoes rolled. And because, in the brewing rebellion of the deserted metropolis, the business of an humble blacksmith toiling at his forge was fraught with tremendous significance, the sonorous cadence was like a ringing challenge and a call to arms.

"Ain't that music?" Shea chuckled, pulling his hat lower over his eyes. "Just like he was sayin' 'To blazes, King Cole! You're through, King Cole!' Cowboy, we park our critters under them locust trees yonder, which gives us a clear trail south. Then we ease in to the back of the shop an' get set to watch the fun."

They left their horses, reins trailing, and sprinted across the intervening vacant lot. They entered through the back door, unnoticed by the blacksmith and his helper, and stood for a moment in the smoke-shrouded gloom behind the forge.

The giant was at the anvil, the boy at the bellows lever; and instantly the partners saw that the bulky one was being urged on to a course of action from which his doubting soul shrank.

"Lean on it, dad!" the boy applauded. "That's waking 'em up! There's Hansen, above the harness shop, looking out the window and rubbing his eyes. See the night marshal standing yonder. He's paralyzed. He knows there'll be something doing in a minute, and he doesn't know what. Keep it up, dad! Put your shoulders and your back into it!"

The bulky one swung mightily. He was working a slender piece of metal which allowed the full force of the heavy hammer to fall upon the resounding anvil. He was doing his part, in so far as physical effort was concerned, but his bearded, somewhat bewildered features were not now those of a leader

of men. Only in his cups, Shea saw, or through the agency of some vast and vital emotion, could the native force of the giant be brought to the surface.

The genial youth strolled forth and halted before the anvil, grinning. The giant desisted for a moment and peered at him almost hopefully, leaning on his hammer.

"You're doin' fine, old scout," Shea approved. "Things is beginnin' to move. Don't forget they's a show-down comin' as soon as the citizens gather around. When King Cole shows up, play 'em like you did last night."

"I dunno about that," muttered the giant. "I'll try. When that maverick struts up an' gives me the eye—— Son of a gun; I wisht I had a shot of hooch!"

"You don't need no hooch," said Shea sternly. "Just drink deep on the memory of yore wrongs. Recall that the citizens hereabouts expect you to lead 'em out of slavery. Remember yore woman, an' the lad here—an' hew to the line."

"But if you get down to cases," said the giant with desperation, "I ain't got a leg to stand on. It's his shop."

"No, it ain't," Shea grinned. "Lady Luck's made other arrangements."

"Whadd'ye mean?"

"Wait an' see," said Shea, backing away. "Didn't I tell you to take my gilt-edged advice an' follow it blind? Lay on, ol' son! Here comes the pop-eyed populace."

The advance guard of energetic citizens, adept in wakening suddenly, analyzing events quickly, and dressing in haste, were indeed approaching. Some walked as swiftly as their dignity would permit; others at an unabashed gallop. Their faces were joyous and intent, like those of small boys, circus-bound, who have heard the distant notes of the caliope reëchoing from the vaulted dome of the big tent.

Grimly the giant bent to his task. He

did not look at the growing ranks of spectators massing at the shop door. His iron had grown cold. He turned to the forge, thrust it into the embers. It was while he was heaping more coal on the flames that his wife entered through the rear door and stood before him, flushed and radiant.

The giant stared at her, his brows lowering.

"Told you to stay to home," he growled. "This is no place for wimmin folks."

"Look, Hank——" She held out her treasure. "Here's your can of gold. I found it. It was in the garden all the while. That's where you buried it, Hank. I dug it up just now."

His great, gnarled hand closed over the can of gold. He stared at it, shifted his bewildered gaze to the woman, and back again.

"It's enough to pay off the mortgage," she said, beaming with pride and happiness. "Now you can face Mr. Cole, can't you, darlin'? Didn't I tell you the lads here would bring you luck?"

"It's the shot of hooch you mentioned, ol' son," said Shea softly. "Get wild!"

The spectators had not grasped the significance of this byplay. The low-toned conversation had occurred in the shadowed gloom of the rear. Nor did they see the look that flamed in the giant's eyes as he looked down at the woman; but the partners knew that for her it was reward enough. Once more, as on the evening before, he was the leader who had risen up to defy the King; and a sword, in a manner of speaking, was in his hand.

The giant placed the can behind the anvil, where he could see it as he labored. He drew forth the sparkling iron from its lurid nest. He took up the hammer, and now, as the boy had previously exhorted him to do, he put his mighty shoulders and back to it. The woman retreated into the shadows to wait. The partners stood motionless.

"Son of a gun!" Shea whispered. "Look at 'em come!"

The street resounded to the beat of hurrying feet. The bulk of the town's male population was on hand, it seemed; and as he examined the growing ranks of grim, intent faces, Shea suddenly knew a strange feeling of humility that was akin to terror. Thus on a high mountain a careless wayfarer might have stood, aghast at the avalanche he had caused by the tossing of a casual stone into the depths. He had hoped merely to help the giant blacksmith. He had spoken genially of dethroning the King. But to the assembled citizens of Hotrocks, the impending crisis—typified by the giant's defiance of the hitherto invincible despot—was neither casual nor amusing. It meant the meeting of forces that could easily cause bloodshed, the dividing of the town into hostile camps where but one could prevail. The welfare of the community might here be tried in the balance, the throwing off of a régime that struck direct at home and posterity; and these were things for whose defense, on occasion, men had fought and died.

"Lean on it, dad," said the boy, pumping excitedly at the bellows lever. "Here comes the King."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHOW-DOWN.

THE crowd had split apart, leaving a way to the street. Down this path composed of towering men, the little despot strode. He was immaculate, as always. While others had rushed to the scene, he had dallied to deck himself in the sartorial elegance that was symbolic of his power. Yet there was, to Shea, something about the monarch's pompous pose that did not quite ring true. It was as though, for the first time, he knew a doubt as to his own resources. He was apparently surrounded by his usual supreme self-con-

fdence. His supercilious smile was fixed. But as he advanced upon the blacksmith, his cold, menacing, reptilian eyes were watchful; and it was no mere coincidence that as the crowd closed in behind him, the jostling front ranks should reveal certain equally intent members of his "strong-arm squad."

Thus, in the half light of early dawn, the blacksmith shop was as a stage upon which drama unfolded. The leaders occupied its center, facing each other across the anvil. Concealed in the shadowed wings the partners and the boy stood, and, farther back, the woman. The spectators, massing from the door outward, were the audience beyond the footlights. Here, late arrivals were hissed into silence. All eyes were fixed upon King Cole and the blacksmith.

"Hank," said the little despot. "I instructed you yesterday morning about working at this ungodly hour. You've seen fit to defy me, eh?"

"It's my shop," said the giant, leaning on his hammer. "They's no law against it."

His voice and manner were mild, and the little man stiffened.

"You big yokel!" he said. "Your impudence last night was excusable, under the circumstances. But you're not drunk this morning. What's the meaning of this? I own the shop, the ground you're standing on, the miserable shanty you call your home. This anvil's mine, all this grimy equipment. Do you deny that?"

"You got a mortgage on it," the giant agreed. "It's due to-day. But in this man's country it's the custom to give a gent a fighting chance. Long as he's doin' his best——"

"Bah!" the little despot interrupted. "So that's the way the wind blows, eh? Contrary to my orders, you deliberately came down here this morning, knowing that your infernal uproar would bring out the town. With an audience, you hoped for leniency, eh?"

"Just wanted to let the citizens see how you'd act if you was given a chance to shoot square," said the blacksmith. "Maybe you wasn't the slimy, poisonous reptile you appeared to be. Yore thugs an' cutthroats have had the populace buffaloeed. Yore gamblin' halls an' dance halls an' dens of iniquity have bled the town dry. You got the leadin' tax payers an' business men by the throat, an' a gent's life ain't his own no more. Still an' all, I figured that if it come to a show-down involvin' all the worldly goods an' hopes of the hereafter of a lowly gent like me, when you got my life an' the future of my woman an' my boy in the hollow of yore hand, maybe you'd show that you had the milk of human kindness in you. Maybe underneath all the orneriness an' manginess on the surface was a little of the real beef. You get me, Mr. Cole? Right now is a show-down for you as well as for me. You can prove to these citizens where you stand."

"I'll do it," said the little man smilingly. All his egotism and self-confidence had returned. "I'm glad you provided an audience for this occasion which you deem so momentous. I'm going to make an example of you, Hank. I'm going to demonstrate what happens to those who cross my path. It is a pleasure to impress you even further with your humble status in life, and show you how insignificant are you and your precious family you prattle about, compared to my plans." From his breast pocket he drew forth an official-looking document, and tapped it with a slender finger. "This is a mortgage and quit-claim deed, Hank, executed by you. It provides that title to this property passes to me on this date without recourse. Since you're unable to satisfy the mortgage, it's now my property." He spoke with sudden, venomous force. "You're a trespasser, Hank. Take off your apron and get off the premises!"

An angry mutter rose from the

crowd. The giant blacksmith, with an instinctive sense of dramatics that caused Shea to all but chuckle aloud in sheer delight, had made it appear that again, as always, the monarch held the winning hand. Had the little tyrant been less sated with his own arrogance, less inflamed with triumphant assumption of power, he might have recognized the dangerous forces rising against him. But to him, with the giant apparently helpless before him, the growling of the resentful, rebellious, baffled mob was yet another tribute.

"That's yore answer, huh?" questioned the blacksmith.

"Could it be any plainer?" said the little man waspishly. "You're through!"

"No," said the blacksmith. "I ain't through."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said the giant, stooping to pick up the can hidden behind the anvil, "that I'm paying off the mortgage. In gold."

The little man stood motionless, his smile fixed. Something like a sigh arose from the ranks of the crowd.

"Wow!" breathed a voice, hoarse with awe. "Hank's found his can of gold!"

"You've had your chance, Cole!" It was the blacksmith who now spoke with force. "The white man's chance I mentioned a minnit ago, to which a gent's entitled in this man's country. Now the deal's closed, an' they's new business before the house. First, drag out that blasted mortgage an' mark it paid."

His features livid, the little man drew forth the document.

"Count it out," he said between his teeth, striving to maintain a semblance of mastery. "Including the interest. To the last dollar."

"Six hundred, ain't it? An' ten per cent interest for six months. That's thirty. Lucky my boy's had schoolin'! We've figgered it more than once." He poured the coins forth upon the anvil, counted them methodically. "There you

are, Cole. Twenty-five twenties. Thirteen tens. You're paid—an' enough left to keep on with the boy's schoolin'. Scoop it up, Cole!" His voice rang with triumph. "You're paid!"

Cole thrust the receipted mortgage into the giant's hand and stooped over the gold; and because the little tyrant's record in dominating the energetic metropolis over the preceding months was proof enough that he was possessed of swift and calculating resourcefulness in the meeting of crises, the interval might have given him time enough to meet even this bitter defeat. But a trivial circumstance, significant at the moment to him and to Shea, was sufficient to shatter even his iron self-control; and the results of his subsequent outburst marked the end of his régime in Hotrocks.

Even as his outstretched hand poised over the gold, he stiffened and drew back with a snarling intake of breath. His unwinking eyes were fixed upon the topmost of the smaller stack of coins. It was a ten-dollar gold piece, with the eagle side uppermost. The coin, it was apparent, was marred by a slight indentation, as though it had been struck a heavy blow by a narrow-faced hammer.

During the counting of the money, the crowd had pressed forward a little, forced on by those in the rear anxious to miss no smallest detail of the drama; and from the shadows in the back of the shop, the partners, the woman and the boy had also closed in. Thus the little despot, lifting his burning gaze from the coin that told him the true source of the gold, looked full in Shea's reckless face. He realized for the first time that the brazen youth was still in town, contrary to his orders; that he had remained to witness his humiliation and that he, Cole, was being paid, in a manner of speaking, with his own gold!

"It's the said handwritin' on the wall, mister," said Shea softly. "Read it an' weep."

"You—— You——" choked the monarch, pointing at the gold.

"That's enough!" Shea cut in swiftly. "Don't say nothin' more about that loot. Just grab it an' run. Tell anything, an' you prob'ly wouldn't get out of town alive."

To the spectators, this interchange meant nothing; nor to Hank; nor, even, at the moment, to the slow-thinking Hogan. They had, in fact, no time to ponder the incident, for before their eyes the dignity that is an attribute of a king was dissipating. His judgment submerged beneath a searing tide of rage that brought all his venomous spleen to the surface, the little tyrant plunged blindly to his doom.

He swept up the gold and fell back a step. His features were contorted, his teeth bared. He pointed a quivering finger at Shea.

"Mugs!" he cried, his voice shrill with fury. "Get him, men! A thousand—two thousand——"

"Protection, Hank!" shouted Shea, grinning. "You gonna let his strong-arm squad gang up on me right in yore own shop?"

"Stop!" thundered the blacksmith, in such menacing tones that the King's retainers, preparing to charge forward at their leader's command, hesitated at the threshold. "You thugs an' cutthroats stay put! This is deeded ground. Cole, it's you that's the trespasser now." He raised a mighty arm and pointed toward the door. "Get out before you're thrown out!"

It was the challenge direct. Grim-visaged now, the crowd opened up an avenue for the despot's retreat; and this diversion in the ranks also marked the line between two opposing forces squarely met at last. For the tyrant's followers were on the right—gimlet-eyed gamblers; Mugs and his gorilla-like lieutenants; pasty-faced youths whose shifty eyes shrank from the light of day—a nameless fraternity that had

fattened and flourished under the protection of the King. Outnumbering these by far, but unorganized, stood the solid, scowling ranks of citizens on the left.

"Looking for a show-down, eh?" snarled the King. "Order me off your blasted premises, will you? Bah! I'm not through with you yet, my fine fellow. I'll get that red-headed snake yet."

"Get out!" repeated the blacksmith. "Last chance, Cole!"

"You big yokel!" the other mocked. "Drunk with your first taste of authority! Dizzy with your picayune triumph! What airs we've assumed, eh, Hank? Because you've paid off this penny-ante mortgage, do you think it entitles you to throw out your chest and defy your betters? Do you imagine for a minute that these self-respecting citizens will look to an ignorant blacksmith for leadership? Because you're just a big, flabby bluff, Hank. You had to have that red-headed whippersnapper to back your play. Your slattern woman must squall at your heels to keep you in line. Your sniveling boy——"

"Throw him out," muttered Shea between his teeth. "Leave him talk an' he'll knife you yet. I say, throw him out!"

He had merely spoken his thought aloud. But the blacksmith's boy, all but sobbing in his excitement, was standing at his side. It might have been the spoken suggestion that wrought upon that frail but indomitable youth. Perhaps, in his boyish heart, he had treasured through bitter months of battling at his father's side in a crisis such as this. Or it may be that the slurs cast upon himself and his family by the frenzied despot had bitten deep into his sensitive heart, for the pride of youth is greater than that of kings.

Shea never knew. He grasped only the amazing and explosive fact. The boy leaped forth into his range of vision

and charged headlong upon the sneering monarch.

There was no time for debate or threats. His vitriolic utterances checked in mid-career, the monarch stood rooted for an instant. Then he turned to flee—too late. With an impact that caused the breath to whistle beneath his teeth, the boy crashed full upon him and hurled him back.

In the photographic instant that the monarch was being hurled toward the door of the shop by the momentum of the impetuous charge, Shea realized that this unexpected development could not have been more ingeniously designed for the undoing of the King. The blacksmith had towered above the little despot. With one mighty hand he could have plucked him from his feet and flung him forth; and utterly remorseless and devoid of principle though the monarch was, feared and hated as a poisonous reptile not entitled to mercy, this vast disparity in physical size between the leaders was in the venomous despot's favor.

But with the boy, in the energetic citizen's own phraseology, it was a "horse of another color"; and the least of them all, in a manner of speaking, without counting the cost or fearing the consequence, had here precipitated the crisis.

Yet even the hopeful Shea was not prepared for the undignified and devastating manner in which the king crashed from his throne.

Hurling back before the boy's furious charge, the despot retreated. The youth still plunged on, intent only on forcing his enemy forth through the yawning door.

Now there chanced to be, hard by the doorway and concealed at the moment by the gaping crowd, an ancient wooden tub, composed of a segment of a huge barrel. It was brimming with water of very somber and murky hue, having been utilized in the blacksmith's

metal-working craft for the immersion of innumerable glowing and grimy bars.

This gaping receptacle was disclosed to view as those in the path of the hurtling pair hastily fell back. They surged still farther back to escape the geyserlike upheaval that resulted when the King descended in a sitting position into the depths of the tub.

Paralyzed, the crowd stood watching. The boy, detached from his victim, crashed to earth. He rolled twice over in the ancient dust, rose to hand and knee. He leaped to his feet, dashed the dark mane of hair from his eyes, and stood over the King in truculent pose.

But there was no longer a king in Hotrocks. Miraculously, certain illusions governing the destinies of the desert metropolis had been shattered. It was merely a bedraggled and exceedingly choleric little man, dripping and speechless with rage, who extricated himself, puffing with the effort, from his inglorious resting place. Gone were his pomp and power, his polish and poise. Gone were the illusions of superiority, of invincibility, of personal immunity from criticism, of retribution that he had built up so painstakingly and maintained with such arrogant complacency; and as he waved his arms with a vain attempt at speech, and even his hired retainers regarded him with bulging eyes that mirrored doubt and dismay, loud and raucous laughter burst upon the scene.

It was the cynical waiter from the Hotrocks Café who had unloosed the colossal guffaw. This one was now observed reeling in the foreground, holding his sides in a paroxysm of glee.

"Don't tell me there ain't any Santa Claus!" he howled. "For six months I've waited for this minnit. Did he splash, citizens? Ho! it busts me in two. My life's work's done. There's nothing left to see. Shoot me, somebody, so I can die happy!"

There were indeed certain ludicrous

aspects to the situation, with the little man buzzing impotently like a bedraggled wasp, disgruntled and humiliated beyond expression, shorn of the mask of supercilious dignity that had been his armor; but the bellowing laughter that reëchoed from the mob had in it a harsh and strident note that was savage and mirthless.

"What's the answer, friends?" The blacksmith leaped upon the anvil and addressed the crowd. "The lad's started something that we're bound to finish. Give it a name, you hairy-chested gents who once were slaves! Where do we go from here?"

"String 'em up!" growled a voice. "Let's do a house cleanin' an do it right. Make this town fit to live in. String up this fourflusher who's bled us white, an' the whole kit an' caboodle of them he-pansies. Make this town fit to live in!"

The crowd roared approval, instantly inflamed by the ruthless suggestion; and this, too, was evidence of inhibitions cast aside, the thirst for vengeance that follows on the heels of rebellion.

"No!" shouted the blacksmith. "Leave 'em struggle along. Give 'em an hour to get out of town. They can walk out, or ride out, or take the first stage. Just so they make dust an' don't turn back. We don't want bloodshed, gents. We can't use their scalps. Leave the buzzards fly. Somewheres else they can find a roost."

"Hank's right!" announced the marshal in a loud voice, pushing forward through the crowd, followed by his deputies. It was obvious that these sagacious officials had been lurking in the rear, engaged in the business technically known as keeping their ears to the ground. Having reached the obvious conclusion that a new political régime had been established in the metropolis, they now hastened, like good public servants, to forswear their allegiance to the late despot and ally themselves with the majority. "Let's do this business in

an orderly manner." declaimed the peace officer. "No bloodshed. No riotin'. Hank, name yore poison!"

"Line 'em up!" directed the giant. "Draw their fangs, an' start 'em off! Who'll volunteer as a vigilante committee to ride herd on these reptyles an' keep 'em going?"

"Here!" shouted a voice. "Here's another!" Two score stepped forward.

"That's fine!" approved the blacksmith. "Gents," he addressed the late despot and his cohorts, "line up an' stand at attention while you're relieved of yore artillery."

"This is an outrage!" The malignant little man who once had been called King Cole had found his voice again. It was shrill and shaken. "I'll have the law on you! I've got property interests——"

"Yore property interests will be protected," said the giant sternly. "From somewheres else, a long ways off, you can send down a legal sharp to wind up yore affairs. Meanwhile, Cole, you've talked too dang much in this man's town. Shut up, an' line up."

The little man mouthed curses, raving and stamping on the ground; but one of his cronies laid a heavy hand upon him and dragged him into their ranks.

Methodically, under the direction of the peace officers, the group were relieved of a considerable assortment of revolvers, brass knuckles, "saps," bowie knives, and other armament favored by the lawless guild who operate under cover of darkness.

"All right, gents," said the blacksmith when this work was done. "Unfold yore ears an' pay attention. You ain't wanted here. Bein' white men, we're givin' you time to gather up a few personal trinkets to take with you when you travel. But durin' the remainin' few minutes of yore stay in this vicinity, conduct yoreselves, in each an' every particular, like hombres who place a

value on their scalps. Look tame, say nothin', an' move fast. Get me? On yore way, an' make dust!"

Thus was sealed the independence of Hotrocks. The King had fallen. The more truculent of the citizens, the younger element, those thirsting for more excitement, followed in the wake of the vigilantes escorting the outlaws thence. But many more remained behind, the more substantial business men and heads of families who had seen much of life in the high desert and were capable of appraising how momentous a change had been wrought during the past hour's drama. These gathered around Hank as men gather around a leader who has blazed a trail. The shop was filled with the bustling crowd, the roar of exultant conversation—and Shea, laying hold of Hogan's arm, jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

"Show's over, cowboy," he whispered exultantly. "We got to get out from under. There'll be speech making and back patting. When Hank wakes up he's liable to fall on our necks. Let's go."

They retreated farther into the shadows, eased surreptitiously toward the rear door. But not entirely, in a manner of speaking, did they escape unscathed. The blacksmith's woman—as always in the sunshine and shadow that had touched the life of her man—stood likewise in the background. Her capable hands were entwined in her apron, and tears were rolling down her plump cheeks. But they were tears of happiness, the partners saw, according to the mysterious ways of women; and her eyes were fixed on Hank, looming like a Colossus among the good men and true who had gathered there to do him honor.

She caught a glimpse of the partners easing through the door, and smiled upon them somewhat tremulously.

"Wait," she said. "Hank will want to see you laddies——"

"Sorry, ma'am," said Shea hastily. "We got to go now. Tell the new mayor of Hotrocks to watch his step or we'll come gunnin' for him. Take care of that boy. He's going to be an upstandin' gent of whom you'll be proud. Good luck, ma'am."

"I'll pray for you," said the woman earnestly. "Heaven will bless you for what you've done for us."

"The pleasure," said Shea, grinning, "was ours. Happy days!"

Not a moment too soon, they discovered, had they beat their retreat. They heard the blacksmith's voice raised above the din.

"They's a couple young buckaroos to whom this village owes a vote of thanks. Where are they at? Don't leave 'em get away——"

"Speed it up, cowboy," muttered Shea.

They sprinted to their horses, waiting in the shadow of the locust tree. They leaped to the saddle. When the citizens poured forth from the rear of the shop, headed by the giant blacksmith, the pair already were thundering into the distance, heading south.

"Son of a gun!" said Hogan in awe, when Hotrocks was far to the rear. "I got it figgered. Now I know why that haywire gold piece bothered me. That wasn't Hank's loot the lady dug up out of the garden. It was that jack pot you euchered out of the King!"

"You're there, cowboy," Shea approved. "Just give you time an' you figger things out. It was crooked money, you savvy. So I got real virtuous an' palmed it off on folks who could use it."

"An' you never told 'em!"

"Of course not!" said Shea. "Use yore bean, old horse! They'd have figgered they was in our debt. As it was, they had the world by the tail."

"You don't get no credit for that noble deal," Hogan pointed out.

"Credit?" said Shea. "Ho! Didn't you see them tears in the lady's eyes, cowboy?"

"Shea," said Hogan with gloomy earnestness, "they was times in our recent stay in that wild cat's nest that I figured we was wastin' our time in them profitless pursuits. But I done you wrong. You shorely added another star to yore haywire crown."

"Bah!" said Shea. "An' does that back pattin' start here, when I figured we'd outrun it? You was also there. But let's us forget the late jamboree, cowboy, an' turn our attention to them

mundane things. We ain't knights in shinin' armor, an' our swords is laid away. We're lowly wranglers out on the said lone prairie, just a-lookin' for a home."

Nevertheless, he grinned to himself beneath his sombrero as their mounts emerged from the gulch and faced into a far demesne bathed in the unforgettable splendor that is dawn in the high desert; and his pose in the saddle, as they swung into the easy lope that would eat up the miles to the Flying Circle, was that of one who rides with pleasant reflections.

NICKEL REFINED WITHOUT USE OF CHEMICALS

ONE of the troubles of metallurgists has been mitigated by a new method for the refining of nickel without the use of chemicals, and at a low cost. The announcement of this was one of the most important features of the international gathering of scientists at a recent chemical convention in Toronto.

The announcement was made by Mr. F. E. Lathe, technical assistant to the president of the National Research Council at Ottawa. Mr. Lathe said that the new process made it possible to secure a solution containing ninety-nine per cent of the nickel and cobalt without any trace of the copper and other precious metals which have previously worried the metallurgists.

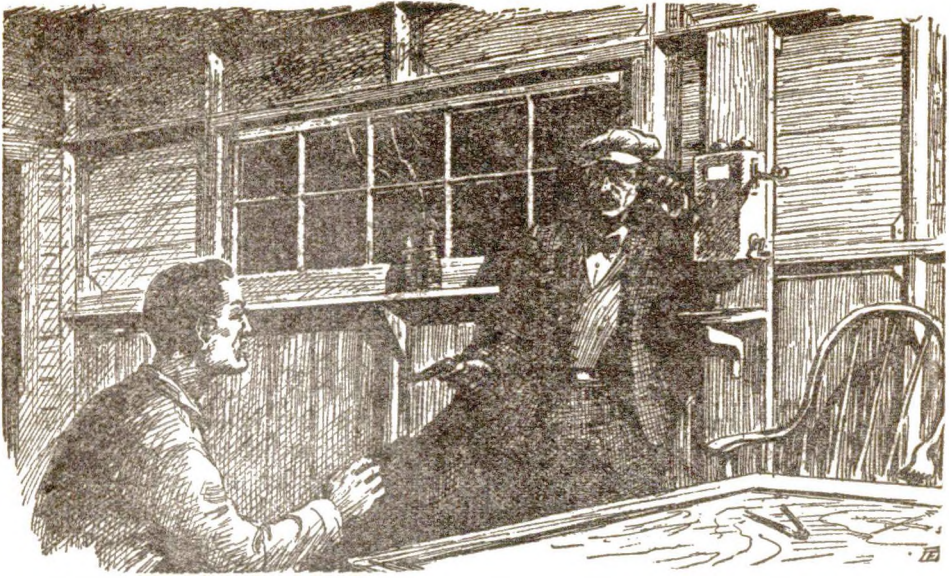
The research which resulted in the above interesting and important announcement was made by Mr. Lathe himself at the University of Toronto.

SAVED BY TOBOGGAN AND PLANE

THE oldest and newest means of transportation on the northern frontier recently played important parts in saving the life of a trapper. The trapper was Jean J. Schevers, of Amos, Quebec, and the instruments of his salvation were a toboggan and an airplane.

Schevers was walking from Amos to a camp some one hundred and twenty-five miles distant, when he was overtaken by a severe snowstorm. The temperature was fifty degrees below zero. And, to add to his misfortunes, the trapper lost his way in the storm and wandered aimlessly about until he fell unconscious from exhaustion.

Fortunately he had not remained long in this condition before an Indian, dragging his toboggan along the shores of Lake Matagami, stumbled over his body, which was already partly frozen. Placing Schevers on the toboggan, the Indian took him to his camp, where first aid was administered. Even after that, however, it would have been hard to save him were it not for the fact that a plane was summoned to take the patient to a hospital in the city of Quebec.



The Fire Spotter

By Kenneth Gilbert

Author of "Man-sized," etc.



HERE is no place for weakness or cowardice among the forest rangers, that scattered army of men who protect the great stands of fir, spruce, and cedar in the Pacific Northwest, and who lead the van in those hours of crisis when fire starts and the red destroyer can only be turned back by dint of heart-breaking labor and death-defying risks. Tom Fallon, newest recruit to the detail of rangers patrolling the Skohomish National Forest, heard this lesson driven home by the sledge-hammer words of Harkins, his chief.

"I'm giving you one more chance, Fallon," Harkins declared, "although I'm not sure that you deserve it. You let that Quartz Creek fire get away from you in a dozen places. Looks as though you were yellow, afraid of being trapped. Whatever the reason, there's

thousands of dollars' worth of government-owned timber destroyed, because you wouldn't take the risk——"

"But I did!" cut in Fallon stoutly. "I took every chance that anybody would. The fire didn't get away from me because I was afraid of being trapped, but because it was purposely started in several places by somebody, for reasons unknown! I had only a dozen men, enough to fight one fire, but we found that we had a dozen blazes to combat. Nevertheless, we got it under control!"

Harkins smiled his disbelief.

"And who, do you suppose," he asked a bit sarcastically, "deliberately set those fires, as you suspect?"

Fallon flushed. He was young, a good-looking boy, husky, two-fisted and with the square jaw of a fighter, yet he felt helpless in the presence of his chief.

"I don't know, Mr. Harkins," he replied. "But maybe some day I'll find

out. When I do——” His shoulders stiffened.

“When you do,” Harkins repeated after him, “when you do, my boy, then I’ll offer you an abject apology. But I’m telling you right now,” he added, in a tone that cut like a whip, “that if you fall down on this job I’m giving you now—the job of fire spotter at Twin Peaks—then you’re through here, and whatever future you may have had with the Forest Service has gone glimmering.

“Twin Peaks is a ‘hot’ job; I’ll admit that. You’ll have to keep a watch out for fires over a vast stretch of territory. It’s a lonely job; you won’t see anybody for weeks at a time. Dangerous, too, because of the electrical storms that crash around the station. One ranger was blinded by lightning there three years ago. Two others quit the service rather than stay at Twin Peaks and go crazy, they said.

“That’s going to be your dish, my boy. We’ll find out the kind of stuff that’s in you!”

Fallon straightened, and looked Harkins squarely in the eye.

“I’ll take it,” he declared. “You’ve made the conditions as hard as you can, Mr. Harkins, so these are the conditions under which I go to work at Twin Peaks. I offer my resignation now, to take effect the week after the forest-fire season closes, in October. Meanwhile, you won’t need to worry about Twin Peaks.”

Fallon turned, and with a nod left the room. Harkins grinned broadly after him.

“The lad has spunk, at that,” he mused. “However, he’s either the most unfortunate man I’ve had up here in a coon’s age, or else he’s yellow. Anyway, a bargain is a bargain, and I’m going to hold him to his word. I’d hoped to recommend him for promotion this fall, but if he fails at Twin Peaks, he’s through!”

Tom Fallon was ready to admit that he was getting “jumpy.” The word picture which Harkins had painted of the job of fire spotter at Twin Peaks was by no means overdrawn. Rather, Harkins had understated the real situation.

Twin Peaks was indeed a “hot” job. In the three weeks that Fallon had filled the post, he had spotted no less than twenty-nine fires. Four or five times a week the ranger station atop the double-pointed rock which rose a good eight thousand feet above sea level seemed to be the target of heaven’s artillery, when crackling thunderbolts kept the place bathed in an infernal greenish glow, and the startling reverberations of thunder threatened to shake the tiny cubicle from its foundations and send it crashing into the valley below. In addition to this there was the constant strain of maintaining a lookout for fires caused by careless fishermen or hunters. Let him fail to spot a fire at the beginning, and it might get beyond control before the gang of fire fighters could be rushed to headquarters. Fallon knew now why no ranger cared for the Twin Peaks job.

Yet he was grimly determined to go through with it. He’d show Harkins! And, when the summer’s work was done, he’d remind the chief of the resignation. He was through with the Forest Service, but in the meantime he’d have the satisfaction of proving that he was not “yellow.” Fallon felt that he was being unfairly judged, yet Harkins would not hear a “squawk” out of him.

So far, Fallon had faithfully discharged his duties. He had promptly spotted every fire that had broken out in his territory. In the watch tower of the station was a large, flat map of the district, set true to the compass points, with every detail of the country noted. With the aid of a powerful telescope, and by triangulation between

landmarks, he was able to tell within a few yards the exact location of any fire which broke out in the region which he covered. This information was telephoned to headquarters, and the fire fighters were enabled to go to the scene of the fire without delay. The telephone was his only means of communication with the outside world.

The station was accessible only by means of a steel tramway which ran from a ledge sixty feet below the building up to the latter's porch. A sling, or "boatswain's chair," was used by Fallon to lift himself up and down. Supplies came up this way, and once a week he went down for water. The rock on which the station was set was practically straight up and down, and he rather marveled at the ability of the first man who scaled the peak, and carried up a line by which material for the building and the tramway was later sent up. But at least the arrangement gave Fallon seclusion; he did not have to worry about callers dropping in on him unceremoniously, although he would have welcomed company.

In fact, this day, after three weeks of solitude, Fallon knew why Harkins had grinned rather sardonically when sending him to Twin Peaks. Fallon was "fed up." He wondered if he would have the hardihood to remain here until after the forest-fire season. But at the thought that Harkins expected him to weaken, his determination strengthened again. And then, as his eye suddenly caught sight of a thin wisp of smoke rising in the air from a hillside perhaps two miles away, he promptly forgot his troubles, and once more was the man of action, the fire spotter.

He focused his glass on the smoke plume but was surprised to see that it had vanished, although a cloud of it still hung above the trees. Watching it, however, he saw it rise again in a minute or so, and this time it seemed

that it came up in three distinct puffs. A fire, all right, and it was apparently getting under way. He went to the telephone which hung on the wall, to make his report.

Before he took the receiver from the hook, however, the phone *birred* sharply—three shorts and a long—his call. It was Harkins himself on the line.

"General notice sent to all fire look-outs," the chief said rapidly. "Treasury Department requests prompt report of all camp fires spotted by rangers. Number of persons, if possible, and their description." It was apparent that the Treasury Department realized the fact that the fire spotters, placed up in the sky and with the aid of telescopes, would be able to see over great distances and actually spy on the doings of persons who were miles away and who little suspected that all-seeing eye up in the clouds.

But why? Fallon wanted to ask that question but decided that it was uncalled for, inasmuch as Harkins did not volunteer the information.

"All right," he replied. "Here's a report. Small fire on upper Squaw Creek, two miles northeast by north of Twin Peaks."

"How's it coming?" queried Harkins. "Fire getting any worse?" It was like the chief to want the details before he dispatched the fire-fighting gang.

"I'll see," replied Fallon, and went back to his telescope.

The glass-eyed tube was still focused on the spot where the fire had been—only the fire was no longer there! Puzzled, Fallon scanned the distant hillside again, but there was no sign of a blaze.

"False alarm," he reported to Harkins. "Fire's out!"

He heard the chief laugh, rather sarcastically, it seemed.

"Sure you aren't 'seeing things,' are you, Fallon?" Harkins asked. "Remember the story you told me about somebody starting the Quartz Creek fire

that made you so much trouble? Better look twice when you see a fire next time!"

The chief hung up, and Fallon turned away, angry. He knew that he wasn't seeing things; that there had been a fire over on that hillside a few minutes before. But now it was gone.

That was indeed strange. The fire of any camper or fisherman would have at least kept on blazing, although under control. Now, however, this fire had vanished utterly.

"Maybe the chief is right," reflected Fallon. "Maybe I am 'seeing things.'" But at the same time his common sense told him that there had been no illusion about it.

Once more he concentrated on the hillside where the fire had been. With the glass, he virtually combed every inch of the place. There was no fire to be found—yet his glass paused at last on something that seemed to be unusual.

It was a clump of brush, yet behind it was something dark, like the mouth of a cave among rocks. Moreover, he would have sworn that he saw something moving there; something very much like a man! Yet so momentary was his glimpse of it that he could not be certain; he might, indeed, be looking into the half-hidden entrance of some animal's den, such as a wolf or cougar might have, and had seen the creature itself moving about. Still, it was puzzling.

Strange, though, that the chief should remind him of the incendiary fire on Quartz Creek but a few weeks before. Fallon was positive that somebody had set those fires; it was not in nature that they should break out in a dozen places, one after another. Nevertheless, the chief had thought him "yellow"—that he had allowed the blaze to get beyond control for fear it would surround him.

Well, at least he'd give the chief no more cause for criticism. Only a few days now to the end of the forest-fire

season; then he was through, even though he loved the service and had hoped to advance in it.

Off in the southwest, he noted, was a mass of black clouds. Another thunderstorm coming. Let it come! Fallon was bitter, discouraged about everything, in a reckless mood where he did not care what happened. He felt that he had been wronged, but he also felt that it was impossible to prove it.

The storm came, in due time, but not until darkness was at hand, and he had finished his evening meal. With the dishes washed and the station in order, he sat before the window and almost reveled in the awesome orgy of the elements, the startling electrical displays and fearsome crashes of thunder, although he surmised that on the morrow there would be new fires in the forest, where lightning had struck snags and ignited rotted wood. Fires invariably came in the wake of just such storms.

But the storm swept by, although it paused, rumbling, in the mountains, as though debating the question of returning. While the moon shone fitfully through temporary breaks in the dark clouds, Fallon sat in the watch tower of the station, meditating upon phases of the situation which he could not fathom. Those incendiary fires, the mysterious blaze of to-day, with the puffs of smoke which came up and vanished almost as though they were a signal. And the odd request of that other government agency, the Treasury Department, to be on the lookout for camp fires, and to make prompt report of them!

But after an hour of such pondering, Fallon gave it up, and prepared for bed, anticipating that to-morrow would be a busy day for him. He was just in the act of slipping off his shoes when he stiffened suddenly, for to his ears had come a most unexpected sound.

It was the creak of a board on the

porch, as though a heavy weight had been placed upon it—a footstep!

Now, had an earthquake suddenly rocked Twin Peaks, tearing the ranger station from its moorings, Fallon might have been mildly surprised. But a footstep on his porch—that was utterly amazing!

He listened intently but heard nothing more. Then it occurred to him that his ears might have been playing him a trick. Still—he was certain that he had heard something.

Nevertheless, it seemed impossible. The sling by which he rode up and down the tramway was at the top, where he had left it after ascending the peak the last time. If anybody had wanted to come up here to see him, they would have signaled him from below. Of course, it was possible for an active man to climb hand over hand up the steel cable, but why would a man do that in preference to calling his attention, and asking him to send down the sling?

"Seeing things," Harkins had said. Now it seemed that Fallon was "hearing things."

The thought infuriated him. At least, he'd get to the bottom of this mystery. He threw open the door, and stepped out on the porch. But no sooner had he done so than a voice from close by in the darkness said huskily:

"Put 'em up! Up!"

Fallon obeyed with alacrity, not through fear but from nervous reaction which responded involuntarily to the unexpected suggestion. He turned, lifting his hands, and saw a man standing within three feet of him, in the shadow back of the door. In the stranger's right hand was the dull glint of metal—a gun!

"What——" began the ranger, bewildered, but the other cut him off.

"Inside!" was the command. "And don't make one odd move, if you value

your life and want to stay in the picture!"

Fallon found himself backing away, inside the station, the stranger after him. As the light fell on the newcomer's face, Fallon saw that he was short, thick-set, swarthy, a cap drawn low over his eyes. He wore an ordinary checked suit, somewhat soiled and torn.

"Back over there!" commanded the man. "I want to figure out what to do with you. Got a gun?"

Fallon shook his head.

"No need for a gun up here," he pointed out. The other nodded.

"Right you are," he agreed. "Anyway, you just keep quiet now, and don't interfere, and you won't get hurt."

Fallon leaned against the wall, and the other seemed to ignore him for the time being, although the ranger could see that he now and then cast a quick glance in his direction. The man considered a moment, as though determining his direction; then took the lamp and carried it to the window. He held it before him, then slowly pulled down the window shade three times. To anybody watching the station at that moment from the valley below, it would have seemed that the light had been doused three times. The stranger, however, waited for a minute or so, and then repeated the signal.

Then, with a satisfied chuckle, he turned to Fallon, and relaxed somewhat. Although he still carried the gun in his right hand, he deftly got out a package of cigarettes with his left hand, put one in his mouth, and lighted it.

"That's that," he announced. "Now—how about you? You can sit down in that chair over there, buddy, but don't forget what I said—no odd moves, because I'm nervous, and I've got a quick trigger-finger!"

Fallon sat down. Recovered from his astonishment at the man's appearance, the ranger's quick brain had noted

one thing—that the dousing of the light, unquestionably a signal, had been done so that anybody in the direction of where that mysterious fire had occurred would have seen it. So he had seen a fire after all, and the three puffs of smoke had been a signal of some sort.

He grinned rather sourly at the stranger.

"I may be unnecessarily curious," Fallon remarked, "but I'd like to understand the meaning of this. I don't have very many visitors up here, especially visitors like yourself."

The stranger chuckled.

"You've got nerve, boy," he remarked, "and, what is most important, a sense of humor. I can almost guess the questions you want to ask, so I'll volunteer the answers.

"I reached your snug little roost up here by climbing up the tramway. I might have asked you to send down the sling, but you probably would have delayed matters by asking a lot of questions. That little stunt I performed at the window was a signal to my friends that I was on the job, and that they can start the fireworks whenever they are ready!"

"Fireworks?" repeated Fallon. The stranger nodded.

"Well, I guess you'd call it that," he replied. "By to-morrow, you're going to see the finest forest-fire down there," and he pointed toward the distant hillside, "that you've witnessed for some time!"

"Forest fire!" exclaimed Fallon, aghast. "Why?"

The stranger grinned, and twirled the gun on his index finger.

"It's a long story, and if I had anything else to do, I wouldn't bother telling you," he answered. "Still, you can't do any harm—wonder to me that the government doesn't put a man in a job like this!—and, anyway, you'll probably read of it in the papers later on, if you live that long!" he added.

"The situation is this," went on the stranger, still in his ironic vein. "I have some friends over there"—he indicated the distant hillside—"and it seems that Uncle Sam is most anxious to make our acquaintance at first hand. We've been operating within the bounds of this national forest for a month, but things are getting a little too warm for us just now. A month ago, over on Quartz Creek, a similar situation arose. They got to hunting us too close, but we started a few fires, and that turned them back. Now——"

"You!" cried Fallon. "You started those fires?"

The stranger frowned.

"Exactly," he said. "And please don't interrupt. As I said before, things are getting hot for us. There's a posse, headed by Treasury Department men, bound our way. The only thing we can do to head them off is to start a rousing forest fire right in their path and, while they're fighting their way through that, or turning back, we'll be making our get-away on the other side. Understand? They sent me up here to account for you, to make certain that you don't telephone a report of the fire to headquarters before the blaze gets out of control.

"Clear, isn't it? All you have to do is to keep quiet, and nothing happens to you. I'll answer the telephone, if anybody calls. Meanwhile, we'll sit up here and watch the blaze get under way, and when it's going good, so that there's no chance of putting it out in a hurry, why, I'll be on my way, with the rest of the boys! And the posse that's looking for us will have to turn back, or else go many miles out of the way to get around the fire!"

Fallon heard this cool statement with horrified amazement; yet at the same time he experienced a thrill of satisfaction at one thing the stranger had said. The Quartz Creek fire that had got away from Fallon had been in-

ceudiary. If only there was some way to prove it to Harkins! Moreover, Fallon surmised that the strange smoke-puffs which he had seen that afternoon were actually a signal—probably to this man who was confronting him now. But the matter-of-fact cold-bloodedness of this man who proposed to burn the forest in order that he and his pals could escape stirred Fallon's wrath. His eye measured the distance to where the other sat, coolly regarding him. A quick leap, and he might easily get that gun—

"Careful!" warned the other menacingly. "I told you that one false move means I'll pull the trigger. I'm not going to warn you again!"

Fallon settled back, realizing that the other had read his thoughts. Yet the ranger inwardly raged at his own helplessness. The other took out his watch, glanced at it thoughtfully. Just as he was putting it back, the telephone rang.

The manner in which Fallon involuntarily moved to get up made his captor smile.

"Thanks," said the man. "I was just going to ask you what was your call on this phone line. You sit quiet, sonny; I'll answer it!"

He stepped to the telephone, and Fallon was compelled to admire the way in which his own voice was imitated.

"Very well!" said the man shortly, and hung up. He turned to Fallon with a grin.

"They're on their way, that posse," he remarked. "Your boss says to be on the job by dawn, to give them all the help possible!" He chuckled outright at the thought.

"Hello!" he said abruptly. "I guess the boys have started things!" He pointed out of the window, to the distant hillside. Fallon saw out there in the blackness a row of glowing red dots—at least a dozen of them. The outlaws, whoever they were, had fired the forest!

"Nothing to do now but wait," remarked the man cheerfully, and once more settled back easily, yet with gun ready.

Minutes passed, and it seemed to Fallon that every one of them was an hour. Then came a distant rumble, and the ranger station vibrated. The man looked up, startled for an instant; then he frowned.

"Thunderstorm coming!" he exclaimed petulantly. "If there's much rain, that may spoil the fireworks!" He got up and strode to the window, and Fallon's gaze followed him. Now the ranger could see that the fire was really getting under way, for there was a reddened horizon in the east. But at that instant there came a crackling flash, and the man involuntarily jumped back from the window. One thing about electrical storms which raged about Twin Peaks—it did not take them long to get under way.

Plainly the man was nervous. He muttered something, but Fallon noticed that he kept away from the window. A moment later the tiny station rocked and trembled with the deafening detonation of a thunderclap.

Again the man glanced eagerly at his watch.

"Hope they hurry!" he said aloud. "I'm getting fed up on this!"

But Fallon grinned to himself. He was used to these terrifying electrical storms, while his captor was unquestionably afraid of lightning.

"You haven't seen anything yet!" ventured Fallon with grim assurance. "Just wait until this storm really gets under way, and then see——"

But his words were drowned in another bellowing roar of thunder following a blinding flash. It seemed as though lightning had actually struck the ranger station; the air was strong with ozone fumes. The stranger, with blanched face, had thrown up his hands, as though to cover his eyes. And, in

that moment, Fallon knew that his own chance had come!

For, with a catlike spring, he was on the outlaw. The man saw him coming, whipped up the gun and pulled the trigger, but Fallon, striking his arm, sent the bullet harmlessly through the roof. Then, under the weight of his rush, he had borne the man off his feet. The two went down with a crash.

Yet the outlaw was incredibly quick and strong, and Fallon, although himself powerful and active, knew that he had a foe worthy of his best efforts. Back and forth on the floor they rolled, and no tricks or holds were barred; the bandit seeking to turn the gun on Fallon, and the latter just as determined to prevent it, while at the same time trying to knock out his adversary. But so evenly matched they were that the battle was a tie, and might at any instant go decidedly against the fighting ranger.

In fact, the outlaw, partly wriggling clear, was twisting the gun around until its muzzle was pointing directly at Fallon's head. The ranger knew that he could not prevent the shot, yet he swung his right fist in a short, vicious jab. Even then he knew that he would be too late, for the outlaw's hand had tightened convulsively on the trigger. Then it was that the storm gods, who delighted to harass this building so high in the air, that it seemed a challenge to the skies, took a hand in the struggle. As Fallon's fist started in that short-arm punch, it seemed as though the world had crashed head-on with some other planet in the heavens. A deafening roar and an eye-searing crash that came together drowned the roar of the pistol shot, yet so startling was that lightning bolt hurled at the station that the gun muzzle involuntarily swung aside. A hot pain ran along the right side of Fallon's head, while his eyes were full of burned powder, yet he had felt his fist land full on the other's jaw.

The outlaw lay limp, while the ranger, dazed, staggered to his feet. If lightning had not actually struck the station, then it must have landed on the rock on which the building stood. For a moment Fallon stood there swaying, trying to collect his scattered wits. Then, faintly, there came to him the voice of somebody shouting, somebody who was on the ledge at the foot of the tramway.

Probably the posse! Fallon's hopes soared; reinforcements were at hand, for he was still befuddled by the creasing action of the bullet along his head, and the terrific shock of the lightning bolt. He threw open the door, and stumbled outside.

"Need help!" he called thickly down in the darkness. "Sending down the sling. Hurry!" Then, when the boat-swain's chair had been loosened and dropped, he made his way back to the room where he had left the outlaw.

On the floor was the gun, where it had dropped from the unconscious man's hand. Fallon picked it up, and stood back from the door, while he heard the creaking of the tramway, which told him help was coming.

Footsteps on the porch, then two men stood there, blinking in the light.

"Darragh!" cried the first one. "Where are you? What's the matter?"

Then the second one cried: "That's Darragh on the floor!"

But, in an infinitesimal fraction of a second, the light of understanding scared through Fallon's hazy wits. He knew! These were not posse members but part of the outlaw gang. Nor was there lack of confirmation.

He saw the right hands of both jump for hip pockets, as they laid eyes on him. But the gun in his own right hand steadied on them, as his brain cleared.

"Stick 'em up!" he cried harshly, murder in his eyes. With a deep cut down one side of his face, his clothes torn, his hair disheveled, and that deadly

gun held unwaveringly on them, his appearance was enough to have intimidated more courageous men. Their hands abruptly shot ceilingward.

A moment later, still covering the cowering pair with the gun, he had disarmed them. Then, walking across the floor to a door, he flung it open.

"In there!" he commanded, indicating the storeroom. "And take him," pointing to the still unconscious outlaw lying on the floor, "with you!"

It was done quickly enough. Then, with the door closed and the knob braced by means of a chair, Fallon strode to the telephone. But as he did so, he glanced out of the window toward the hillside where, but a few minutes ago, he had seen that ominous red line of fire.

It was gone! Moreover, on the roof of the station he could hear the muffled thunder of rain. The heavy down-pour had quenched the flames! All this he saw while he spun the telephone crank in calling Harkins, at headquarters.

"Had a fire to report, but it's out now," he told the chief. "If you'll send the posse up here, I'll turn over the three men who started that incendiary fire on Quartz Creek last month." Briefly he outlined what had happened.

He heard Harkins make an odd sound into the telephone; it might have been a stifled gasp, or an admiring chuckle. But Fallon did not care.

"What's more," he went on, "you can send a relief man up here to take my

place. I'm quitting—now! I've stayed long enough to prove to you that I wasn't yellow in handling that Quartz Creek fire, and that I'm not 'seeing things,' nor 'hearing things.' And that's as long as I want to stay!"

He would have hung up the phone, but he heard Harkins' crisp voice:

"Very well, son—but wait a minute! There's somebody here who wants to talk to you. It's the commissioner himself."

It was Fallon's turn to gasp then. The commissioner? The man who to Fallon was a demigod in power, who stayed at the national capital and who could not possibly ever know of the trials and tribulations of a mere forest ranger! What—

But a deep though pleasant voice with authority in it was on the line.

"Congratulations, Fallon," it said. "You may not know that the three men whom you captured to-night are members of one of the most desperate gangs of counterfeiters known in recent years. They have a record as killers, and the Treasury Department has been hunting them for months, finally locating them up here in the Skohomish National Forest, where they had an elaborate plant. The posse found the plant, but the men got away. You've brought credit to the Forest Service by handling the situation as well as you did.

"Harkins says you're going to quit us. But that, of course, is out of the question. Just try to get away from us, my boy!"

ISOLATED RANGERS GET THEIR DAILY PAPERS

THERE are two forest rangers who, at a station ten thousand feet above sea level and with no communication with the outside world except by a pack train, get their morning papers as regularly as city subscribers—by having them delivered by airplane.

The two men are stationed at the China Mountain lookout in the Sistoryou Mountains, one of the most rugged and inaccessible sections in the West. But pilots on the Seattle-Los Angeles air mail route, flying daily over the station, drop the papers and magazines to which the men subscribe in their front yards.



Twelve Peers

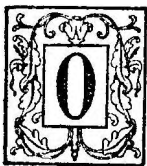
By Max Brand

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

HARRY DESTRY sets out to "get" the twelve peers of the jury who convicted him of holding up and robbing the express. He was framed by Chester Bent, who poses as his friend. Assuming a cowardly attitude when he returns to Wham after his imprisonment, Destry is jilted by Charlotte Dangerfield. This further pleases Bent, who wants to marry her himself. Throwing off his mask of fear, Destry, skillfully avoiding crime, disposes of three of the peers, and is now about to ruin the career of the fourth, the oily politician, Clyde Orrin, who holds in his safe a most incriminating letter.

CHAPTER XV.

ENTER MR. CAMPBELL.



ONE of the strings which lay in the hand of Clyde Orrin connected with the detective branch of the police department, and it was for that reason that Detective Hugh McDonald was installed in the little basement room which contained the safe of Orrin. It was a small, bare room, without an electric light, and even after a chair had been installed, and a lamp furnished, the place was not much more inviting. However, Mr. McDonald had sat through longer nights in worse places.

He first looked to the small window and assured himself that the bars which defended it were solidly sunk in the concrete of the sill and window jambs. He shook them with all his might, and still they held. Then he drew down the whitened glass pane, which shut out all sight of the interior to one passing outside. Next, he regarded the door, locked it, shoved home the bolt, and told himself that no agency other than spiritual could effect an entrance to this chamber. After that, he opened his magazine and resumed the narrative which had been interrupted by this call to duty.

To make surety a little more sure, he laid his Colt across his lap; it was a spe-

cial guarantee against sleepiness, because it would be dangerous to allow that gun to fall to the floor.

Dimly, overhead, he heard the last sounds of people going to bed, the creak of a stair being climbed, and the screech of a chair pushed back from a table. Then silence gathered the house softly in its arms.

It was two o'clock when there came the tap on his window.

He looked at his watch, made sure of the hour, and then approached the window carefully, standing to one side, where the lamp could not throw his shadow upon the whitened glass. He was in no humor to throw away chances, for he had not forgotten the strained face of Clyde Orrin when the latter told him that in spite of one or twenty detectives, that room would be entered and the safe opened, if so be that the feared criminal decided to do this thing. Hugh McDonald had smiled a little at this fear; he was used to the tremors of the man of the street.

Now he said: "Who's there?"

"Jack Campbell," said a voice, dim beyond the window. "Open up and let's have a chin, will you? I'm froze out here and wanta thaw out my tongue!"

Mr. McDonald, hesitating, remembered the strength of the bars beyond the window, and his doubts departed.

But first he returned to the lamp and turned down its flame until there was only the faintest glow through the room. After that, he raised the window and peered cautiously out into the darkness. At once a face was pressed close to the bars, a face that wore bristling mustaches which quivered and stood on end as the fellow grinned.

"Who are you?" asked McDonald.

"I'm Campbell. I heard there was another Campbell down here on the job."

"I ain't a Campbell," said the McDonald, with seasoned bitterness, "and

what's more, I wouldn't be one. I ain't a Campbell, and there ain't a drop of blood in me that ever seen Argyleshire, or ever wants to see it. I ain't a Campbell, and I never had a Campbell friend; and what's more, I don't never expect to have one. If that ain't enough for you, I'll try to find another way of sayin' it!"

"Campbell or McDonald," said the stranger at the bars, "there's only one country between us."

"You don't talk like it," said McDonald.

"Don't I? What chance have I got to talk Scotch when I never was there, but a Scotchman's a Scotchman from London to Yuma, and don't you mistake that."

"You talk like a man with a bit of reason in him," admitted the McDonald. "But what are you doin' out there?"

"I'm the outside gent on this job," said the other.

"I didn't know there was goin' to be an outside man," said McDonald.

"There wasn't," replied the Campbell, "but along comes Orrin back to the office and makes another howl, and gets me put on the job to be outside watchdog! What's in there, anyways?"

"Nothin' to eat," said McDonald.

"And me with my stomach cleavin' to my backbone!"

"Where'd you come from?" asked McDonald.

"Up from Phoenix."

"I never seen you before."

"Because you never been in Phoenix."

"Have they put you on regular?"

"They've put me on for a try, but if they don't give me no better chance than this, what good will a try do me, I ask you?"

"You can search me," said McDonald. "What can you do?"

"Ride a hoss and daub a rope."

"Humph!" said the McDonald.

"Well, I wish you luck. I'm gunna go back to my chair. You can sit on the

outside of the window sill, if that's a comfort for you!"

"Thanks," said the other. "But put these mustaches straight, will you?"

"What?"

"Look at 'em," said the other. "I dunno whether they're tryin' to make a fool out of me, or not, but they stuck these on me like a detective in a dime novel. Look at the twist in 'em, already, but I got no mirror to put 'em straight."

"What difference does it make? It's dark. Nobody's worryin' about your style of mustaches."

"It makes me nervous. It don't cost you nothin' to put these right for me, and it keeps me from feelin' like a clown. Look at the way they got me fixed! A wig, too, and the dang wig don't match the mustaches. They're makin' a fool out of me, McDonald."

"Some don't take much makin'," said the McDonald sourly. "Wait a minute, and I'll give those whiskers a yank for you."

He stepped close to the bars as he said this, and when he was near, the hand and arm of the other shot through a gap. In the extended fingers of the Campbell appeared a small rubber-housed bag of shot which flicked across the side of the McDonald's head.

The detective fell in a noiseless heap to the floor!

After this the "outside" man fell to work with a short jimmy which easily ripped the bars from their sockets. He was presently able to pull the whole framework back, and entering the room through the window, he closed it carefully behind him.

Next, he secured the fallen gun of the man of the law, "fanned" him dexterously but failed to find anything more of interest on his person, and then gave his attention to the safe.

He turned up the flame in the throat of the lamp's chimney so that he would have ample light, and then fell to work

with wonderful rapidity running a mold of yellow laundry soap around the crack of the safe door.

Then, into an aperture at the top of the mold, he let in a trickle of pale, viscous fluid from a small bottle which he carried.

He was engaged in this occupation when the form on the floor stirred and groaned faintly. The intruder calmly went to him, selected a spot at the base of the skull, and struck with the bag of shot again. The McDonald slumped into a deeper sleep.

A moment later the fuse was connected, lighted, and the intruder stepped back into a corner of the little room and lay down on his face. The next instant the explosion took place, not a loud roar or a great report, but a thick, half-stifled sigh that shook the house to its foundations.

The lamp had been put out by the robber before; now he lighted it again and by that flame he viewed the contents inside the open door of steel.

In the very first drawer he found what apparently contented him—a letter which began:

DEAR ORRIN: I've just read a copy of your last speech—the one of the seventh—

He glanced swiftly through its contents and placed the envelope in his pocket. Then he canted his head to listen to the rumble of footfalls coming down the stairs.

He was in no hurry. He even delayed to lean over the unconscious detective and slip a hand under the coat and over the heart of the McDonald. The reassuring though faint pulsation made him nod with satisfaction, and raising the window, he was gone in a moment more into the night.

Still he was not ended for that evening, but hurried to the street, across it to a narrow alley, and down this to a hitching rack where a tall bay mare was tethered.

Here he mounted, and cantered her out of the little suburb into the adjoining capital city, itself hardly more than a village conscious of its three paved streets and its gleaming street lamps!

He gained the center of the town, where he tethered the mare again in an alley and shortly afterward was climbing the dingy stairs that led to the rooms of the *News-Democrat*.

The reporters were gone. It was far too late for them. But the editor remained, punching wearily at his typewriter while he held the press for a late item. He was an old man. He had sunk to a country level from a city reputation. His head was gray, his eyes were bleared with constant perusal of wet print, the glamour and the joy of the press almost had departed from his tired soul, but still a ghost of his old self looked through his glasses at Destry as that robber stood smiling before him, rubbing the crooked mustaches with sensitive finger tips.

"What're you made up to be?" asked the editor, grinning.

"I'm made up to be scandal," said Destry. "You take a look at this and tell me what you think."

The editor glanced at the first few lines, half rose from his chair, and then settled back to finish.

At the conclusion, he glanced fixedly at Destry for a few seconds, then ran to a tall filing cabinet from which he produced a handful of specimens of handwriting. With a selection from among these, he compared the signature at the bottom of the page.

After that, he allowed everything except the letter to fall fluttering and skidding through the air to the ink-painted floor while he rushed to a telephone.

Destry started for the door, and heard the editor calling wildly:

"Stop the press! Stop the press!"

Then, as Destry was about to disappear, the editor's voice shouted after

him: "I want your story! Where'd you pick this up?"

"Out of his safe," said Destry.

"Hey? What? Wait a minute! You mean that you robbed his safe?"

"Out of a feelin' for the public good," said Destry. "So long. Make it big!"

"Make it big? It makes itself! It's the whole front page! It's the T. & O. going up in smoke——"

But Destry waited to hear no more. He hurried down the stairs to the street, only pausing at the first dimly lit landing to take from his pocket a card containing a list of twelve names. Three of these already had been canceled. He now drew a line through a fourth.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STORY GROWS.

THE slope was long, dusty, and hot, and Destry jogged up it on foot, with Fiddle following close at his heels, stepping lightly, with the burden of his master's weight removed from the saddle. When they came to the crest, the man paused to roll a cigarette and look over the prospect before him and behind. In front was a steep declivity which ran down to the cream-and-brown froth of a river in space, the water so high that it bubbled against the narrow little wooden bridge that spanned the flood. Then, turning, Destry scanned the broader valley behind him.

He could see the cattle here and there, singly or in groups like dim smears of pastel; but only one thing moved to the eye of the fugitive, and that was a puff of dust which advanced gradually across the center of the hollow. He knew that there were six riders under that veil, and the thought of them made him look carefully at his mare.

She had done well, she had done very well indeed to hold off the challenge of relayed pursuers, but she showed the effects of the labor, for her eye was not as bright as usual, and though it was as

brave as ever, it was the luster that Destry wanted to see back in it. She had grown somewhat gaunt, also, and the ribs showed like faint streaks of shadow under the gloss of her flanks.

She needed rest. She could not endure the continued strain of the race which already had lasted for thirty-six hours since first the handful of riders had spotted him on his way back from the capital and had launched their early sprint to overtake him.

Since her legs were not long and strong enough to distance all pursuit, Destry calmly sat down on a stump and considered the problem gravely, unhurriedly. There was only one salvation, and that was in his own mind.

He could, for instance, nest himself somewhere among the rocks and open fire point-blank on them, when they came struggling up the slope within the range of his rifle, but he knew that he who kills is bound to be killed. Moreover, even if he dropped two or three of them, enough would remain to keep him there under observation; and more men, more horses, were sure to come up from the rear.

Aware of this, Destry lighted a second smoke, and with the first whiff of it, he saw the thing that he should do.

He went down the slope at the calmest of walks, therefore, and crossed the little bridge with the mare at his heels. The water was now rising until some of the spray dashed continually upon the bridge and got the surface of the floor boards slippery with wet, yet Fiddle went over with a dainty step and stood at last on the farther side, with her fine head raised and turned back toward the ridge they had just crossed, as though she knew that danger was coming up behind them.

Destry led her on up the steep way that twisted snakelike among the rocks above. When she was safely upon the shoulder of the tableland that appeared here, he put her behind a nest of pines

and went back to the edge of the plateau. The bridge was now a hundred feet directly beneath him, and over the ridge which he had just passed tipped the pursuit—six riders, six horses, one rushing behind the other, and their shout of triumph at the view of him went faintly roaring down the wind to Destry's ears.

There were masses of detached boulders lying about, fallen from the upper reaches of the high ground, and one of these monsters he rolled end over end, until it pitched over the verge, landed not a foot from the bridge, and burst like a shell exploding.

Another great shout went up from the pursuers, but Destry had learned how to find the range, and he heaved another boulder to the brink with perfect confidence, and regardless of the shots which the six were pumping at him. Bullets fired from the saddle on a galloping horse are rarely more dangerous than a flight of wild sparrows.

He carefully deliberated, then heaved the stone over.

This one, falling more sheer, struck a projecting rock-face halfway in its descent, and glanced outward. Almost in the center of the bridge it struck and broke that frail structure as though it were built of straw. The water completed the ruin. It seemed to rise with muddy arms, and in a thrice all the timbers had been wrenched from their lodgement and carried swiftly down the water.

So the link was broken between Destry and the six.

He waved his hat to their shaken fists and brandished guns, then returned to the mare and rode her at a walk through the pines, up to the crest, where he appeared again, faintly outlined against the sky, then dipped from view beyond.

He was in no slightest hurry.

At the first runlet which crossed his way, he refreshed Fiddle by sluicing water over her stomach and legs, and

letting her have a few mouthfuls of grass; then he loosened the cinches and went on, walking in front of her, while she followed, grazing here and there, then trotting to catch up with him—sometimes galloping a quarter of a mile ahead, and there pausing to feed greedily, until he came again.

In this manner he walked straight through the heat of the day, and in the early evening, when the sun was beginning to bulge its red cheeks in the west, he came up to Cumber Pass. Through it lay the way to Wham, split cleanly between two lofty mountains, and on the outer lip of the pass was a small hostelry. It had been a shambling little ranch house until the pass was opened. Now by the addition of a few lean-tos it had been converted into a hotel, and even a second story had been built, looking like a straw hat on an oversized head on a windy day.

Destry paused here and spoke to a small boy who was seated on the top rail of the corral fence. On his head was a hat-brim, without a hat. He wore a shirt with one sleeve off at the elbow and the other off at the shoulder; his father's trousers were upon him, not cut off, but worn off at the knees. But this loose and shapeless attire nevertheless appeared to accent a degree of freedom and grace in the boy. He looked past a liberal crop of freckles and eyed Destry with as firm a blue glance as ever said: "Beware! I am a man!"

"The top of the evenin' to you," said Destry.

"How's yourself?" answered the boy.

"Kind of bogged down with a tired hoss. Is this a hotel?"

"You can see the sign," suggested the boy.

His eyes wrinkled a little as if he would have liked to ask some acrid question, such as whether or not the stranger could read, but he restrained himself.

"You ain't full up?" inquired Destry.

"Full up with air. We got nobody yet for to-night," said the boy.

"Then I reckon I'll put my hoss up. Is that the stable?"

"It's the only one."

He slid down from the rail and accompanied Destry.

"She kind of runs to legs, I reckon," he observed.

"Kind of," agreed Destry.

"Them kind don't hold up very good," said the boy, "unless you get the kind that Destry rides."

"What kind has he got?" asked Destry.

"I'll tell you what kind. She cost nineteen hundred dollars, and she was cheap at that. A rich feller down at Wham gives her to Destry. Nineteen hundred dollars!" he repeated slowly. "That's a sight of money."

"It is," agreed Destry.

"Take thirty dollars a month and save it all—how many months——" The eyes of the boy grew vague with admiration. "Some people are pretty nigh made of money," he concluded.

"I reckon they are. Who was the rich man? One of them miners?"

"It was that big bug—that Chester Bent. He's one of them that everything they touch turns to money, pop says. He's got sense enough to want Destry for a friend, you better believe!"

"Why, I wonder?" said Destry. "I thought Destry was in prison?"

"Him? Ain't you heard that he's out?"

"I've been up country."

"You've been up pretty far!" said the boy, with a touch of suspicion. "You mean to say that you ain't heard?"

"No. About what?"

"Why, Destry's loose!"

"Is he?"

"Sure he is."

"Did he escape?"

"I'll tell you how it happened. He gets tired lyin' around that jail and he sends for the governor."

"Did the governor come?"

"You better believe! Would you come, if Destry sent for you? Well, I suppose that nobody'd be fool enough to want Destry to come and fetch him! You bet the governor come a-hoppin'! Destry says: 'You look here, I'm tired of this here life.'

"'What's the matter?' says the governor. 'Ain't they treatin' you pretty good?'

"'They can't make cornbread here that's fit to eat,' says Destry, 'it's that soggy.'

"'I'll have that fixed right away,' says the governor.

"'Besides,' says Destry, 'they're a pile too early with breakfast, I tell you.'

"'I'll give 'em word to let you sleep,' says the governor.

"'There's only one thing you can do for me,' says Destry. 'I've tried your old prison, and it ain't no good. I want a pardon.'

"'If they ain't anything else I can do to please you,' says the governor, 'here's your pardon. I wrote out a brand-new fresh one before I come down. I suspected maybe that was what you'd want!'

"So Destry and him shakes hands, and Destry comes home, and then whatcha think that he done?"

"I ain't got an idea."

"Plays scared-cat. Even lets folks slap his face, some says! People begins to laugh. The jury that scattered out of town when they heard he was comin', they drift in back; and then *bang!* He's got 'em!"

"All of 'em?"

"Three of 'em, quick. He kills one, and he cripples another, and he chases another out of the country, and now he's gone over and showed that another one of 'em was just a low crook, all the time, and the police are lookin' for him. Pretty soon he'll have all twelve of 'em! That's the kind that Destry is! You don't seem to know much about him!"

"No, not much. He always kind of puzzled me a good deal."

"Well, pop says it's like lookin' down a double-barreled gun to look at Destry's eyes. That's the kind he is. He could pretty nigh kill you with a look, if he wanted to!"

"Could he?"

"Pop says the same as a bird does with a snake, that's the way of Destry with a man he don't like. Just charms 'em helpless, and then he swallows 'em!"

The boy spoke with great gusto.

"That's a funny thing," said Destry.

"Sure it is, for them that ain't swallowed."

"How can he do it?" said Destry.

"Pop says that it's practice. Teach yourself to look straight at things, and pretty soon you bear 'em down. I been tryin' it out at school."

"Have you swallowed plenty of the other boys?"

"No, but I've had plenty of fights tryin' it and practicin' it out, and now it begins to work better, if I only had more boys my own size to use it on; but I've licked all of them in the school! Here's the barn. You snake off the saddle, and I'll throw her down a feed of hay."

CHAPTER XVII.

"WHAT'S THAT LIGHT?"

THE boy's "pop" turned out to be a chinless, weary man, with a little work-worn wife as active as a squirrel. It was she who placed ham and eggs and country-fried potatoes before Destry, while Pop drew up his chair opposite and conversed with the new guest.

"You look plenty tired," said Destry. "Been puttin' in a hard day?"

"Me? I been tired for years and years," said Pop. "I was took tired all of a sudden, once, and I ain't been the same man since."

"I could tell you the year and the day," snapped the wife. "It was when we got married and you found out——"

"Ma," said her husband, "I dunno what possesses you that you keep comin' out with that, when it ain't a fact at all. I've argued you out of that twenty times, but you keep right on comin' back.

"Fact is," he said to Destry, "that a woman can make a pile of words, but not much sense. You know how it is! But it takes a man like Destry to come along and make 'em hop into their right place."

"Can Destry do that?" asked the visitor.

"Him? Look what everybody says! That rich Dangerfield's girl, her that was gunna wait till Destry got out of prison, when he come back and pretended to be a yaller dog, she turned him down, and what did he do? When he showed himself and kicked the town in the face she was mighty anxious to be noticed ag'in. Did he do it? He didn't. He wouldn't give her the dust off his boots. Pride is what they like. You take a reasonable man like me, that likes to argue out a point, and they just wipe their boots on him; but when a Destry comes along and slaps their faces, they plumb like it. The snappin' of a black snake is the only kind of music that really makes them step. They's a lot of ways that a woman is like a mule."

The wife turned back to her stove, merely shrugging her shoulders at this drawing harangue.

"Get me some wood, Pop," she said dryly, at the end of it. "Or if you won't, let Willie go out and fetch some in."

"Willie, you hear your ma askin' for wood," said pop irately. "What you standin' around for?"

"Don't you tell nothin' about Destry," said Willie, "till I come back."

And as Willie vanished, with a great slam of the kitchen screen door, Destry asked: "You a friend of Destry?"

"One of the best in the world," said

Pop with conviction. "Him and me always took to each other."

"Lazy men and thieves is always matched pretty good," said the wife, without turning around from her stove.

Her husband raised his head and stared at her back with dignified rebuke.

Then he went on: "Destry and me, we been like twin brothers, pretty nigh."

"That's mighty interesting. I've been hearin' that he didn't have many friends."

"And no more he don't. What would he be doin' with a lot of friends? He wouldn't be bothered. But now and then he goes and picks him out a gent and cottons to him, and that feller's his friend for life, like me. It ain't often that he does it. But when he does, it's for life!"

"That's a strange thing," said Destry.

"I don't think he ever seen Destry in his life," said the woman at the stove.

Her husband laughed with a fierce scorn.

"Listen at her!" he suggested. "You'd think that I sat here and actually made up the things that I've heard Destry say, and the things that I've seen Destry do! That's what you'd think! You'd think that I was a liar, you would, to hear her carry on!"

"There is some things," said the wife, "that a body can be sure about, and don't have to stop with thinkin'."

Pop half rose from his chair.

"Woman," said he, "if shame can't shut you up, my hand'll pretty pronto do it!"

"Your hand!" said she. "Your hand!"

And this, or the connotations which the word suggested to her, sent her into a fit of subdued laughter which continued for some time; it was indeed against a background of laughter that Pap continued talking.

He first winked at Destry and tapped his forehead, then hooked a thumb over his shoulder as though to indicate that

his better half was slightly but helplessly addled.

"He seems to be makin' a good deal of talk," said Destry. "What sort of a looking man might Destry be?"

"Him? He ain't so big," said the other. "Tallish, sort of. Might be three or four inches taller than you. That's all. Biggish in the shoulders. Run about thirty pound more than you, I'd say. But it ain't the size of him that counts."

"No?"

"I'll tell a man that it ain't! It ain't the size at all that counts, but just the style of him. You see him settin' still, he don't look like nothin' much, but you see him rise up and walk—then you see something, man!"

"Like what?"

"Well, ever see a cat sleepin' by the fire?"

"Sure. Many a time."

"It don't look much, does it?"

"Nope. It don't. Only sort of slab-sided and all fell in together."

"But along late when it opens its eyes, and the eyes is green, and it goes and sharpens its claws on the leg of the table—it's kind of different, ain't it?"

"Yes. Now you come to put it that way, it is."

"And ornery, and dangerous?"

"Yes, that's true, too."

"And all at once you're kind of glad that it don't weigh twenty pound instead of six?"

"Yeah, I've thought of that, watchin' a cat get ready to go out huntin' at night. I've even dreamed about it afterward—me bein' the size of a rat, and the cat stretchin' a paw in after me, with the claws stickin' out like big sickles, and every one sharp as a needle."

"Well, then, I don't need to tell you nothin' about Destry, because he's just that way, and when he comes around, the brave men, and the rough-handers, and the gun-slingers, and the knife-throwers, they curl up small, and get

into a corner, and hope that he won't reach out for them. And when he stands up and slips across the floor, slow and silky, you can see what kind of a machine he is!"

"Yeah?" said Destry, entranced.

"You bet! Snap off a man's head quicker'n a wink."

"You don't say!"

"Don't I? I do, though! Tiger, that's all."

"Aw, rot!" said the wife, with a sigh.

"You gonna carry on all evenin'?"

The boy, who had brought in the armful of wood had been standing by listening, agape with interest, now glanced out the window and called out: "Hey! Look see! There's that light winkin' off by the Cumber River! That one we seen a coupla times, lately!"

"What light? Oh, that! That's jest the sun hittin' on a rock face, as the sun goes down," said the father of the family. "I disremember when it was," he resumed his narrative, "when I first seen Destry——"

"It was one night when you was dreamin'," said the wife.

Pop's face contorted with vexation; his narrow fist clutched into a ball, but gradually the anger relaxed a little.

"Like a pin bein' jabbed into you, the talk of a woman," said he, bitterly.

"But this here Destry, I guess he ain't done much damage to other folks," said Destry suggestively.

"Ain't he though? Oh, no, he ain't!" said Pop in soft derision. "I guess he ain't worse'n Billy the Kid and Wild Bill throwed into one. I guess he ain't!"

"I guess he ain't twice as poison as both of them throwed together!" crowed the boy, chiming in with a face brilliant with exultation at thought of such a dangerous character.

"Why," said Destry, "appears like Billy the Kid killed twenty-one men, and Wild Bill done up about fifty, in his time."

"Sure, and what about Destry? He don't do it in front of reporters. He don't advertise none. He just slips up and says to a gent: 'You and me'll take a walk, to-night.' The gent don't think nothin'. Destry goes out with him, and they walk by the river, and Destry comes back alone. Yes, sir! That's the way it happens!"

"Murder?" said Destry, appalled.

"Murder? Why for would he murder? He don't have to! Is there any fun in murder? No, there ain't nothin' but trouble. It's the fun that Destry wants, not the killin'. If he kills, it's so's they won't talk about him afterward. But fast as a cat can snap off the heads of mice, that's the way with Destry. I know him like a brother."

"Must be kind of dangerous to have him around, ain't it?"

"Him? Not for me. I know how to handle him. Suppose I sent him word, he'd be up here in a jiffy. The gents around here, they talk pretty careful around me. They wouldn't want that, I can tell you."

"No, I reckon that they wouldn't," said the wife. "But if they was only to say 'boo!' at you, you'd start runnin' and never stop! G'wan and gimme a hand with the wipin' of the dishes, will you?"

"Son, you hear your ma talkin', don't you?" asked the father. "G'wan and do what she wants you to do. You can hear me just as good from over there, I reckon?"

"Only," said the wife, "I'd like to know why that light off yonder winks so fast? That ain't like the way that the sun would be off of a rock."

"What light?" asked Destry, rising suddenly from the table. He went to the window and looked out.

"Over yonder," said she, pointing to the range of hills.

"There?"

"Yes."

"I don't see anything."

"I reckon maybe it's stopped. Yeah. I guess it's stopped."

"Because the sun's gone down!" said Pop triumphantly. "They ain't no logic in a woman, partner. Logic will always put 'em down, I tell you what! And they got nothin' to do but little things, so they're always tryin' to rig up little things into mysteries and they shake their heads and start wonderin' about nothin'."

But Destry looked fixedly from the window across the darkening landscape and toward the blue of the eastern hills on which the light had winked. He would have given much to have seen the flashing of the light, for there was such a thing as a heliograph which could send messages jumping a score of miles as accurately as any telegraph.

The drawling voice of Pop began again, however, and lulled all his senses into a sleepy security.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHO WAS HE?

AT once Destry went to bed. He was a little particular in his selection of a chamber, taking a corner one in the second story, where the roof of the first floor jutted out beneath the window. But having locked his door, he threw himself on the bed without undressing and was instantly asleep.

Pop, having heard the key turned in the lock, went back to the kitchen to his wife.

"Well," said he, "it sort of opened that young feller's eyes, didn't it, when I talked about Destry? I thought that they'd pop right out of his head."

"They sure did," joined in Willie. "I never seen nothin' like it."

The wife put down a pan she was washing, and with such recklessness that greasy dishwater spurted from the sink over her apron and far out on the floor.

Then she turned on her two men folk.

She was one of those excitable creatures whose emotions appear in their physical actions; now she gripped her wet hands and shook her head at Pop.

"You know who that there is?"

"Who? The stranger?"

"Yes—stranger!"

"Why, and who might he be, bright eyes?" sneered her husband.

"Destry!"

It had the effect of what is called in the ring a lucky punch. In other words, it caught Pop when he was walking into danger, not knowing that it was there. His head jerked back; his hair flopped under the impact; his knees sagged; his eyes grew glassy. Then he staggered toward his wife exactly as a half-stunned boxer striving to fall into a clinch.

She slipped away from him, holding him off at a distance while, with cruel eyes, she struck him again.

"It's him! Sure as I'm alive it's that great friend of yours! It's Destry himself!"

Willie rushed to the rescue.

"Him? You could cut Destry in two," he declared, "and make a couple men better than him!"

"Oh, of course, Willie's right," said Pop. "As if I didn't know Destry when I seen him! This here Destry? You wanta make me laugh, don't you?"

"Did you see his eyes when he watched you? Did you see the smile that he was swallerin' while you puffed and talked like a fool about how mighty well you knew him? Why, I seen they was something on his mind right from the first! And why shouldn't Destry come this way?"

"Why should he, ma?" asked Pop, still staggered and hurt, but fighting to save himself from this new suggestion.

"Wouldn't this be his straightest line between the capital and Wham, if he went back that way?"

"He wouldn't go back that way," said Pop. "He's through with Wham. He'd

be driftin' around the country, pickin' off the jurymen. Everybody knows what he'd do!"

"He'd go back there to Wham," insisted the wife. "And ain't he ridin' a tall bay mare?"

"A skinny, long-legged thing," interjected Willie. "He said himself that she was so tired that she was plumb bogged down!"

"Gimme that lantern off the wall and we'll go see," said the wife. "You, Willie—you, Pop, you never neither of you never had no eye for a hoss. But my old man raised 'em."

She led the way with rapid steps, which her two men imitated poorly, as they followed stumbling in her rear; and through the darkness, Willie again and again turned his head and stared wistfully, with a sick heart, toward his father. He had been in doubt about this man many a time before, but now he feared that doubt would become crushing certainty.

They entered the barn, passed by a pair of the mustangs which were in stalls there, and came to the place of the bay mare. She started as she heard them, and lifting her fine head, turned it full toward the lantern light which the woman had raised high.

She did not go closer.

"Thoroughbred!" she said. "That's all that mare is."

Pop and Willie did not answer. There was no need, for the truth which they had overlooked now seemed to be stamped in letters a foot high upon the forehead of Fiddle.

"It's Fiddle," said Willie slowly. "And him—he was Destry."

His mother suddenly put an arm around Willie's shoulder and drew him close to her.

"Don't you bother none about this, son," said she. "Men are mostly like this. You hear about 'em and away off in the distance they look as big and blue and grand as mountains. But bring 'em

up close and they ain't no more than runts and dwarfs!"

They left the barn, Pop recovering a second wind as soon as they were under the stars again.

"As if I didn't know all the time!" said he.

"Oh, Pop," protested his son sadly.

"As if I didn't know!" said Pop. "Why, what was I doin' all the time but praising Destry right to his face? What was I doing but making him feel good? You'd think that I was a fool, the way that you carry on. But I know what's what. I know how to handle things. I was just soft-soapin' Destry a little and wanted to——"

"Leave off! Leave off!" said the wife. "It ain't that I mind for myself. But Willie—give him a chance to respect you a little, will you?"

Willie, however, had gone rapidly ahead and was now out of sight.

It was for him the crashing of a world about his ears. He had not been able to avoid seeing the truth about many phases of his father's idleness and shiftlessness, but no matter what else he might be, he had loomed in the mind of Willie as a great man, because he was the companion of Destry, the famous. A hundred stories he had told Willie of adventures with that celebrated man, and now these stories had to be relegated to the sphere of the fairy tale!

So Willie ran forward around the corner of the house and up the road with a breaking heart, not knowing or caring where he was bound so long as it was away from the persistent misery of the pain in his heart. He went blindly, and as he hurried up the trail he found himself suddenly caught by both shoulders.

"Who are you, kid?" asked a gruff voice.

Willie looked up to the face of a big man who held him, and behind him appeared eight or nine others, looming more or less vaguely through the dark of the night. It was more mysterious,

even, than any of the stories that his father had told him. For every one of these men carried rifles and revolvers, and every one of them was on foot! Here where men walked two miles in order to catch a horse and ride one, here was a whole troop coming softly down the road with weapons in their hands. The unreality of it made Willie's head spin, as though he were plunged from the actual world into a dream.

"I b'long here," said he.

"He b'longs here, he says," repeated his captor.

"Lemme see him," said another.

They talked very quietly, guarding their voices. The second spokesman now approached him, took him with a jerk from the hands of the first, and shook him so that his head teetered back and forth dizzily.

"You lie!" said the second man. "You been sent up the road with word to somebody. Don't lie to me, or I'll jerk you out of your skin! Who sent you, and where?"

"Nobody sent me no place," said Willie, anger growing greater than his fear. "And you let go your hold on me, will you? I b'long here, I tell you, and I gotta right to walk up the road."

He who was now holding him chuckled a little.

"Listen to the kid chirp up and talk," said he. "He's a game cock, this kid is. You belong back there in that house?"

"Yeah."

"That's the new hotel, ain't it?"

"Yeah."

"Tell me something!"

"Yeah."

"Did Destry come by your place last evenin'?"

"Destry?" echoed the boy.

"Don't stop to think up a lie. Did Destry come by your place?"

"Yes," said Willie.

"Did he stop?"

"Yeah. He stopped for chow."

"What did he eat? Answer up quick, now, and don't you try to lie to me!"

"He had ham and eggs and cold pone, and coffee, and condensed milk in it. He said it was the outbeatin'est coffee that he ever drunk."

"Because it was good or bad?"

"Good, I reckon. He didn't say. Why you askin' me about Destry?"

The other hesitated.

"Because we're all friends of his," said he. "There ain't a one of us but has a lot of interest in meetin' up with Destry. We like him a lot, and we sure yearn to find him. That's why we're all here."

"Well," said Willie, "you're headin' exact the wrong way."

"Which way should we go?"

"Slantin' up the hills, there, to the right side of the pass."

"To the right side of the Cumber Pass?"

"That's it."

"Dog-gone me," said one, "I wouldn't aim to guess that he would go that far out of his way even if he knowed we was waitin' in the pass for him!"

"The pen has made him careful," said another. "We better turn back and cut through the pass again and nab him when he comes down the far side. Did he say where he was gunna go, kid?"

"He didn't say," replied Willie, "but he talked some about Wham."

"He talked about Wham, did he? And what did he say?"

"Why, nothin' much, except that he thought he was needed powerful bad, back there."

They consulted in murmurs.

"He said he was needed powerful bad in Wham. I reckon he ain't needed so powerful as all that!"

"No," muttered another, "I reckon that Wham could get along tolerable without him!"

He who had first seized on Willie said suddenly! "Suppose the kid's lyin'!"

"He wouldn't dare to lie. What would he lie for, besides?"

"Because Destry's always a hero to the kids! They like the idea of the one man agin' the many. They always have and they always will—the kids and the women. Maybe Destry's right back there in the house, this minute."

"We'll go look!"

"It's no good doin' that," said Willie, "because Destry ain't there."

"Ain't he?"

"Besides, ma is down with the scarlet fever, and pa has got a terrible rash."

"The kid's lyin' like a tickin' clock," said one of the men. "Take him by the neck, and we'll go back and look at all these here fever patients. Take my word—Destry's in that house!"

CHAPTER XIX.

EXIT SAM WARREN.

SAID one of the men, "Sam, shall we go in?"

"I'll go in with a coupla you boys," replied Sam, the leader. "The rest of you scatter around the house. I wish that we had riot guns with us. But whatever you're in doubt about, use a cartridge on it. There won't be any harm in that! If Destry smells trouble, he's gunna be off like a shot. But if we have a fair chance, maybe we'll get him. I'll go in and talk to the folks."

So he took Willie, still held by the nape of the neck, into the house and found his father and mother in the kitchen, still wrangling, though with voices subdued by the thought of the greatness of their guest.

"Hey," said Pop, "if it ain't Sam Warren!"

"Yep, it's me," said Warren. "I hear that you're all busted out into a rash, and your wife clean down with scarlet fever."

"Is that Willie's talk?" asked Pop, glaring severely toward the boy.

But even in reproof, he was not quite

able to meet Willie's eye, and the latter knew, with contempt and disgust, that he had taken the measure of his father forever.

He was more interested in looking up at the man who held him and who led the night party. His was a name which had acquired a sudden fame, along with the rest of that unlucky jury which had condemned Harry Destry to the penitentiary. He had been, only a few months before, a fairly obscure cow-puncher, rather well considered for his speed and accuracy with guns, but now he was celebrated as a marked man.

He was a very tall man, being upward of six feet, and both his face and his body were unusual. His shoulders and hips were narrow, his body almost emaciated, and the arms and legs very long. Hair grew on the back of his hands, which were long-fingered and suggested a strength uncanny in a body so slight. His face was almost handsome, up to the eyes, but these popped out with an expression of continual anger beneath a perpetually frowning brow. The forehead rose high above, swelling out almost grotesquely at the top.

When Willie had marked down the features of this man, he listened again to the conversation.

"Now, Pop," said Sam Warren, "you know why I'm here?"

"Why, I couldn't guess," said Pop.

Sam Warren loosed his hold upon the neck of the boy in order to lay his hand upon the shoulder of Pop.

"You better think it over, Pop," said he. "Mind you, I'm your friend, if you gimme a chance, and so are all these here boys along with me. But we ain't gunna stand for no foolishness. Is Destry here?"

"Destry?" said Pop blankly.

And suddenly the very heart of Willie turned to water, for he knew that his father would surely betray the sleeping guest.

He worked, in the meantime, slowly

toward the door, and heard Warren saying:

"If we have to search the house for him, he'll hear us and get away; and if we find out, we'll make things hot for you! But if you'll show us where he is——"

"He ain't here at all," declared Pop.

"You lie," said Warren with a calm brutality, and Pop shrank under that verbal stroke.

"Now talk up," said Warren. "I've wasted enough time. Likely he's in the next room, listenin' all this while."

Here Willie gained the door and stepped back into the shadow. He hardly could believe, for an instant, that these keen man hunters actually had let him go, but expected a long arm to reach out after him.

Yet it was true!

He slid down the narrow hall, pulled the shoes from his feet, and then ran noiselessly to the top of the stairs. He found the door of Destry's room at once, and tapped softly, calling in a whisper through the crack of the door.

There was an answer immediately, the guarded voice of Destry calling: "What's up? And who's there?"

"Sam Warren's downstairs. He's huntin' for you!"

"For me?"

"Yeah. For you. For Harry Destry."

The door opened.

Willie found himself drawn hastily into the presence of the great man.

"How many are there, Willie?"

"About nine, countin' 'em all. Three downstairs, and the rest circlin' around the house, ready to shoot at anything at all."

"Warren? You sure of him?"

"I'm dead sure of him. He's wearin' a pretty nigh snow-white sombrero same as he always does; and you can't forget his face, once that you've seen it."

"Warren," said Destry thoughtfully, "is a mighty rash and pushin' man."

Now, look here, kid. You see if you can get down to the stable and snake out the mare for me, will you?"

"I'll try!"

"Throw the saddle on her. Mind you, watch her, because she snaps like a wolf at strangers. Hurry, Willie, and I'll give you something to remember me by——"

He was working busily in the dark of the room, as he spoke, gathering his pack together, and Willie waited for no more, but slipped from the room and hastened in his bare feet down the upper corridor, down the narrow, twisting, rear steps, and so to the ground below.

He issued from a window to get to it, and flattened himself out like a snake in the dust. There was need of such caution, for hardly an instant later a form strode through the darkness, and the fall of a foot puffed the dust into his face. It filled his eyes, his nostrils, his lungs.

He lay quietly writhing in an ecstasy of strangulation and the overmastering desire to sneeze. It was terrible seconds before that paroxysm ended, and during it, he told himself that he was sure to die, so great was the pressure of blood in his head.

Gradually he could breathe again, and now he moved slowly forward. He knew the back yard of the house as intimately as he knew the palm of his own hand, and so he was able to keep up his snakelike progress from one depression to another.

Near the barn, he looked back and he was just in time to see a dark form slip out from the window of Destry's room. There it hung for an instant dangling, helpless in this posture, while half a dozen guns began to roar at the same instant.

Never had Willie heard such a bel-lowing, crashing noise. Men were shouting as the guns were fired, and yet for a long moment that swaying form

remained there—surely with the life torn out of it long before—hanging so, merely by the convulsive grip of the hands, no doubt!

Or could it be that the darkness of the night was so great and the excitement of the hunters so intense that they were missing even at this short range?

Willie, his heart cold with anguish, stared dimly at that shadowy and pendulous form, while he heard the excited cries around him, and finally one loud voice that yelled: "I'll get him, dang him, even if he gets me!"

A man rushed forward, rifle at shoulder, shooting, advancing, shooting again.

Then: "It's a fake!" he cried. "It ain't Destry! It's a dummy he's hung out for us! A fake! A fake! Scatter and look for him somewhere's else, or he's sure gone from us! He's snaked himself out the far side of the house, I reckon!"

They did not wait for further consultation, but splitting apart, one to one side and one to the other, they rushed to block any further possible flight of the fugitive.

Willie, however, remained for one moment longer, for he was so overwhelmed with relief at the saving of his hero that he was incapable of movement; so it was he and he alone who saw another form slide out over the sill of Destry's window.

This time it did not hang foolishly by the hands, but flicked like a shadow down the side of the house—a shadow such as a fire casts up and down a wall, sending it flickering from the height to the bottom, all in an instant.

Willie saw no more. He turned madly and plunged into the barn, tortured by the thought that he had betrayed his own trust by not obeying the orders of Destry long before.

Now he rushed for the stall of the tall mare, and whipped into it—to find himself embraced in long, powerful arms.

"It's the kid, is it?" said the voice of Sam Warren. "It's the scarlet-fever kid, is it? And where's the rash breakin' out now? Where's Destry now?"

His hard-tipped fingers sank into the flesh of the boy as he spoke. And Willie could not stir.

He could only gasp: "Destry's dead! They've murdered him."

"You lie," said tall Sam Warren. "And here I got you on my hands——"

He found a short way out of that difficulty by rapping the youngster across the head with the barrel of his Colt. It was a crushing blow, but though it felled Willie in a heap, it did not altogether stun him, for through a mist he could see a form leap into the entrance of the barn.

Then desperation gave Willie voice to yell: "Look out! Warren's here!"

He heard Warren curse through gritted teeth; he saw the form that had darted through the barn door swerve to the side just as the revolver above him thundered and spat.

It was answered swifter than its own echo by a leap of flame from the hand of Destry, and Willie saw the tall man stride over him, picking up his feet in a foolish, sprawling way. As Warren stepped forward, he sent in a steady fire, but Willie knew that the shots were wild. He heard one crashing through the shakes that covered the roof of the shed; he heard another smash a lantern so that there was a jingle of wires and a fall of glass.

Then Destry fired again, and Warren toppled stiffly forward, for all the world like a man tipping off a platform for a high dive. His long body struck the ground with an audible thud, but did not move again. From the dark waters into which Sam Warren had fallen, Willie knew that he never would rise.

But he had no time for reflection. There was work to do, and he sprang up with tigerish eagerness, in spite of his reeling head. From the peg he

jerked the saddle. He had it over the back of the mare as a pantherlike shadow went by him, flirting the bridle over the head of Fiddle. Quick hands dashed those of the boy aside and jerked the cinches up, as voices bawled from the direction of the house: "What's goin' on back in the barn? Hey—Pat and Bill, come along with me!"

Destry was already out the rear door of the barn, and there he took the head of Willie between his hands—and felt the sticky, hot stuff that streamed down one side of his face, for the sight of the revolver had torn his scalp!

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHERIFF MAKES A DEAL.

DID Warren do that? He did!" said Destry.

"Go on—doncha wait here!" pleaded Willie. "I'm all right. He had to whang me to keep me quiet, only he didn't whang hard enough. Go on, Destry. They're comin'!"

"You done this for me," said Destry, "may I die to-morrow if I ever forget."

"I only wanta to say one thing—dad was only pretendin'—he knew you all the time—he wouldn't be such a dog-gone——"

"Your Pop's all right," said Destry. "He's your father. That's the main thing that's right in him. Willie, so long! I'm comin' back to see you. We're gunna be partners!"

He flashed into the saddle. To the bewildered and admiring eyes of the boy it seemed as though no bird with an airy flirt of the wings ever could have moved more swiftly and lightly. Then the tall mare swept into her long canter that flicked her off around a corner of the barn and instantly out of sight and hearing. At that very moment, there was a jumbled outcry from the men within the barn as they stumbled over the body of Warren, and then a yell of fear as they discovered who it was.

They would not remain long on the ground after that, the boy guessed; and, in fact, there was an instant flight for horse and saddle where they had left their ponies up the road and among the trees.

Still, Willie remained as one entranced behind the barn, looking in that direction where the darkness had swallowed the great Destry. At last he heard the voices of his mother and father entering the barn; the swinging light of the lantern which one of them carried set the cracks flushing and dimming as it rose and ebbed.

"A fine thing you've done, sicking murderers onto one of your guests!" said the woman.

"I was helpless; they was too many for me!" said he. "Besides, he's a bad one. The law's after him!"

"The law ain't after that fox. A wise hoss that has tasted rope-fire don't never pull agin' the lariat ag'in! Neither will Destry. He's got his lesson! They didn't do nothin' in the name of the law, but all in the name of this here Sam Warren that feared for his own hide—and lost his scalp tryin' to save it! Look at him lyin' there! He comes with his eight or nine men, and Destry, he sees him, and finishes him, and then fades out! But if I was——"

Willie heard no more. He had faded off among the brush near by, for all at once the voices of these people made him sick at heart. He had looked on a hero; he had seen a hero in action; upon his head the hands of the great man had been placed.

So, like a prince anointed for the throne, he turned his back upon the facts of life and wandered off into the woods to commune with his swelling heart, and with the future.

The hands of Sheriff Ding Slater were crammed with news of this affair as he walked down the street to the gate of his garden in Wham. He had tele-

phone messages transcribed among the package of papers in his hand, and he had, moreover, notes upon verbal reports which had been made to him at his office. And yet the affair of the Cumber Pass and the death of Warren did not occupy a great portion of his thoughts. It was something else that bowed his head as he loudly slammed the gate behind him.

"Hey, Ding!" called his wife from a front window.

He was silent; having closed the gate with such force, he remained there, glaring up and down the street.

"Hey, Ding, what's the matter?"

"Aw, nothin', except that after weedin' the crooks out of Wham, they've come crowdin' all back in on me to bother my old age."

"What's happened?"

"Why, an hour ago a gent with a mask on walked into the Fitzgerald store, stuck up young Fitzgerald, and walked off with the money. Not much. Three hundred. He takes that and says it's enough, and walks out again by the back way. Fitzgerald grabs a gun and tears after him, but there ain't anybody climbing the frame of a hoss in the back yard. Whoever it is must 've just gone right on around the house, takin' off his mask as he went, and walked into the crowd on the corner! Cool as ice! Fitzgerald tears into that crowd, but nobody had seen nothing, because they'd been watchin' young Bent drivin' his new span of cream-colored hosses down the street! There you are! A package of trouble. Open light of the day. And nobody has no clew. Why, that's enough to start a whole crowd of daylight robberies, ain't it?"

"It's gunna work out all right!" said the wife. "Come on in. Here's somebody to see you!"

"I don't wanta see nobody," said the sheriff. "Send him away."

"It ain't a him," said the wife, "and she's waitin' here and noticin' the things

that you say and the way that you carry on."

"Is she?" said the sheriff.

He came stumping up the steps and flung open the door.

"Hey, Charlie," he called to the visitor. "Where'd you come from?"

"How are you, Uncle Ding?" said she.

"Got the rheumatism and the blues," said he, "and my liver's out of kilter. Otherwise, I'm pretty fit for fifty-five!"

"You oughta have a helper," said the girl. "You can't go on bein' the lead hoss, and the wheeler, and do the brain work, and pull all the load, too!"

The sheriff threw his hat into a corner.

"Who'm I gunna get?" he asked.

"I've been lookin' all these years for a deputy that was worth his salt, but them that I've tried, they spend their time at home shinin' up their badge, and spend their time away from home show'n the badge off to the boys. It don't take much notice to spoil a man, these days. They're gettin' like girls; they like to be all ornamented. Set down, Charlie. I'm plumb glad to see you. We ain't gunna talk about my affairs no more. What about that Destry of yours, that's gone and got himself another man?"

"He ain't mine no more," said she, with a rather twisted smile. "But I'll tell you what, Uncle Ding. He'd make a deputy for you!"

"He? Him? Destry?" gasped Slater.

"I mean he, him, Destry," she answered.

"Why—honey, you mean it really? Destry's—he's—why, I never heard of such an idee!"

"Think it over," she said. "Particular if that rheumatism is bad. He'll pull at the wheel for you, all right."

"What would bein' a deputy mean to him?" asked Slater.

"It would mean that the men who hate him wouldn't be so bold to attack him. It's one thing to go after a com-

mon man, but an officer of the law is different."

"I ain't noticed it much," said the sheriff. "However, you're right. But it ain't what he wants. It'd cramp his style, considerable. I reckon, seein' that he's doin' most of the leadin', and the rest of 'em are just playing on the tricks and followin' suit, most of the time."

"He might 've had that idea yesterday, but not to-day," she replied. "They've hunted him pretty hard, and would've nailed him, too, if it hadn't been for a mite of a boy, people say. Well, that'll make him want to go slower!"

"Sure," agreed Slater. "Fire'll burn you before you boil, and I guess he's been singed a little. But he ain't left his street number with me. I dunno I could pick the mountaintop that he's settin' on now, gettin' ready to pounce like an owl on mice as soon as the evenin' comes."

"He's likely layin' up at Chester Bent's house right now," said the girl.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because Wham's the center, and the folks he's after are scattered all around it. He'll come back here, and he'll likely go to Chet's place."

The sheriff said not a word as he gathered his hat off the floor, but before he left the room, he took Charlotte Dangerfield by the arm and asked her gravely: "How long did it take you to work this out?"

"All night," she replied at once, and smiled at him.

"Aye," said the sheriff, "a house you once lived in is always partly home. So long, Charlie. This here may be an idee that I can use."

He went straight up the long street from his house, only pausing at the first corner to look back and see Charlotte saying good-by to Mrs. Slater at the gate. He could guess by that, that she had made her call for one purpose only.

He continued his way until he came

to the fir hedge that surrounded the house of Bent, and opening the gate in the middle of this, he left it swinging, with the latch clicking to and fro across the slot, while he marched up to the front door.

It was opened for him by Destry!

That worthy held out his wrists with a grin. "I seen you comin'," said he, "and I thought I'd save you the bother of huntin' me up."

Ding Slater had recoiled a little from this unexpected appearance; then he brushed the extended hands aside.

"It ain't for Warren that I'm here," he said. "When a man tries murder, there ain't anything in the law that'll help him when he gets killed. Warren's dead, and Warren's been ripe for dyin' a long time, by my reckoning. I've come here on my own troubles, Harry. Go back in there and sit down with me!"

They sat down in the parlor, hushed and dim. Only one shade was raised a few inches to admit the hot light of the middle day. This illumination was only sufficient to reveal them to one another in rough profile.

"Harry," said the sheriff, "sometimes a kid'll play in one back yard just because he don't know what it's like on the far side of the board fence. Maybe you're like that kid?"

"Maybe," said Destry, "I could agree, if I follered the drift."

"You been agin' the law or outside of it since you was a kid. Now you're playin' safe, but still you're agin' the house. Suppose, Harry, I offered to give you a pack to deal for me?"

Destry raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"I mean," said the sheriff, "that I need help, and you kind of need a roof over your head to keep the stones from fallin' on you. Suppose, then, that you was to put on a badge and call yourself my man for a while? Hired man, y'understand?"

Destry tapped the tips of his fingers together.

"It's this here Fitzgerald business that bothers you some, I suppose?"

"I suppose it does," said the sheriff.

"It'd give me a fine way of fadin' out of the picture for a few days," said Destry, thinking aloud. "It'd make my game easier and their game harder. Why, Ding, I dunno that I can afford to say no to you, no matter how low the wages might be!"

CHAPTER XXI.

WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE.

THE details of the Fitzgerald robbery were quickly told, and Destry considered them for a moment with the blank eye of a man in deep thought. At last he said: "What's funny about this job, Ding?"

"What would you've done if you'd robbed a store?" asked Ding.

"Waited for dusk, when the till was fuller of money, and the lights was bad outside."

"What else?"

"Had a hoss handy and flopped onto it and rode off."

"But what did he do?"

"All different. He took three hundred. How much more was in that till?"

"Three times that much."

"He took a handful and ran?"

"That's it."

"He ran——" muttered Destry absently.

"Are you day-dreamin', son?"

"I'm gunna slide away on Fiddle and try this job."

The sheriff pinned a badge inside his coat, saying: "Mind you, Harry, while you wear this, you don't belong to yourself; you're property of the law!"

"Sure," said Destry. "I follow that, all right. If there ain't anything more, I'll start movin'."

"That's what the cat said when she

walked on the stove. Are they makin' it that hot for you?"

"They are," admitted Destry. "When they wake you up at night, eight strong, that's something, ain't it?"

"Aye," said the sheriff. "That'd make me take to an out trail! I'd never come back, neither! This job is gunna rest your nerves considerable, Harry! Good luck to you! There's one last thing."

"And what's that?"

"It was Charlotte Dangerfield that suggested where I'd find you, and that I get you for this job."

"She knew I was here?"

"Yeah. Or guessed it."

"She's mighty thoughtful," said Destry. "She reminds me of the gunmen of the early days, that never let a dead one go without a good funeral. It used to set some of 'em back a lot, buyin' coffins and hirin' hearses. And Charlotte that way. She takes care of you after she's done with you. So long, Ding!"

He departed in haste, heedless of the last anxious words which Slater was calling after him. Out to the barn went Destry, took the mare from her pasture, saddled and bridled her, and then chatted for a moment with Bent's hired man, who eyed him with equal awe and suspicion.

"They've done a lot of improvin' of the roads around here, Mack?" said he. "Since I was away, I mean?"

"They've done considerable," said Mack. "The old roads wouldn't satisfy people none. It wouldn't cost enough just to fix them up. They've even had to build a lot of new ones."

"Where to?"

"Why, up Amaritta way, for instance; and down through the Pike Pass."

"That's down toward the railroad, ain't it?"

"That's the way. They let the old trail go. But right now it's twenty mile shorter. You can see from the upper

trail how it would be; you can look right down at it, snakin' along the river bed most of the way, travlin' around shorter curves."

"Why did they ever make a new one?"

"Because to widen the old one for freightin' meant blastin' out a lot of rock. But for hoss and saddle, it's still pretty good, except that it's overgrown a lot! They was uneasy, though, until they found out this fine new way of spending their money! They had to go and get shut of a pile diggin' out the new road."

Destry departed with no further conversation, for he had learned what he wanted, and turning up the main street, he joggled Fiddle out the road to Pike Pass. Presently he came to the fork, the new road taking the left, the old trail dipping down on the right, but Destry kept the left-hand way.

As the slope increased against him, he drew the mare down to a walk, but it was far faster than a cow pony's gait, the long legs of Fiddle stepping out at a good four-mile clip upgrade and five down. For she walked as eagerly as she galloped, and kept turning her bright head from side to side to keep note of her master, and of all that lay around her.

As they climbed, the old trail was indeed visible, on the opposite side of the canyon, and far lower down. It was not smoothly graded, but jerked up and down according to the way the action of the water, ten thousand years before, had leveled the rocks.

After a few miles, Destry reached a little shack at the side of the way. Weather ages unpainted wood so rapidly that it was impossible from that clew to determine the age of the house, but the brush and the mesquite still grew up quite close to the door, and Destry could guess that the place had not been occupied very long, otherwise this firewood would have been cut back

to a far greater distance. A half-breed woman sat in the doorway, patting out tortillas from wet cornmeal; she nodded in response to Destry's salutation.

"D'you move up here from the old trail?" he asked her.

"No," she replied. "We ain't been in these parts more'n six months. My man wishes he'd never seen the place, too! But cows is cows, I always say, and them that follers them is bound to live miserable. Too hot in summer, too cold in winter, bogged down in spring, and sold in the fall, that's the life of a cowman, heaven bring 'em help!"

"I thought that I'd seen you once on the old trail," said Destry.

• "Never, not me!"

"I reckon some still ride that way," he suggested.

"Some that are powerful hurried out of Wham," she replied. "And some I've seen that fair flew!"

"Not many no more?" persisted Destry.

"No, not many. After the new trail was opened, they was still some that kept to the old way, but they found out that they might save time, for they used up the legs and feet of their hosses down there; so now pretty nigh every one comes by my house. I pick up a good deal sellin' meals. You ain't hungry, are you?"

"No," said Destry.

She went on: "One come by there two hours back; not fast, though. Easin' his hoss around through the brush and actin' like he was enjoyin' himself on the ride."

"That so? From Wham?"

"I reckon from nowhere else," said the woman.

"I wonder who. Maybe Jimmy Pemberton. He was ridin' out into the pass to-day."

"Did he have a pinto?"

"Yeah. He did."

"Then that was Jimmy Pemberton that rode up along the old trail, and

you'll never catch up with him on this one!"

"I reckon I won't. I'll just leave him be," said Destry.

He went on, but no sooner was he around the next hill-shoulder, than he turned aside, and hurriedly slid Fiddle down the slope to the bottom of the ravine.

Two hours would have made about the time that the fugitive from the Fitzgerald robbery would have been riding up this canyon if, as Destry suspected, he had been making for the railroad line; and he was willing to wager a fair sum that the rider of the pinto was the man the sheriff wanted. Therefore, in the name of the law and his new office, Destry sent Fiddle scampering up the old trail.

She went as a deer goes, lightly, gracefully, never fighting the steep places as most horses will do, never getting into a sweat of anxiety over sharp drops in the way, but studying out everything in detail and going nimbly about the solution in her own way. She was one of those rare animals that accept the purpose of the rider and then bend themselves intelligently to fulfill it, without starting and plunging at every unexpected obstacle along the way.

He helped her, too, in that perfect partnership.

Often the old trail jumped up the almost sheer face of a rock, and then Destry leaped to the ground and worked his own way up, without giving the mare the pull of that extra burden. Or again, where it plunged sheer down, he was once more running beside her, and leaping into the saddle only where the ground became more favorable.

So they went on swiftly—at amazing speed, considering the nature of the way. But Fiddle could leap little gulches through which most cow ponies would have to jog, staggering down one bank and laboring up the other. And

she seemed to know, with that extra instinct which seems like eyes in the foot, exactly which stone would bear her weight, and which would roll and make her stumble.

However, no matter what speed they were making, Destry did not push her too hard, for he realized that a stern chase is a long one, and that the pinto had two hours start of him. He worked rather to come up with the leader by the dusk of the day than to overtake him with one sustained effort.

So he checked Fiddle, rather than urged her forward.

It was bitterly hot in the ravine. Even when the sun made sufficient westing to fill the ravine with shadow, the heat which the rocks had been drinking all the day they now seemed to give up with one incredible outpouring of the locked-up energy. No wind could find its way down into the heart of the canyon; the air was close and dead. The mare was cloaked with dripping sweat that rubbed to foam where the reins chafed her sleek neck and shoulders. Destry himself was drenched, but he regarded his own comfort less than that of the mare.

Four times he stopped to slush water over her, and four times she went on, refreshed, while the pass darkened, and the sky overhead began to grow brilliant with the sunset.

Then Destry called on her for the first time, and she responded with a gallant burst up the long last rise to the summit of the trail. That long mile she put swiftly behind her, and as he came to the top of the rise, Destry saw before him a sea of broken ground on which the dim trail tossed like the wake of a ship on a choppy sea, swinging this side and that.

But all that he could see of the trail was empty; then something loomed against the sky line—a pinto, surely.

No, it was only a Hereford!

But a moment later, as he was digesting this first disappointment, he saw a broad sombrero with a lofty crown grow up against the sky, and a rider beneath it, sitting tall and straight in the saddle, and finally a pinto mustang; all three were only two swales away from him; and seeing the pinto stumble with weariness, and sag as a tired horse will do, he knew that man, whoever he might be, was within striking distance!

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

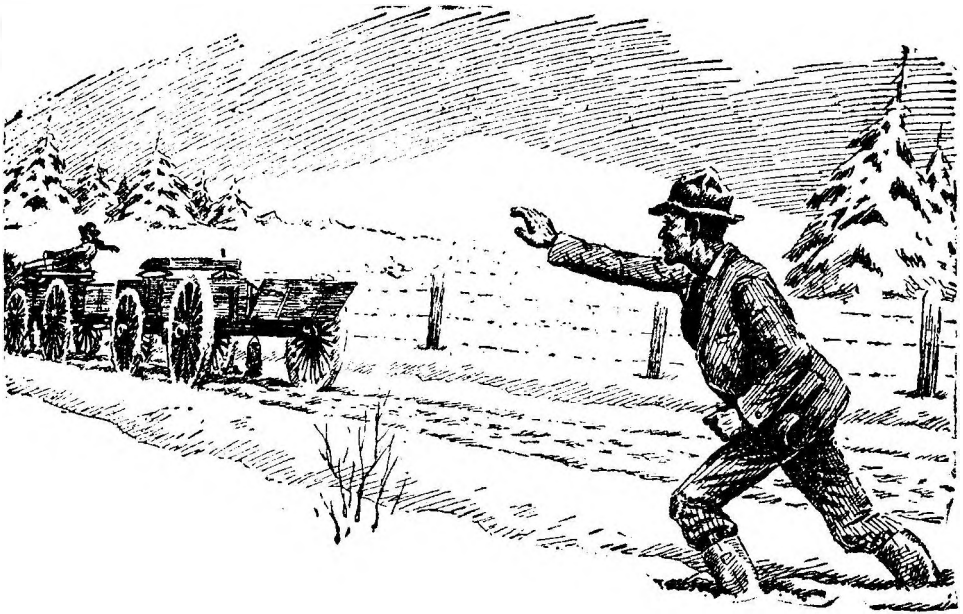


SUMMER HOMES FOR THE NATION'S WILD LIFE

THE recent revision by the president of the boundaries of Lassen Volcanic National Park in California to include several thousand acres of additional land naturally meets with the approval of the fortunate citizens whose playgrounds are thus enriched. But the good is not confined to them alone. Part of the land thus included is used as a summer habitat by the black-tail and mule deer, and it is with the object of preserving this needed sanctuary and grazing ground for park animals that this portion now comes within the boundaries.

The primary object of the establishment of Lassen Park was the preservation of the volcanic phenomena of which the new territory affords many interesting spectacles.

A further enhancement to the beauty and interest of the park will be a museum featuring the volcanic and historical aspects of the region. It is to be built by Mr. B. F. Loomis in memory of his daughter. It will be a gift to the new park region in which it is to be included.



Hungry

By Guthrie Brown

Author of "Good Ridin' Cowboy!" etc.



THE storm was full in old Coucher's face as he pulled into the narrow space near the river bridge, which stood just at the foot of a two-mile grade down into the Lonesome Canyon. He set the wagons at a slant that would give the horses a maximum of protection from the wind. He watered them at the river and unharnessed and bedded them for the night.

Much ridicule was heaped upon old Coucher by the other freighters because he bedded his horses. Inarticulate except with his animals, he was not able to defend his action. But he knew why he did it. Couldn't they see?

He patted the damp chests and distributed hay, chuckling at the expectant nickers upon the subject of oats.

"Eat your 'taters first, ponies. 'Taters 'fore cake."

Only then did he consider his own comfort, and that perplexedly, as he beat his soaked gloves together and peered about in the sleet. Suddenly his eye brightened. With baling wire he fastened a disreputable old tarpaulin to the side of the wagon away from the horses, conveyed grub box and bed roll to the protected spot beneath, and lit a lantern.

He placed a new pasteboard box carefully on the reach of the wagon, and built a tiny fire from pieces of an apple crate. He brewed black coffee over the flame and poked in the grub box exploringly.

"Bacon's all gone. Well, you can't have everything," he said, and his glance went happily to the pasteboard box. "I'll put 'em on in the morning. No—these'll last me another day, anyhow."

He put one foot after the other be-

side the lantern for inspection. An unprejudiced observer would have wondered where he found grounds for the assumption that those shoes would last another day. Both heels were gone; the stitching was ripped; the toes were worn through, and wet paper saved the ball of his foot from the ground. But the old man nodded his decision, and went to take the feed bags from the horses' heads.

Coucher rolled out his bed on the frozen ground. It had never occurred to him to put some of the straw under his thin blankets.

Propped on his elbow, he raised his hand to put out the light. The hand stopped halfway, poised. He had not heard a sound, but his glance went to the rear of the wagon.

A man, his clothes covered with snow, his hat over his eyes, was slowly crawling under the trail tongue toward him.

"Gosh," exclaimed the old man, "you must be froze!"

The advancing man stopped abruptly, with a glittering, upward glance, hesitated, and thrust something behind him. He crouched on his knees, his beady eyes gleaming with surprise and suspicion.

Coucher was out of his blankets, pulling on his shoes.

"I'll have a fire in a jiffy," he promised, forgetting the diffidence which usually beset him in the presence of his kind. This man was different—like a horse, needing him.

"Take off your coat and shake it and hang it on the reach," he directed. "Then you can wrap up in a corner of the tarp. It's dry."

Mechanically the newcomer obeyed, a rather dazed expression on his face.

Soon the coffee was bubbling over the jealously guarded fire, and a chunk of hard bread lay on the turned-back top of the grub box.

"I ain't got no bacon," Coucher

apologized. "But you're welcome to what there is. Set right up."

The stranger gulped the bitter coffee in silence, his furtive glance going occasionally to the serene old face beside him. The bread was impossible until soaked in the coffee. The clawlike hand reached for the last bit of the chunk, and drew back. Coucher noted the movement and spoke quickly.

"Take it all. There's crackers for our breakfast."

The stranger looked at him, not moving for a minute, his eyes curiously expressionless. He took the bread and munched slowly. He had not spoken a syllable since his appearance. If he had, he would have startled the old man into an embarrassed silence. As it was, Coucher felt at ease with him.

"Roll right in here beside me," he invited. "It'll be warmer with two of us."

It was now that Coucher noticed the stranger's shoes, worse shoes even than his own. The burst seams revealed sockless feet, and one blue toe protruded indecently. Coucher quickly averted his eyes.

The stranger did not appear conscious of them as he laid the two wrecks on the warm spot left by the fire and thrust his bare feet into the blankets. Coucher put out the light.

Soon the old man was sleeping soundly, but the stranger lay rigid, his breathing uneven. Once he reached out and touched the pulsing body beside him, with a certain awe and unbelief. Yes, it was real! The thing had happened. A man had shown him simple kindness, had treated him like a brother. In all the battered years of his life, from its gutter-bred beginnings, this thing had never happened to him before.

A sudden recollection came to him. Cautiously he slid from the blankets and crawled from beneath the wagon. The snow stung his bare feet, but he

did not stop. He groped under the canvas that covered the ore on the trail wagon, found what he sought, and stepped quickly along the road toward the bridge. He faced downstream and something from his hand arched toward the middle of the river, something that spread as it fell into a torn shirt, with a dark blot across its faded gray.

Shudderingly the stranger slipped back between the blankets.

"I'll go in the mornin'," he thought, "'fore he wakes."

The stranger awoke with a sense of warmth and ease. It was daylight. The tarpaulin had been dropped and a brisk fire burned beside the wagon where the snow had been shoveled away.

He sat up quickly, bumping his head, and looked about for his shoes. They were nowhere in sight. He could see old Coucher's legs move about the horses as he harnessed them.

"Hey!" he called. "Where's my shoes?"

"Right there by the fire," responded Coucher.

The stranger looked, but his shoes were not there. A pair of perfectly new shoes stood near the fire, kept out of the wet on sticks.

"They ain't. Where——"

Coucher came around the wagon and pointed. Embarrassment had suddenly robbed him of words. The other sat looking up at him.

"Where's them—I had?"

Coucher jerked a thumb over his shoulder and walked away.

So the river had received another of the stranger's meager possessions. Slowly he edged toward the shoes. He picked one up and looked at it, his eyes again expressionless. He found, to his amazement, a new sock stuffed in each shoe.

It was during their breakfast of crackers and coffee that the stranger's gaze chanced upon the feet of old Coucher. Halfway to his lips the tin

cup stopped. He set it down slowly. A film stole across his eyes as he looked from his feet to Coucher's. The old man did not notice.

The stranger packed away the grub box, while Coucher tightened the chain connecting the two wagons. His foot struck something solid. He searched in the snow and brought up an iron rod, some eighteen inches long. It was one of the stakes he used on the rear wagon to hold bulky freight. He crawled out and stood up, looking at it.

"Now," he said aloud, "however did that stake get there?"

The stranger glanced around, and looked quickly away again. Coucher returned the stake to its proper place, much mystified.

Everything was in readiness to leave. The old man was sorry the stranger was not going his way. Speech had deserted him, but he held out his hand in good-by.

The other looked down at his own grimy palm, then up with an-unreadable expression, and shook his head.

"I ain't fitten," he muttered, and turned away.

The wagons rumbled over the bridge, and the stranger started up the grade, with slow step and head bowed. He shook himself impatiently, lifted his chin, and quickened his pace. But again he slowed and turned about, listening to the creak of the wagon wheels that came clearly to him through the morning air.

He faced up grade again with an effort, plodded a few steps, and stopped.

Suddenly he flung his arms above his head with a half-articulate, hopeless cry—wavered—turned—then ran down the road, sliding and nearly falling in the loose snow.

Coucher heard a voice and looked back to see the stranger following at a stumbling run. He pulled up in astonishment and helped the nearly exhausted man into the seat beside him.

For hours neither spoke. Coucher, though, became interested in a queer change in his companion. The beady eyes and sharp features seemed to be lighted from within, as if from some secret radiance. They were no longer pinched and furtive. They were—well, thought Coucher, peacefullike. Suddenly the man burst out, triumphantly, the swift ring of hope in his voice.

"I forgot! They ain't no capital punishment in this State! I'll be a lifer." He turned toward Coucher, his tone dropped to a wistful note. "You'll write me a letter sometimes, won't you?"

Coucher looked at him, puzzled. "But——" he began.

"You will, won't you?" the other insisted.

And Coucher promised without understanding.

They pulled into a little town on the railroad at noon. They had just

crossed the tracks when a lithe man out of nowhere called "Whoa!" to the horses, leaped up the wagon wheel, and laid hands upon the stranger. He very nearly lost his hold, however, when his prisoner demanded calmly:

"The reward's still out, ain't it?"

A nod was the answer. The prisoner jerked his head toward Coucher.

"He captured me. Every cent of that thousand dollars is hisn. You see that he gets it?"

Again the lithe man nodded and transferred his gaze to Coucher.

"Lemme have my hand a minute," pleaded his captive.

And, contrary to all his training and experience, the lithe man willingly complied.

Timidly the dirty, clawlike paw was thrust toward old Coucher.

"I'd like to, now," said the stranger.

Coucher grasped the proffered hand, struggling futilely for speech.



THE GHOSTS OF PIKE'S PEAK

IN addition to its many other claims to attention, Pike's Peak has recently enjoyed the distinction of ghostly lights that appear by night about its noble summit. A thorough aerial search of the mountain revealed no trace of human beings, who might be held responsible for the sepulchral flares. So a theory of static electricity, which charges the atmosphere of the higher mountain peaks when storms are brewing, has been generally accepted as an adequate explanation of the recurring mystery.

The luminous display has frequently been noted. And observers say that it bears a marked resemblance to "St. Elmo's Fire," which is often observed at sea. Those who know about such things say that the phenomenon is caused by the combination of static electricity in the earth with static electricity in the clouds.



Riders of the Breaks

By Russell A. Bankson

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

CAM TRIVERS is sent by Bab Jamieson to warn his enemy, Hector Macgregor, that the ranchers will put their cattle on the breaks, over which Macgregor has taken authority. Macgregor sends back a message of defiance. Wendy, his daughter, and the old waddie, Pete Windsor, escort Cam. The three are stopped by an outbreak of fire before which the herds are stampeding onto the breaks. They rescue a fleeing rider. It is Jamieson, and Wendy makes a desperate plea to him to avert the range war. He refuses, claiming, with justice, that the breaks are free land. The war is on, and Jamieson takes command of his men. He presently disappears. Cam finds him wounded in a nesters' cabin on the breaks, with Pete and Wendy also caring for him. Even in their distress the young people are glad to meet again. Jamieson, delirious, speaks of a brother whom he has greatly wronged, and calls for his daughter, Nonnie. Cam decides to fetch her.

CHAPTER XIII.

NONNIE.



HOW Cam Trivers ever accomplished the feat he had undertaken was more than even he could have explained.

So that he would not be held up or delayed in any way, he took a rough short-cut which carried him away from the zone of war, and on a bee line for Sun City. Once there he

stabled Prince, who was ready to drop, and secured another sturdy pony.

Then he found Doctor Wester and got him into action, after which he went to the Jamieson home and called for Nonnie. Her face lighted as she saw Cam, but at his message she flew to prepare for the journey into the breaks.

Cam did not tell her how close to death her father was. He said that he had been hurt and needed her. He did not even tell the girl into whose hands Jamieson had fallen, and who it was

that had been caring for him since his injury. These things he left for her to find out after she arrived.

Then the three of them—Cam, Nonnie, and "Doc" Wester—were climbing up into the rough country, following wild-horse trails that probably had never before been followed by man, Cam leading the way and guiding their course by the higher buttes that broke the sky line ahead.

But even at that it was almost evening before the trio arrived at the tumble-down Kupperthwait ranch house.

Wendy was sitting beside the injured man with her brown little hand resting on his forehead to soothe him when Nonnie suddenly stepped across the threshold.

For a long moment the two girls looked steadily at each other.

There was Wendy who was so small and so dark-skinned, from the blistering sun of the breaks, with her brown eyes that were almost black and her hair that matched. And there was the aristocratic Nonnie Jamieson, so fair-skinned and blue-eyed that she looked almost frail; who stood quietly with the poise of absolute assurance.

One was dressed in rough, boyish clothing that was serviceable; the other in the best riding habit which money could buy. They were strong types, both of them, but as far separated as the span of two lives may be.

And Cam, standing in the doorway, looked from one to the other, and wondered why he should think them both so beautiful and so wonderful when they were so unlike.

The girls looked at each other and even Cam read the hostility in their eyes and wondered why it should be there. He liked them both and the thought came to him that they should be like sisters to each other.

"Miss Jamieson, this here is Miss Macgregor," he said at last, stepping awkwardly into the breach. "Wendy

has done a mighty lot for your dad, Nonnie, she really has."

Nonnie inclined her graceful head slightly, then her eyes turned swiftly to the silent figure on the cot.

Wendy stood to one side, giving her place to the other girl as she came forward.

"He's been so still all day," she said, speaking more to Cam than to the daughter, who was bending over her father, whispering to him, talking endearingly to him, with a growing fear in her voice. "He hasn't hardly moved or made a sound for hours. We—we're so glad you got back, Cam. We were afraid you wouldn't get here in time."

Doctor Wester, who had gone directly into the little lean-to kitchen to direct the sterilizing of water for his hands and his instruments before viewing the patient, came into the sick room then.

"Doc! Doc!" Nonnie called to him. "Poor dad! He'll be all right, won't he, Doc?"

The doctor bent over the patient, studying his face, while he adjusted thermometers and prepared to examine the bullet wound. But when he read the thermometers his face was grave and he shook his head.

"One hundred four and a half!" he said. "That's dangerously high for a man as old as Mr. Jamieson."

"Doc! He's just got to get well!" Nonnie said fiercely, the tears filling her eyes for the first time.

Throughout the long ride, when Cam had told her and Doctor Wester as much as he thought best of what had happened, she had given no sign of breaking down. But now that the tension of the long strain under which she had been laboring since Cam had first appeared at her door was somewhat broken, she seemed about to lose control of herself.

"You'd better go out of the room while I make my examination, Nonnie," Doc said to her quickly, with the famil-

ilarity and the firmness of a family friend who had watched her grow from infancy.

Cam saw Wendy hesitate for an instant, then with a little toss of her head and with a setting of her firm jaw, she stepped forward and slipped an arm about Nonnie's waist.

"Come on," she said. "I'll take you out."

It took courage to do that, but Nonnie, sobbing now, scarcely knew who it was that touched her, or what was said to her.

She let the strange little girl of the wilds lead her from the room and down to the shade of the willow grove about the spring. And there she sat down on a rock and stared out across the walled-in basin where the Kupperthwaits had their home.

Wendy left her alone, but she did not go far away, to be at hand if the girl should need her.

Cam watched them until they were settled, then he turned back into the room to aid the doctor in any way he could.

Pete and Mrs. Kupperthwait kept a roaring fire going to boil water in every available vessel, while Doctor Wester made his preliminary examinations.

This required more than an hour, but through it all Bab Jamieson gave no sign that there was life in his body, further than the almost imperceptible breathing and the faintest of faint heartbeats.

"The bullet has done a lot of damage," Doc said to Cam finally. "It is resting in such a position that it must be removed at once, or there isn't the slightest chance for him. He is so weak now that there is only about one chance in a thousand that he can withstand the shock of an operation. And even if he pulls through that, there is only a small chance that he can survive. I guess you had better go down and have 'a talk with Nonnie. She is the one to say what to

do—and she might just as well know exactly how matters stand."

Cam hesitated.

"Couldn't you go down and tell her, Doc?" he asked. "I sort of hate to have to do that."

"I'm afraid to leave him," the doctor answered. "There is no one else to do it."

Cam heaved a sigh and tiptoed from the room.

Nonnie was sitting in the same position in which Wendy had left her. But at Cam's approach she turned eagerly toward him, searching for some hope in his face.

A look told her, though, and she stood up, waiting for him.

"Nonnie, there's just one chance in a thousand that Doc can do anything," he blurted out miserably, as Nonnie swayed toward him and he caught her in his arms, holding her gently. "He—he wants to know—now—whether he best take that—chance."

From the circle of his strong young arms she looked up into his face, her pale cheeks stained with tears.

"He's got to take it, Cam!" she said. "He's got to save dad!"

A stifled little sob came from over beyond the spring. Wendy Macgregor turned and fled blindly from the shade of the willow clump, out into the heat of the basin, climbing up into the rocks. But neither of the two who stood down there heard her or saw her going.

Cam lifted Nonnie and placed her back on the rock again.

"I'll go, then," he said. "You stay with Wendy."

Thirty minutes later Doctor Wester found the bullet and removed it. And only just in time did he finish the operation, for another night was coming over the breaks.

But Bab Jamieson still lived!

That was the marvel to the rough-and-ready medical man, who had spent a good many years of his professional

career in dealing with the harsh and sudden causes of death in the Montana cattle country.

"He's got a marvelous constitution, and he's beaten the biggest odds against him," Doc said. "He's got a battle ahead of him yet, but getting this far gives him a real chance."

Cam, thinking first of the daughter, rushed from the room.

But neither Nonnie nor Wendy were at the spring. He called to them, but there was no answer. Then he found Pete in the kitchen, still shoveling fuel into the box stove to keep the pots of water boiling.

"Where are the girls?" he demanded.

"Gol-dinged if I know," Pete answered. "How'd the old longhorn make the grade?"

"He came through fine," Cam answered.

But Pete Windsor, who had gone to the limit of his ability in making possible a successful operation, snorted in disgust.

"We'll have to hang him yet," he exploded. "You natur'lly can't croak them kind with no lead."

Cam was gone, though, while the bantam waddie was still talking.

He found the two girls sitting close together on top of the butte above the spring, and he climbed up to them, filled with his good news.

After his first outburst, Wendy slipped quietly away, leaving him alone with Nonnie.

"Oh, Cam!" Nonnie whispered to him. "You're wonderful. To think what you've done for me—and dad."

"It wasn't anything," Cam denied, confused. "It just had to be done, and that's all there was to it."

"But you did it for me, Cam!"

She had crept closer to him, and her fair, golden hair was against his shoulder.

"Will Doc let me see dad now?" she asked.

"No. Can't nobody go into the room before mornin', Nonnie," Cam answered. "I'll have to fix up sleepin' quarters for all of you, includin' the Kupperthwaites, down in the hay sheds."

But Nonnie leaned her head against his arm now, and snuggled closer.

Dusk, filled with the mysterious charm of the rugged breaks—dusk, with its myriads of unseen, pulsating life—was stealing in across the bad lands, gripping them.

The livid sun had slipped down behind the ragged borderland to the west and the first cooling zephyr danced out of a ravine and touched their faces as gently as the wand of an elfin.

Cam's arm crept down and drew in around Nonnie's waist and she, like a little child who was weary, and afraid, and alone, buried her face against his chest.

A silence fell over them—a long silence, while Cam watched Pete go down from the house to the spring, moving with his queer, bow-legged shuffle, carrying in either hand a pail that almost dragged the ground.

"Cam?" said Nonnie.

"Yes, Nonnie?"

"I'd be terribly afraid—if you weren't here."

"Aw! Naw! You don't mean that, Nonnie."

Silence.

Cam watched Pete waddling back up to the house. When the distance was half completed he saw the waddie suddenly drop the pails and stare down toward the corral.

He, too, looked

A small figure, barely discernible in the rapidly gathering dusk, was leading a pony from the corral. And as he stared, he saw that Wendy Macgregor was saddling her horse!

"Say, now! What's she doin'?" Cam broke in, his body stiffening as he spoke.

"Who?" Nonnie demanded, sitting upright and looking where he pointed.

"Why, it looks like that child who helped take care of dad," she said disinterestedly.

Cam winced at the slur in her voice.

"It's Wendy!" he said. "She acts like she was gettin' ready to pull out. She can't do a thing like that, with night comin' on."

"She probably knows what she's doing," Nonnie answered coolly. "I don't blame her for not wanting to stay here with us after what her men did to dad."

"She's not going!" Cam angrily shot back, rising to his feet and helping Nonnie up.

"What are you going to do about it? It looks to me as if she were making her own plans."

"I'm going down there and stop her! After everything she has done, she's not going to ride away like that."

But if Wendy had any thoughts of riding quietly away from the basin alone, she had not reckoned with the ever-faithful Pete.

He was racing toward the corral with all the speed of his sawed-off legs, and he was waving his long arms and shouting.

Cam turned to Nonnie.

"Come on!" he said. "We've got to get down there."

"No!" she answered defiantly.

But Cam seemed hardly to hear her. His eyes were on the shadows down by the corral fence. He stepped down off the rock on which they had been seated and began a rapid descent into the basin. Nor did he look back to see whether Nonnie Jamieson was following or not.

Pete beat him to Wendy, but he wasn't far behind. The little girl from the breaks was in the saddle when he came up, struggling for breath.

"Where you goin', Wendy?" he demanded.

She looked down at him solemnly.

"To New York or London or Paris—or maybe across the basin and back," she said tonelessly.

"Oh!" Cam said with relief. "I thought you were going somewhere."

"What if I was?" she demanded.

"You can't!"

"My, but you're bossy," she said. "Does sitting up with a sick man make you like that?"

Cam showed the hurt in his lean face.

"You weren't figurin' on goin' away were you, Wendy?" he asked.

"Yes, I was!" she came back with a defiant toss of her head—a movement which he had seen so often before.

"Why?"

"There isn't anything more I can do here. Mr. Jamieson has come through the operation, and he has all the help he needs. Pete can stay here if you need any one."

"I carried all the water I'm goin' to lug for that longhorn," Pete broke in. "I could 'a' took a hundred baths in what I pulled out of that spring. You wait till I git my hoss saddled, Wendy."

Cam was desperate. He took hold of Wendy's bridle reins.

"Please, Wendy, don't go away like this, at night," he pleaded.

"Let go of my reins!" she flared.

"I won't! Not till you say you'll get down and stay here."

For an instant she sat very straight and still. Then as suddenly she slipped from the saddle. She turned her face away from Cam, but as she walked toward the house, he saw tears in her eyes.

Slowly he unsaddled the pony and turned it back into the corral. Then he crawled up onto the top rail, shaking his head.

"Pete," he said, as the waddie crawled up beside him, "what the blazes is it always makes girls get mad at me when I talk to 'em?"

"They don't me," Pete answered. "Mebbe you ain't got no way with 'em, like me."

"I reckon," Cam said. "I'd like to be friends to Wendy and Nonnie. But

every time I go to talkin' to one of them, the other gets mad."

Pete scratched his head. Then he rolled a cigarette and lit it.

"Mebbe you better lay off talkin' to 'em, then," he said philosophically.

"I can't," Cam decided, turning his head to look up toward the house in the direction Wendy had gone.

The two girls had met outside the door. And they were standing there as though in conversation. Cam's pulse quickened as he saw the two dimly outlined shadows.

"Say, Pete," he said suddenly, "did you ever fall in love with a— a girl?"

The bantam-sized waddie stared at him, startled.

"Me?" he asked. "Naw! What kind of a gol-dinged fool you take me for?"

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE doctor stayed close beside the wounded stockman throughout that night, watching his every move, while Cam and Pete sat outside the room, on the doorstep, to be ready for any emergency call.

The girls, with Mrs. Kupperthwait, retired to the hay sheds, where Cam had spread out blankets for them on the sweet-smelling wild hay which had been gathered from the basin for winter feeding.

Strangely, Nonnie and Wendy had seemed to be on the most friendly terms, talking to each other during the evening. But neither of them had had a word for Cam, nor had they so much as looked his way, so far as he could tell, as he went about arranging the beds.

Their attitude puzzled him deeply, and during the night, as he sat before the door of the sickroom, he thought about this a great deal.

At intervals, Doctor Wester left the side of the sick man and came out into the fresh air, to sit for a few minutes

with Cam and Pete while he smoked his pipe.

Each time his reports were the same.

"He's holding on," he'd say. "As long as he does that, its good news. So far, he hasn't stirred, but his pulse is getting a little stronger all the time. If he can pull through the night his chances are fair."

So that was the way it stood. If Bab Jamieson pulled through the night, his chances for recovery became fair.

Along about five o'clock, after the sun had been up for an hour and a half, Nonnie and Wendy came up from the hay sheds.

Doctor Wester chanced to be outside at the time, and they joined in questioning him. Considerably relieved at his answers, but still with no word for Cam, who stood miserably to one side, they turned again to the corral and saddled their ponies for a ride before breakfast.

When they returned an hour after, the doctor was elated.

"The turn came while you were gone," he told Nonnie. "Now I think he is going to pull through. He opened his eyes and tried to swear at some one for shooting him. That's almost a certain sign of recovery."

Nonnie was allowed to go on into the sick room, so Wendy turned to the kitchen to help Mrs. Kupperthwait finish the breakfast.

Cam, still ignored, sat down on the doorstep again and waited for events to take their course.

He heard Wendy talking to Mrs. Kupperthwait, and he heard Nonnie talking to her father. And down by the spring he heard Doctor Wester talking to Pete, whom he had followed down there for a cold drink of water.

"Everybody's got some one to talk to but me," he thought.

So he got up and walked around the house, and then down to the corral.

Leaning on the rails, he looked at the ponies which had done them such fine

service from Sun City, and he wondered what was going on over in the battle-torn country to the southeast.

There had been no sign of any one with news of the battle, but Mrs. Kupperthwait had not seemed worried about the long absence of her husband.

She was more or less used to absences of this sort, and when Cam wandered back up to the kitchen and found her alone there, he questioned her as to when she expected to see her husband.

"Allow he'll come when he gits here," she answered him.

She had the same attitude toward him that he had felt in others from the breaks whom he had encountered. It inferred that he had turned traitor to his own people in joining with the stockmen of the basin.

He was about to leave the kitchen again, when Wendy came in. She had on an apron that was too large for her, so that she looked even smaller than she was, wrapped in its folds. Her face was flushed from the heat of the kitchen stove, and there was flour on her arms and a spot of it on one red cheek. A lock of dark hair had dropped down across her forehead, and her eyes were sparkling bright.

"Hello, Wendy!" Cam said, when she professed not to see him.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, startled. "What are you snooping around the kitchen for?"

"I was goin' to try and kiss the cook!" he said boldly.

"She's got a husband," Wendy answered, a faint dimple showing in her left cheek. "I'd look out if I were you."

Cam took a deep breath and chuckled boyishly. She wasn't so terribly mad, then, if she could joke with him. He started toward her. But she retreated hastily toward the door that divided the kitchen from another lean-to room where the table stood.

"Don't you touch me!" she warned, her face sobering.

"Wendy, can't I talk to you a little bit?" he asked. "There's a lot of things I wanted to tell you."

"Pete and I are starting for Rattlesnake Pass as soon as breakfast is over," she said.

That was the thing he had been afraid she was going to say. He was at a loss for words to answer her. But finally he burst out:

"Could I ride over there and see you, Wendy? Could I come when this trouble's all cleared away?"

"You better ask Nonnie," she answered. "Maybe she won't want you riding away out there in the breaks."

Cam flushed. He couldn't help but understand the inference in her tone. So he met the challenge.

"If you think there's anything between Nonnie and me, why—why—you're mistaken," he said. She was standing in the doorway, but he went across the room to her.

"Wendy," he begged, "I'd like awfully well to go to Indian Butte and see you. Couldn't we be friends?"

She looked at him steadily for an instant, then she stepped back into the room and close up to him.

"Haven't you ever talked about love to Nonnie?" she asked, with the frankness of a child.

Cam shook his head. "No!" he said. "I've never talked to her about love. I've never talked to any girl about love, Wendy."

Again she looked at him steadily. "I'm not mad at you—Cam!" she said softly.

But before he could take even a quick step forward, she had slipped away into the dining room, and there stood Mrs. Kupperthwait's portly figure blocking the doorway.

He heard a soft laugh beyond the mistress of the house, but the only thing he could do was to turn and sheepishly leave the kitchen.

"Gosh! But Wendy's a fine kid!" he

said, half aloud, once he had reached the open. "I'm goin' to ride over and see her. Yes, sir! I really am!"

He wanted to tell somebody about it, so he nailed Pete as he came up from the spring with two brimming pails of cold water.

"She ain't mad!" he said. "She just as good as said I could come over and see her."

Pete carried the pails on into the kitchen and set them carefully on their bench, then he returned to face Cam.

"Not by a gol-dinged sight you don't!" he said. "She ain't mixin' with no long-horns!"

"I'm ready to shoot it out with you along them lines, Pete," Cam answered good-naturedly.

The whole world looked different to him now. And a few minutes later he boldly sandwiched himself in between the two girls at the table, in high spirits with himself and the world. Then when the meal was finished, he went into the sick room to sit beside the injured man while Doctor Wester had his breakfast.

Bab Jamieson opened his eyes and recognized him.

"Dickens of a place for me to be, Cam," he said weakly. "We've got to get out of here as quick as we can."

"Doc says you can't be moved for three weeks or a month, and maybe not then, Mister Jamieson," Cam answered.

"I'm pulling out in a day or so!" the old cattleman retorted, with a show of his old vigor. "Let one of those murdering nesters plug me, then let some more of them nurse me! You're going to get me out of here if you have to carry me on your back, young man."

Cam did not try to argue with him. But he knew that the wounded leader was not going to move if a guard had to be set over him night and day.

"What have you heard from the boys?" Bab asked presently. "Last I remember, a nester turned and fired point-blank at me just as I was about

to run him down. Have the nesters given up and scattered?"

"I don't know anything more than you do, boss," Cam said. "I've been right here with you ever since the morning after that first brush, except for a trip to Sun City after Nonnie and Doc, when I didn't see anything."

"Good gosh, man!" Jamieson exclaimed. "Then the nesters may have wiped our men out and stolen all of our cattle. I've got to get moving!"

He was getting excited, and Cam sought desperately to calm him.

"Nonnie is in here, too," he reminded the older man. "We've got to be careful until we get her back to Sun City."

Jamieson frowned and relaxed onto his pillow.

"You'll have to take her out, Cam," he said at last.

Then, as though a new train of thought had struck him, he turned his head and stared at Cam.

"My boy," he said, "once I told you that if you proved your worth, in spite of the handicap of your birth and raising, I would withdraw all objections to your courting Nonnie. I consider that you have proved yourself now, and—the bars are down, so far as I am concerned. Go to it! And I hope you win her."

He paused and a faint smile broke the drawn lines of his face, where the marks of the intense fever were still plainly evident.

"You take her home, Cam," he went on. "It will be an excellent opportunity for you two children to become better acquainted. Anyway, if you are going to marry Nonnie and take care of her all the rest of her life, you might just as well begin right now."

A sharply drawn breath from the doorway caused Cam to turn his head quickly. He was in time to see Wendy Macgregor turning to leave! What she had chanced to overhear, he did not know. But he was certain she must

have heard the last statement made by Bab Jamieson.

"I've got to go, Mister Jamieson," he said hastily. "I really have. But I'll be back in a little bit and finish talkin' to you."

As he ended he was halfway across the room, and he bounded through the door.

He saw Wendy running, fleet as a deer, toward the corral. And down there he saw Pete Windsor sitting in the saddle on his own pony, holding Wendy's pony by the reins, saddled and ready to travel.

"Wendy!" he called.

But she did not turn. Lithe and quick she raised herself into the saddle, and with a slap of the reins she was away; Pete, a full length behind, trying desperately to catch up.

"I've got to get my horse," Cam said to himself. And he hurried on toward the corral. But before he had reached the gate he heard some one calling him and he turned abruptly.

It was Nonnie Jamieson.

"Cam!" she called again. "Dad is asking for you!"

The young cow poke took another look at the rapidly vanishing pair who were heading across the basin toward the rim on the other side.

"Be right there," he answered Nonnie.

She came down the path a little way to meet him, and she snuggled her hand possessively beneath his arm, with a worried expression on her face.

"Cam, I don't know what we're going to do with dad," she said. "It's up to you and me to take care of him now. He's getting restless and talking about leaving here. Doctor Wester says there isn't a thing more he can do, and there isn't a thing for dad to do but lie perfectly quiet for several weeks."

With an effort, Cam brought his thoughts back from Wendy.

"Sure," he said. "We'll rope him down if we have to."

"But I mean it seriously, Cam," Nonnie insisted. "It means that you and I both will have to stay right here until he can be moved."

"Huh!" Cam thought. "A little while ago Nonnie was mad at me, too. And now she ain't a bit mad."

Aloud he said to her:

"Maybe Wendy will come back. Then you and her could look after him while I go back with the crew. I ought to be there, helping to look after things."

But Nonnie shook her head. "No," she answered. "She won't be back."

"How do you know?"

But Nonnie only smiled at him.

In the sick room Bab Jamieson was fretful.

"Nonnie," he said grimly. "Cam is going to take you to Sun City to-morrow morning. Doc says he'll stay another day with me, until Cam gets back. So you get things ready. And now no arguments about it, young lady!"

"Dad, you always think you have to have your own way about everything," she answered him spiritedly. "That's one reason why you were shot. You had to put your cattle over into this country. If you'd stayed out, as Hector Macgregor told you to, there never would have been any trouble.

"But now it has happened, and you are going to do just what we say. You are going to stay right here and get well, and Cam and I are going to stay here with you. You may just as well settle down and get used to it."

The patient would have argued with her, but she would have none of that either, and Cam was treated to another side of Nonnie Jamieson—a side of her which was efficient and firm.

He left them alone in there and went outside again.

There were a lot of things about Nonnie Jamieson that he liked, and a fellow ought to be mighty lucky feeling that he could even talk to her, he thought. And to spend several weeks there in that

shack with her to look at and to talk to any time he wanted, was a privilege.

Only he wished he wouldn't keep on thinking about Wendy Macgregor all the time, the way he did.

Involuntarily he looked off across the basin in the direction where Wendy and Pete had vanished, half expecting to see them riding back.

And, sure enough, a trail of dust was moving down into the basin, and in the center of it he made out two riders. That gave him a real thrill.

"Gosh! They're comin' back!" he exclaimed, half aloud.

Mrs. Kupperthwait heard him and came to the door of the kitchen, cupping her hands about her eyes against the glare of the sun.

"No, 'tain't," she announced. "It's two men."

They studied the riders and Cam saw that she was right. It was not Wendy and Pete.

A few minutes later the strangers were down in the hollow of the basin, out of the glare, and the watchers could see that they carried rifles slung across the pommels of their saddles.

A moment after that a high, chirruping whistle, like the call of a prairie sparrow, sounded on the sultry air, and Mrs. Kupperthwait, standing close beside Cam, answered it.

"That's a sign everything's all right here," she volunteered, when Cam turned to stare at her.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"My old man an' one of the boys," she answered.

CHAPTER XV.

NEWS FROM THE FRONT.

BEFORE his own door, Joe Kupperthwait drew rein but he did not dismount at once. He had a neighbor with him, and the two sat in their saddles, with their guns in readiness, while Joe put some questions to his wife.

"That longhorn, Jamieson, croak?" he asked.

"He's gittin' better," she answered. "The doc's been here a-workin' ont' him."

"Huh! Then it's got out all 'round 'bout him bein' here," Joe snorted. "Reckoned if he croaked it would be best not to never say nuthin' 'bout it. Whar's Hec Macgregor's gal?"

"Gone home with Pete."

"Then reckon word'll git to Hec. We ain't had no way of gittin' word in to him yet. He should reckon we done a good piece of work, riddin' the range of that longhorn that's been causin' all of the trouble. But if he ain't croaked, I ain't a mind what we're goin' t' do."

So far Joe Kupperthwait had ignored Cam, but now he turned upon him.

"Who're you? Joe Trivers' kid? You look 'nough like him, an' I heard tell you was runnin' in these parts—doin' spy work for Bab Jamieson."

Cam flushed under the lash.

"I'm ridin' for Mister Jamieson," he answered. "And now I'm here helpin' take care of him."

"Well, I ain't much use for you. If you was any good, you'd be out there a-fightin' with the folks who was your neighbors. Your paw'd 'a' been doin' it."

"Bab Jamieson has a right to bring his cattle into the breaks," Cam defended.

"Not if Hec Macgregor says he ain't. Hec says it, an' he's a-payin' us to ride for him."

After that he lost interest in Cam again, and the two men climbed out of their saddles and turned their tired ponies over to the freckled-faced Kupperthwait boy, who was seldom seen but was on hand when he was needed.

"We'll grub up an' sleep to-night," Joe announced to his wife. "Then we'll hit the trail at sunup."

Cam was eager to ask a lot of questions, but he knew the answers he would

get from one of Joe's disposition, especially with his present feeling toward him. So he held his tongue.

This inaction and the lack of information about what was going on was getting on his nerves, but there was not a thing that he could do about it.

He went down to the spring for a drink of cold water, and then, because there was nothing else to do, he crawled in among the willows and stretched out to rest.

In a little while Joe Kupperthwait came down for a pail of water, and his wife followed him.

Cam did not mean to be an eavesdropper, but they were upon him before he realized it, and after he had caught the trend of their conversation, he listened openly.

"Them longhorns ain't doin' nuthin' much ever since Bab Jamieson disappeared," Joe said. "They don't know what's become of him, or that Trivers kid, neither. We've been sneakin' in close to their camp every night an' listenin'. It's made things sorta easy for us. All we gotta do is keep scatterin' the stock of nights. Then they spend the days herdin' 'em together ag'in."

"Has any one else been hurt?" his wife asked anxiously. "I've been real worried 'bout you sometimes, Joe."

"Huh!" the nester snorted. "Naw! They ain't been no shootin' since that first day, only once in a while droppin' a shot over some of their heads jest to let 'em know we're still 'round. We reckoned as long as we could keep it quiet whar Bab Jamieson was, them longhorns wouldn't do much, which they ain't, an' that's givin' Hec Macgregor time to work out his plans."

"What's he aimin' on?" the woman asked, worried again.

"He didn't tell none of us," her husband answered. "He took most of the crew, though, to keep pesterin' 'em, before he knowed 'bout Bab Jamieson. We ain't seen nor heard from him since,

or enny of 'em. All he said was for us to keep 'em back as close to the basin as we could till he come back, an' then he'd have everything fixed. An' he said for us not to do no shootin' to hurt nobody."

Joe had his pail of water then, and the two turned again to the trail leading to the house.

Cam remained motionless for some time after that. He had gained the information he wanted. The war was at a standstill but Hector Macgregor was planning something. And no one in the breaks, outside of those who had been to the Kupperthwait ranch, knew about Bab Jamieson. Hector Macgregor supposed the cattleman was still leading his riders into the breaks, and Jamieson's own men knew only that the boss had vanished, probably captured, and that Cam had gone after him and had not yet returned.

"I've got to get out to them and tell them," Cam decided, after he had thought the whole situation over carefully. He slipped away from the spring and circled around to the corral, and from there made his way up to the house again. He did not try to talk to Joe Kupperthwait, but he got hold of Doctor Wester and Nonnie, and held a low conversation with them.

"Doc," he said, "if you'll stay here until to-morrow mornin', and look after Mister Jamieson, I'd like to ride in to Sun City."

"Why do you want to go away?" Nonnie asked, alarmed.

Briefly he repeated the information he had overheard.

"I've got to get out and let the boys know that the boss is coming through all right, and warn them to be ready for whatever it is that is going to happen. Then I'll get right back here."

Doctor Wester agreed to remain over and explain to the Kupperthwaits that it was imperative that Cam ride into Sun City after medicine.

Joe Kupperthwait accepted the information without comment, and within a few minutes Cam was riding swiftly toward the southeast again, as he had done on two occasions recently, but for widely divergent purposes.

He knew now that the reason he had not been stopped when he rode after the doctor and Nonnie was because most of the nesters under Hector Macgregor had left the scene of strife; and for the same reason he anticipated no trouble in riding straight through to Alligator Rock, where he was certain the riders from the Sun River Basin would be camped.

In making the trip, though, there were some things on which he had not figured. For one thing, late in the afternoon, when he was about halfway to his destination, his pony stepped in a gopher hole and went lame.

He hobbled along at a slow pace for a time, but finally he was forced to get off and walk. This put him in a bad way. A foot in the breaks was no joke. It was a serious thing, which was always the fear of any one who rode through the rugged, sun-scorched bad lands.

And another thing, he found that he was coming upon increasing numbers of wild horse bands. It seemed that every rise of ground that he topped revealed to him hundreds if not thousands of the fuzz-tails, who thundered away at the sight of him.

Where they had all come from he could not guess, but they were certainly moving in vast bunches down out of the rougher country toward the basin and the area where the cattle were ranging.

Leading his crippled pony, and with his own feet already sore, Cam forced a grin to his face as he thought of something he had heard.

"'Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink'," he said aloud. "Only this happens to be horses, horses everywhere, but not a one to ride. If I could

get a rope around one of those fuzz-tails, I'd sure climb aboard."

And as the afternoon wore away toward night, with the soles of his feet scorched from the blistering rocks, and the muscles of his legs growing so stiff that he walked with difficulty, this very possibility seemed to be the only hope for him to make it out of the country.

He began to stalk some of the bands, but they gave evidence of having been badly frightened recently, and were wary of his approach, racing away before he was anywhere within half a mile of them.

"I guess there ain't anything that's got quite as far-seein' eyes as wild horses," he said aloud, more to keep company with himself than because he expected any one to hear him.

He came onto a good-sized watering hole when the sun was hanging low against the western horizon. It was black with horses, and all the slopes leading down to the water were covered with moving bands, all heading in for their evening drinks. Within a few minutes after he came into sight, however, the watering hole was deserted, and he had it all to himself, with his useless pony.

But this gave him an idea. Here was one place where they would be bound to return, for they must drink.

"I could build me a blind out of sagebrush down there, and sooner or later some of them will come in with the wind," he mused.

So, freeing his crippled pony and hiding his saddle, he hacked sagebrush from a ridge and carried it down to the watering hole, where he built what looked like a natural growth of the weed, in the center of which he secreted himself.

Within fifteen minutes, a band of horses that had evidently traveled far and hard that afternoon swung down off the ridge and headed directly for the water.

But a hundred yards away they stopped so suddenly that they piled up

in a mass, and their leader, a roan stallion, sent forth a shrill challenge.

They had caught the taint of man's presence, and while Cam held every muscle rigid, scarcely breathing, the leader turned and raced for the high ground again, his band close at his heels.

Other bands which had taken flight at his approach, too, began to circle back, but they were wary, and as time passed the task which Cam had set himself seemed to be a hopeless one.

"I've got to stick, if it takes a week," he told himself.

It seemed as though some sort of a grim fate was dogging his steps, for another evening began to settle over the breaks and not once had a wild horse come within reasonable reach of his rope, though many had been able to quench their thirst by approaching the watering hole from the opposite side to where his blind stood.

With darkness coming on, he knew that even if horses came close enough to be roped, it would be useless to attempt to capture one; and he was just about to give up and retire to the higher ground to sleep when he heard a shrill squeal up above him on the ridge.

A stallion, just arriving at the watering place from a long run, was bringing his band down. He was coming at full speed and without hesitation, and behind him were at least fifty or more horses, indicating that he was an unusually strong leader.

"I'll wait for this bunch," Cam said, half aloud. "Maybe my luck is goin' to turn now."

He could make out the forms of the horses as they plunged forward, eager to get their noses into the water and quench the terrific thirst which they had accumulated through the hot day. The leader was well out in front of his band and he was coming at a swift, rhythmical pace that was beautiful to see.

Cam drew in his breath in admiration.

"He's a beauty!" he whispered. "He really is!"

The stallion was dark in color, as Cam could see in the gathering dusk, and he was perfect in shape.

Cam knew that it would have to be a foot loop that caught both front feet of the stallion if he held him, for even if a loop dropped over the horse's neck, he would never be able to choke him down without a snubbing post. If he could raise the loop and draw it above both fetlocks, however, he could bring the mustang down in a pile and bind him so that he could hold him until morning.

His pulse began to race as the leader surged on. It seemed certain now that he had not scented Cam's presence. On he came, almost straight for the sagebrush blind, and Cam's muscles began to tense.

The leader was only a hundred yards away now, and still he was coming. Now he was fifty, and yet he had not hesitated, a glorious animal who ran with head high and mane and tail streaming. Once he sent back a shrill, whistling command to his followers, but he did not hesitate.

On and on! Twenty-five yards more!

Cam, crouching, every muscle taut, gripped the loop of his lariat rope so intensely that his knuckles cracked.

Then, as though some unheard command had been given, the great leader stopped so suddenly that his stiffened legs plowed furrows in the soil, sending a cloud of dust above him.

Some sixth sense had warned him of danger!

Perhaps he had caught sight of the stand of sagebrush in which Cam waited, and something about it did not look exactly natural; perhaps a slight shifting of the wind had carried some odor of man to the leader.

He stopped and stood with head high, body rigid, while his followers drew up in a close cluster behind him, waiting. A shrill, high scream pierced the evening

air. A scream so fierce that even Cam started. It was a challenge to all unseen enemies to come out in the open and fight; a bloodcurdling challenge to do battle to the death! Then the challenger lowered his head and pawed the earth, sending a cloud of dust skyward.

From far away, along the rim on the opposite side of the watering-hole basin, the battle cry was answered. But to this the leader only gave a snort which was plainly one of deep disgust.

"Oh, Lordy! Lordy!" Cam whispered. "He's got to come on!"

And as though that were the right answer to the challenge which he had issued, the leader leaped into the air and charged. He came almost straight for the sagebrush blind.

Cam drew in his breath slowly, but not a muscle of his body moved.

Twenty, fifteen, ten yards away! The great beauty was charging straight at the blind! In there he scented or sensed danger, and he was coming to destroy it with his powerful feet!

Cam could hear the stallion's deep breathing as he plunged again. One more plunge. Then——

Cam straightened up, standing lean and erect, almost beneath the breast of the leader!

The stallion was in mid-air when Cam made his move; but he did not finish the leap.

Instead, he sunfished almost above Cam, turning so that he was heading back toward his hand, which was piling up behind, sliding to a stop, to turn and race away.

Swish!

Cam's rope flew from his hands!

It was so dark that the body above him was little more than a blur, but the rope shot from Cam's tense fingers in a deft, upward arch, his right arm circling downward and outward in a difficult toss which he had practiced by the hour until he was perfect in it.

Like a snake that uncoils and twists

as it is thrown through the air, the rope uncoiled, a loop at a time, with a hissing *swish*.

The stallion leader heard it and saw it coming, and he sent another surge of strength through his body to carry him beyond the loop.

But he was too late. As his forelegs pawed the air, the sinuous loop of rope came upward, closed about those legs, drew them in close together with a firm jerk.

The stallion came down and turned almost completely over, landing on his side, and a scream of such rage as Cam had never before heard almost broke his eardrums.

But there was no time to consider the temper of the animal he had roped. Drawing the rope taut, he sprang for the head of the leader and threw all his weight on top of it to hold it close to the ground while he deftly twisted the loop of rope about the forefeet, then encircled one of the hind feet, drew it close up to the front feet, and fastened it there.

He had captured the stallion alone and in the dark!

Freeing the leader's head, he let him wear himself down somewhat with frantic struggling and vicious biting and squealing.

"I've got some horse! I really have!" Cam gloated.

But there was little he could do that night with his prize except truss him up so that he would not harm himself in his frantic struggles, and he set about doing this, securing the stallion's legs in such a way that he could not be able to get up. By morning, he figured, he would be able to handle the stallion with a great deal more ease, as he would have worn himself out through the night.

Satisfied at last with his work, he crouched close to the leader's head and stroked him, talking to him in a low, soothing tone, telling him that he would not hurt him, as is the way with cow-

boys who herd cattle but love their horses.

But an overwhelming curiosity was upon him to see what sort of a prize he had gained, and finally he struck a match and cupped the yellow flicker of light. Before him lay the Blue Streak from the Indian Butte country!

CHAPTER XVI.

WILD HORSES.

THE cowboy could hardly wait until morning to make certain that he had really captured the famous Blue Streak. The one flash of light with which he had looked told him that a great dappled blue stallion lay on the ground, enmeshed in the coils of his rope, and that the forelock had not been trimmed. The Blue Devil, twin stallion to the Blue Streak, had gone through the rodeo and had had his forelock trimmed.

But aside from the thrill which overwhelmed Cam with the capture, a thousand questions were pouring through his brain.

It was a long journey through some of the roughest country in the breaks to Indian Butte and the stamping grounds of the blue twins. How had Blue Streak come to be over here, along the edge of the breaks, with his hand? What unusual disturbance on his home range had forced to desert it for a strange country?

So when it was scarcely light enough to see, Cam was up and looking at his prize. He had spent the night lying on the ground a few yards away, afraid to leave him far, and now he crept in closer, talking to the silent horse with low, crooning sounds.

The leader had struggled and fought against the bonds which held him for a good bit of the night, but near dawn he had quieted down, worn out. At Cam's approach he made another valient effort to free himself, then lay silent again, his body trembling.

"It's a dirty shame to rope you down like that," Cam said to the stallion.

Then as the dawn strengthened, he saw that he had made no mistake. He had really roped the Blue Streak. But one more proof was necessary. Wendy Macgregor had said that she had branded the two dappled blue stallions.

Working his way gently forward, Cam laid his hand on the leader's head and stroked it. Then he examined the inside of the ear.

Yes! There it was—left ear dot!

He had captured Wendy's Blue Streak!

He remembered now other things which Wendy had told him. She had gentled Blue Streak and had ridden him on the range, she had said. It was the Blue Devil which had never been ridden before that week at the rodeo.

Talking steadily, in a quiet voice, and gently stroking the blue beauty, Cam placed a set of hobbles on the hind feet and another set on the front feet—hobbles which he always carried with him on his saddle.

Then he built a hackamore from his lariat rope and fitted it firmly on Blue Streak's head.

When the stallion was thus secured, Cam let him scramble to his feet, where he stood glaring wildly about him, but too wise to attempt to make a break.

Cam was up against a pretty strong handicap in saddling Blue Streak, alone, and without a snubbing post, and after half a dozen attempts he was forced to throw him again and blindfold his eyes, fastening the saddle about him as he lay on the ground.

Then he was treated to a real bucking demonstration which gave him fair warning of what he was going to enjoy when he attempted to climb into the saddle.

Wendy had gentled the horse on the open range and had ridden him with surcingle only, so that the saddle was something new and terrifying to him—

something which aroused in him the demons of battle.

Cam kept him bucking steadily with the empty saddle for half an hour until he had worn himself down somewhat and begun to grow accustomed to the leather, then he climbed aboard.

"Yip! Yip! Yip!" he shouted in good old cowboy fashion as he settled his feet into the stirrups.

For a full minute Blue Streak stood absolutely motionless, his body rigid, his muscles set and tense. Then he leaped into the air, twisted, landed with all four feet wide apart, legs stiff.

It was a jarring jolt which brought Cam's jaws together with a jarring click and sent a throb of pain through his head, but he clung to the saddle and raked the stallion from one end to the other with his spurs until he started running. But within a few yards he stopped so abruptly that Cam found himself wrapping his arms about the horse's neck.

He straightened up again, though, and caught his balance as Blue Streak pitched sidewise in a series of staggering, stiff-legged bounces that wrenched Cam's body unmercifully. It seemed to the gritty rider that every bone in him was being wrenched from its socket and ground into pulp, yet he hung on. Across the basin they raced, then into the air in a jackknife; then a swift, dizzy whirling, back across the basin, and then a sudden stop.

But Cam did not give Blue Streak a chance to get his breath. Slapping him with his sombrero and raking him with his spurs, he sent the horse into another great spasm of leaps and mighty twists.

It was cruel to horse and more cruel to rider, but to Cam it was a part of the necessary business of saving his life, for it was doubtful if he could have traveled on foot through that blistering, uneven country to the harbor of the range camp. He had to have a mount, and he had to

teach that mount that its business was to carry him to safety.

So for an hour or more, he refused to let Blue Streak pause, although he himself was ready to fall from the saddle, and he felt that never in his life had he been given such grueling, torturous punishment.

It finally ended, though, as it must sooner or later, with Cam the victor, though a much-battered hero of the struggle.

Blue Streak stood and refused to buck, even when Cam raked him with his spurs and slapped him across the ears with his hat.

Then as suddenly as he had climbed into the saddle and started his rough riding, Cam leaped to the ground and began to talk to the wild mustang leader again, gently, persuasively, stroking his arched neck and his erect ears, as one would a dog.

All the time that he had been working with Blue Streak, Cam had been aware that wild horses—many of them—were topping the horizon line, racing in toward the watering hole, only to turn and thunder away at sight of a human being there. It seemed to him that he had never known there were so many wild horses in the breaks. There were hundreds of them, even thousands, moving swiftly toward the southeast, out of the wilder country, as though some scourge dogged their steps, forced them restlessly forward.

Finally, satisfied that Blue Streak was ready to serve his new master, Cam got into the saddle again.

The humid air was growing heavy with the dust raised by the passing bands of wild horses, and Cam could hear the thunder of their hoofs constantly as they circled the basin.

He knew that he should waste no time in pushing forward to the cattle camp at Alligator Rock, yet on an impulse, he turned Blue Streak back toward the rim of the basin to the north-

west, where, from the high ridge, he could look back into the rougher country.

From the divide he witnessed a sight which startled him and left him wholly mystified.

Everywhere he looked there were wild horses!

And they were all moving. They were not stopping to graze, but in droves that seemed to mount up into the thousands, they were moving steadily toward the southeast, in such dense numbers that the bands were almost indistinguishable from each other.

Never in his life had Cam seen wild horses in such numbers, even in the breaks where he had been raised. Even in the periodical wild horse round-ups there had never been so many of them moving at a single time. Hundreds of them he had seen; even up to two thousand in a single bunch had been driven down out of the rough country. But here, spread out over hundreds of square miles of country were thousands of the animals.

Some of the bands were fresh and high-spirited, and they went plowing forward at high speed; others showed plainly that they had been moving through the night, for they walked slowly, with heads down.

His young face wrinkled with a deep frown, Cam sat for a long time and watched the sight. Some foreboding of a great catastrophe far back in the breaks gripped and held him.

Fire?

But it could not be that. There would have been a pall of smoke hanging over the bad lands if fire had driven the wild horses out.

Had all the watering holes suddenly gone dry under the intense, ceaseless heat of the drought period?

But the watering holes in the territory where he was would have been dry, too. And the one where he had spent the night had not dropped unduly.

"It's somethin' bigger'n that." Cam said aloud. "And I reckon we better wait a spell and see what we see."

Drawing up in the shade of a sharp butte of rock, Cam sat in the saddle for an hour. And in all that time the wild horses kept on coming.

So quietly did he wait, and so weary from long travel without food or water were many of the horses, that they passed within a short distance of him, only veering away when they actually saw him.

There were horses of every color and every size; there were old, battle-scarred stallions, and young, glistening leaders; there were mares with young colts and with yearlings still suckling; and there were homeless young waifs, outdistanced by their sires, trailing along far behind, doing their best to keep up, begging piteously for food from every mare that came within reach of them but driven savagely away with bites and kicks. There were leaders who fought savagely to keep their bands unbroken, circling their mares, driving away encroaching stallions, fastening their teeth into the rumps of the laggards.

And all the air was filled with the singsong, monotonous whimper of the horses, a song that was as tuneless as the blating of sheep; the complaining, sad tune of mares that had lost their colts, of colts that had lost their dams, of old horses that wanted to rest, of young horses that wanted to eat and drink.

But most of all there were the shrill whistling calls of the leaders trying to find their lost harems; warning all within hearing of their voices to beware of trespass.

"Lordy! Lordy!" Cam whispered, his blood stirred until it was racing through his body. "A sight like that ain't never been seen before. Lordy! And me right in the middle of it!"

Then as suddenly as the migration had started, it had ceased.

The last of the wild horses had passed,

and Cam sat there in his saddle in a growing calm and quiet, while the thick, volcanic dust settled slowly, letting the sun beat down with a renewed, stifling vengeance.

Then, far away to the northwest, cutting clear against the sky line, Cam saw the silhouetted figure of a horse and rider!

And turning to another point, he saw another rider!

And farther to the west was another, and still another!

Riders! Riders everywhere, along the horizon, topping the high ground, following in behind the wild horses!

And the answer which Cam had sought came to him.

The wild horses were being driven out of the breaks! Strings of riders were behind them, forcing them forward!

Cam waited for the riders to come down off the ridges, into the lower country. He had not heard that wild horse hunters were in the breaks, yet he had witnessed the greatest wild-horse drive of all time. For two or three days, at least, the bands had been moving ahead of these riders.

Who were they? He had to know. So he sat quietly and waited for the advance guard to approach. Then he rode boldly out to meet them—three men who were riding together, at a slow, even pace.

They drew rein suddenly some distance away when they saw him, and Cam saw that they had each dropped a hand down to a convenient six-gun.

But he raised high his arms in a motion of peace, and spurred Blue Streak forward.

"Howd'y, strangers!" He offered a friendly greeting in the vernacular of the trail.

For a moment there was silence, then a voice spoke.

"Who are you?" The question was shot at him.

"Cam Trivers!" he answered without evasion.

One of the riders spurred forward and came up to his side.

"My gosh, where'd you git that hoss?" the stranger demanded.

And then Cam almost lost his balance.

He was looking into the bearded and dust-begrimed face of Hector Macgregor!

The surprise was mutual on the part of each man—Macgregor that Cam was there with Blue Streak beneath him, and Cam that Macgregor was there at all. And for a full minute neither of them found words.

"So!" said the ruler of the breaks, shattering the silence first. "So! a hoss thief, are you? That dappled blue carries Wendy Macgregor's brand!"

Cam began a hot denial.

"I've paid for the right to ride this horse!" he said. Then he broke off lamely and finished: "I snared him last night when my horse went lame under me."

The old leader's face was grim, and as he looked levelly at Cam, the youth felt that he faced a crisis in his life.

"Young man," said Macgregor, speaking slowly, but with a terrific force behind his words, "whar is my gal? Not a word from her since she rode away with you and Pete!"

Cam felt a great surge of relief.

"She and Pete rode through Rattlesnake Pass to Indian Butte yesterday," he answered promptly.

The tense suspense which had gripped Hector Macgregor seemed to break at those words.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "If she's suffered one minnit, I'll kill you! I could have you strung up for hoss stealin', but it's my gal I'm thinkin' of. You tell me that's the truth?"

Cam nodded.

"She started for Indian Butte yesterday morning, and Pete was riding beside her," he said.

Macgregor turned to the two other riders who had closed in about Cam, ready for any order from their leader.

"Boys," he said, "the lad speaks the truth. He wouldn't dare to say otherwise."

He hesitated. "We'll let him go his own way—an' we'll let him ride the Blue Streak!"

There was a ringing note of triumph creeping into his voice.

"We'll ride on! We've got 'em licked! Their cattle will die of starvation an' thirst inside of a week. Ten thousand wild horses eatin' up an' stompin' out the range they thought they could steal! Ten thousand wild horses! That's my answer!"

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.



ALASKA GETS ITS BUFFALOES

TO perpetuate a great herd of American bison in the Yukon and Tahana River valleys has long been the desire of the Alaska game commission. And, through the funds appropriated by the last territorial legislature, this desire seems about to be fulfilled. In fact, thirty head of buffaloes have already been shipped to Fairbanks, Alaska, where they were turned over to the Alaska Agricultural School for experimental purposes. The small herd were shipped from Montana by the biological survey of the department of agriculture.

Conditions in the Yukon and Tahana River valleys are ideal for the fostering of this new industry, especially as there is plenty of grass for winter as well as summer feeding. Then, too, Alaska has the reputation of being a great game country, for it has its herds of Tibetan yak, its great herds of caribou, its many moose, and vast droves of domestic reindeer. And in addition to the general species of wild game the territory actually ranks with Africa in big game. Therefore, it ought to be only a question of time before the buffalo is as much at home in Alaska as in his Western preserves.



THE UNPROFITABLE JACK RABBIT

THERE is something so gay and carefree about the name of Jack Rabbit that one dislikes to think ill of him, but the department of agriculture has been taking serious note of this member of the four-legged family, and the result bodes ill for Jack. He has never been popular in the Southwest, where he is looked upon as rather a useless fellow, particularly as he can't be eaten and his skin isn't worth much. But these are negligible qualities. It is the tremendous appetite of the jack rabbit that is bringing him into disfavor with the powers that be agricultural.

What about this for a bill of fare? 11.8 jack rabbits will eat as much green forage as a sheep; 58.8 jack rabbits dispose of as much green roughage as a cow; 14.2 jack rabbits consume as much hay as a sheep, and 71.4 jack rabbits swallow the equivalent of one cow's dry feed! In short, the jack rabbit eats a good deal more than he is worth. The jack rabbit population grows and flourishes apace and there is every likelihood that its unwilling hosts will lend an attentive ear to any scheme which the government may suggest for curtailing its numbers and the ravages of its appetite.



Bud Tuttle Misses A Steer

By Seth Ranger

Author of "Bud Tuttle's String," etc.



WITH the first streaks of dawn, "Bud" Tuttle stirred in the manger that had served him as a bed for the night. Horses in adjoining stalls were crunching oats; wranglers were emerging from near-by bunk houses. They stretched, yawned, looked at the weather, and then washed up. The great arena in which the Bitter City Round-up was being held was deserted. The activity was the sort the spectator never sees—the drama behind the scenes. Bud Tuttle was eating it up. He had arrived at the round-up broke, but the winning of some day money had given him a start. Then his relay string had won, and now his pocket was fairly well lined with bills. But he preferred to spend a night in a manger, where things were happening, to the comfort of a hotel.

The straw of a near-by stack stirred and Mike Porep emerged. "The top o'

the mornin' to you, Bud," said the little Irishman.

"The balance of the day to yourself," Bud answered in the same tone. "Mike, I've some news for you! I'm going to take a whirl at the Northwest Steer Bulldogging Contest to-day."

A shade of concern passed over Mike's face. "You don't need the money, so why take a chance? In a couple of days you'll be heading for Seattle and Alaska. You've been delayed several times already. If you get hurt, you may never get there. Besides, you haven't had the experience."

"That's true, Mike," Bud admitted cheerfully. "But as I've said before, the only way to get the experience is to get it. I can't get it standing on the side lines watching the other fellow. You see, Mike," Bud continued, growing serious, "I'm young and full of ambition. It isn't so much the winning that I care for as it is the fun of stacking up against some other fellow who

is the best in his line and thus finding out how good I am myself. I'd rather come in second or third with the best than win against dubs. Some day I hope to enter the finals of the All-around Cowboy World Championship. The time to start is right now when I'm young and haven't much sense. When I'm old and cautious it'll be too late."

Mike snorted and gave his young friend a hard look. "Are you suggestin' I'm old and cautious?"

"You're a reckless fool as far as you're concerned," Bud explained, "but you're sure cautious with me."

Mike felt better. "Maybe you're right, kid, but bulldogging is dangerous business to a fellow that ain't tried it!"

"I've tried it," Bud confessed.

"You have?" bellowed Mike.

"Yes, but it was in private. I got a mouthful of dirt and a kick that made me silly for five minutes. Oh, I've given all the contests a try at different times. I forked one of the buckers from the world string and got tossed higher than a kite. I took a hand at roping a steer, too."

"How did you come out?" Mike eagerly inquired. Mike had attempted to teach Bud the fundamentals of the fine art of roping.

"I roped my steer," Bud explained, "but I had to use a big loop in order to be sure I cleared his horns. Well, the loop hooked a fence post the same time it hooked the steer, and I yanked out fifty feet of fence."

"That didn't cause much damage," Mike said.

"Oh, yes, it did," Bud answered. "You see, there was an Indian sitting on the fence post at the time. It just about wrecked him. If it hadn't been that he won a lot of money betting on my relay string, he'd probably have declared war. As it was, he gave me some fine points about roping and then sent his cousin, Maiden Afraid of The Men,

to tell me a thing or two about bulldogging."

Mike Porep whistled, then withdrew all objections to Bud's entering the bulldogging contests. Maiden Afraid of The Men might be afraid of the men, but she feared no living steer. She was one of the very few native girls who either roped or bulldogged. She did both. In her graceful copper-colored arms there was the strength of a man. Experience had taught her the trick of catching the steer off balance. The rest was easy. Nor did she use exhibition steers in her work. She took them as they came from the corral. She did not contest with the men. And there were some cruel enough to claim that she was ruled out in order to save the men embarrassment.

Mike was so thoughtful that Bud Tuttle was moved to inquire, "What's wrong?"

"Maiden Afraid of The Men has never offered to teach any one, native or white, anything from her bag of tricks," Mike said, "and I am trying to figure out what her game is. In the early days, Bud, I saved myself a lot of trouble by never underestimatin' an Indian's sense. In those days they were uneducated. Now they're educated. Mark my word, she's playing a game of some kind!"

"My gosh!" exclaimed Bud in alarm. "You don't suppose—suppose—suppose ——" He flushed, groped for words, then grew silent.

"Suppose what?" said Mike.

"Well, you'll probably think I'm stuck up for saying it, but you don't suppose she's sorta fallen in love with me? I can't see how any girl could, but there's no accountin' for some people's tastes, and she might like me well enough to want to see me get along in the world."

"Any girl could do a lot worse than fall for you," Mike answered, "and I'm not sayin' that because you're a good-

lookin' cuss. Looks don't help much in the long run. I'm saying it because you've got plenty of character. But don't worry, Maiden hasn't fallen in love with you. It looks to me like you're bein' used in some scheme of squaring accounts. I'm going to find out."

A half hour later Mike was talking to the prettiest girl in the Indian village. As he talked, the old-timer was certain the girl's mind was on something else. Several times he saw her eyes flash, and in that flash he detected the flame of a woman scorned. Mike shifted his position in order to observe just what the girl was looking at. He saw the tall, handsome figure of Carter Manson posing for several still pictures with an Indian-village background.

Manson had once been a rather average cow-puncher. Then the motion pictures had discovered him. He photographed well, and a good director had made him famous. A change had immediately taken place in the man. Former friends were completely forgotten. He was never at home to the busted cow-punchers he had once borrowed money from. Not for a moment could he forget he was Carter Manson, picture star. His contract permitted him to select his own leading lady, and he selected girls who were content to let him hog the picture. But his contract also provided that he was to take part in the annual Bitter City Rodeo. This permitted his press agent to tell the world that Manson was a real and not a drug-store cow-puncher. News-reel weeklies were also used to prove this.

All this old Mike Porep knew. He ventured a remark. "You don't think any more of that cuss than I do, Maid Afraid of The Men?"

"I hate him," she said in a low, tense voice. As a young man, Mike had seen other native girls' eyes flame over some injustice. Education had not changed this girl.

WS-8C

"Let's hear the story, Maid," Mike suggested.

"I will tell you if you'll let Bud Tuttle enter the Northwest Championship," she agreed.

"What have you against Bud?" Mike countered. "He is inexperienced, and you know it."

"I have nothing against him. I am sorry there are not more like him, Mr. Porep. As to his experience—well, he'll have plenty of it when I am through with him." She looked Mike squarely in the eyes. "Bud Tuttle wants a hand-carved, silver-mounted saddle for that wonderful horse he rides. I have seen him again and again looking at the Cleghorn saddle down in Cleghorn's window. Bud is no fool. He knows his limitations, but he tries to overcome them. He doesn't think he has a chance in the world to win the Cleghorn saddle, but he is going to win it."

"What makes you think so?" Mike inquired.

"He has courage, strength, and quickness. That is all the battle except experience. I can supply enough of that."

"There are some pretty fast bulldoggers in the Northwest Championship," Mike observed.

"Not so many as usual," she replied. "Why? Because Carter Manson is planning to win that saddle and the glory that goes with it. It is a gesture of his to save his face. This is what he has done. He has made the World Championship so attractive and offered so many prizes that the bulldoggers can make more by coming out fifth or sixth in the World Championship than by winning the Northwest."

"I see," Mike exclaimed, "he eliminates the good men so he'll look good among the dubs. And his picture following will never know the difference."

"Exactly!"

"But why are you so interested?" Mike inquired.

"I hate a four-flusher. Perhaps it is because I am willing to take a chance myself, but the fact remains—I hate a four-flusher. Carter Manson is trying to bluff his way through; trying to take his place among men who merit what they have. Besides, I can't forget the two months I played with him in that picture. Every man from the director down treated me as an educated woman. I am not white, I am an Indian, and I am not ashamed of it. But when a woman, regardless of race, merits respect, she should have it. Carter Manson treated me like a Siwash squaw. I am going to humble him by making him go into the Northwest Championship against at least one good man. Bud Tuttle is that man. Do I get him or don't I?"

"You do!" Mike Porep answered.

"I rather thought you would agree with me," the girl answered.

Mike chuckled as he walked away. "Education and twenty thousand dollars a year from a wheat ranch hasn't spoiled that girl any. And she's just like her old man, Chief Painted Horse—out for a square deal."

Cleghorn's Harness Shop was Mike Porep's next point of call. The Cleghorn Trophy was in the window. Mike paused to admire the saddle. It was the best saddle a veteran could make. The carving was beautiful; the mountings of solid silver. Mike entered the shop, and the old saddle maker greeted him pleasantly. "It beats heck how some of us old cusses hang on," he observed.

"Yeah," Cleghorn agreed.

"It seems like you went pretty strong on that trophy this year," Mike said, getting to the point.

"Huh!" Cleghorn grinned, bit off a chew of tobacco, and was moved to become confidential. "That movin'-picture jasper figgers to win that saddle this year, and so he had me add a lot

of silver things and charge the extra cost up to him. Well—there she is. But don't tell nobody."

"I won't," Mike promised. "But he might get fooled and somebody else would win it."

"Not that tightwad! He's attractin' all the real competition to the World Championship and explains off his actions by sayin' it wouldn't look fittin' for him to go after his own prizes. Big-hearted Carter Manson! Blah!" And Cleghorn resumed his saddle making.

Bud Tuttle was gazing at the saddle when Mike came out of the shop. The back of Bud's hand was badly skinned, but there was no end of admiration in his eyes. "Say, Mike, that's a sweet saddle, isn't it?" he asked.

"Sure is," Mike agreed, "and the next time I strike it rich I'll buy you one for a present."

"Get me something else, Mike, I'd sooner wait a year or two and win it. There's a silver plate in back for the owner's name, too." He closed his eyes and could see in engraver's script:

NORTHWEST BULLDOGGING
CHAMPIONSHIP.

Bitter City Round-up.

Won by

Bud Tuttle.

The time would be engraved, too. Bud was too modest to care to show off or blow about his ability, but there was a mighty human desire in his heart to leave his horse with that saddle standing at some curb where people could see it.

"How'd you hurt your hand?"

"Maiden Afraid of The Men has been giving me some instructions. I was a split second too late and got my hand between the steer's horn and the ground. The feeling is coming back now. It'll be in good shape this afternoon." He chuckled. "Say, who do you suppose saw me and my teacher?"

"Who?"

"The answer to a maiden's prayer—Carter Manson!" Bud had no idea of the surprise he was creating.

"Was he at all interested?" Mike demanded, with considerable excitement.

"He was popeyed!" Bud replied. "From the way he acted you'd have thought he had suddenly discovered I was going to be the winner. And listen, Mike, it took me a minute and a half on account of getting my hand caught. I'm no fool! I know I haven't a chance to win this year—even with Maiden teaching me the tricks of the business."

"You might be surprised at the chance you have," Mike said. And it was Bud's turn to be surprised.

At twelve o'clock that day Carter Manson received another jolt. In the small arena where cow-punchers often practiced, Bud bulldogged a steer in twenty-nine seconds. True, he had plenty of luck and the Indian girl was on hand to coach him, but it was something for a green kid to write home about, and Manson knew it.

As Bud left the field, Manson strolled over to the girl. "I know your game," he said unpleasantly, "but I have never seen the day that I couldn't beat a——" He paused and jerked his thumb toward Bud Tuttle, then added, "—that I couldn't beat a squaw man."

The girl's whip slashed across Manson's face. She was furious. She had as much contempt for the squaw man as had any white man. Bud Tuttle not being on hand to hear and resent the insult, she did it for him. "That is the first time I ever struck a dog with a whip," she said quietly.

Painted Horse, sensing something was wrong, hurried up; then, seeing his daughter had the situation well in hand, he indulged in a grin. The chief's old eyes rested on Manson's hat. It was a bit of headgear the chief had long

coveted. The hat, a white Stetson, was famous in Manson's pictures. "Bet you five hundred dollars against hat, your hat, Bud Tuttle beats you?" the chief said.

Manson walked away. The chief had matched his strategy against better white men than Manson and won. He trailed behind, a colorful figure in beaded moccasins and war bonnet. In time he found Manson surrounded by an admiring crowd. "Him buckaroo?" the chief grunted. "Ugh! Him pretty drug-store buckaroo! Him four-flusher. No good bulldogger!"

Manson flushed, the crowd grew interested. In the motion picture, Manson handled such situations with ease. The crowd expected to see something now in real life. Manson cleared his throat. "This ignorant savage," he said, "has been annoying me all the morning, offering to bet. I don't want to take the poor fellow's money."

"Haw! Haw! Haaaaw!" roared a cow-puncher. "That ignorant savage is wuth five hundred thousand dollars. Go ahead and rob him! He won't care. What's the bet, chief?"

"I bet five hundred dollars against his hat Bud Tuttle beat him in bulldogging. He four-flusher. No take bet. Drug-store buckaroo."

Stung to rage, Manson whirled on the chief. "I'll take that bet! My hat against five hundred dollars. And I'll give the five hundred to charity. I am sick of your annoying me."

Manson galloped away to prepare for his part in the show. The white riding breeches were exchanged for overalls and a hickory shirt. The prize hat was placed in a leather case and a battered Stetson jammed on his head. Bulldogging was anything but a white-collar job. His next move was to look up a man called "Shorty." Shorty was a rodeo camp follower who picked up a dollar now and then—sometimes honestly. "Here's ten bucks, Shorty!

When they start the steers out for the bulldogging, give 'em a hand. See to it that Bud Tuttle gets the tricky steers."

"I'm next, Mr. Manson! Bill and Steve are the toughest of the lot. They have a way of tossing their heads and making a man miss. Say, that Indian princess is watching us." He jerked his thumb toward Maiden Afraid of The Men. "Is she interested?"

"Yes. She's out to show me up. She's coached Bud Tuttle!"

Shorty looked across the arena at Bud. "I happen to know he's spending most of his money caring for his racing string. From here he heads for Alaska. He'll have to ride the rods unless he has money. He might listen to reason," Shorty suggested.

"Thanks for the tip," Manson answered. He rode slowly away.

Maiden evidently knew the man she was dealing with. She lost no time in hurrying to Mike Porep. "Hang around the steer corral, Mr. Porep, and see that Bud Tuttle is given a fair deal," she advised. "Manson has just had a conversation with Shorty. It may be very much on the level, but I doubt it. Bill and Steve are the tricky steers of the lot."

"I'll take care of that," Mike promised. "What do you think of Bud's chances?"

"Only even. You see, Mr. Porep, Bud is too honest with himself. As a result, he has underestimated his chances. He's going out to win, but he doesn't expect to. I can't convince him that he is as good as he is. A little conceit would help a lot right now."

Mike knew Bud well enough to know that talking would do no good. In the final analysis the old prospector preferred Bud to have sound judgment rather than a bit of conceit. In the long run he would be better off. Though in this instance it did look as if conceit would help a lot.

He saw the Maiden take her place with the other Indians, then the judges rode into the field. It was some time later that the Northwest Bulldogging Championship was announced.

Due to Carter Manson's foresight in making the World Championship so attractive, the competition consisted mostly of green boys eager to get a start in one of the toughest games in the world—rodeo competition.

There was a challenge in Mike Porep's eyes as he heard Carter Manson's name called. Mike observed that Shorty was doing his best to maneuver a sleepy steer called Solo to the chute. Mike had also noticed that this same Shorty had prevented Bill and Steve from leaving the corral at any time. Mike watched his chance, then prodded Steve with a sharp stick at the right moment. The steer shot for the open gate, knocked Solo aside, and was in the open.

It was too late for Manson to do anything but go after the steer. Already the crowd had cheered him to the echo. Now it was quiet as his horse raced to overhaul the galloping Steve. Manson's arms shot outward; his fingers touched the horns. Then, just as he was off balance, the steer gave a quick toss of the head. Manson struck the ground flat on his face and stomach. His chin plowed a tiny furrow in the sod, then he leaped to his feet.

"Missed his steer!" said a thousand voices.

Manson picked up his hat and waited for the hazer to haze his horse up. Crestfallen, he rode back to the chute.

"Tuttle!"

Bud turned to find Manson at his side. "Five hundred dollars if you miss your steer," said the cowboy-actor. "Winning doesn't mean a thing to you. It means plenty to me."

Mike Porep could not hear what was being said. But he saw a change come

over Bud Tuttle. Sudden confidence seemed to have swept through him. Shorty, observing that Mike was studying Bud, took full advantage of the situation and headed Bill for the gate.

As Bill broke into a dead run, Bud whirled in pursuit. He was mounted on his great wild horse, Tex. With tremendous strides, Tex overhauled the steer and closed in. Thousands of people stood up in time to see Bud Tuttle shoot through the air and hit the ground, while Tex, Bill, and Bud's hazer vanished in the dust. Bud whistled and Tex returned.

As Bud rode up beside Carter Manson the latter smiled. "Easy money, kid! I'll see you after the show!" He spoke in a low tone, the words trickling out of the corner of his mouth.

"You owe me nothing, Manson," Bud retorted. "I missed that steer fair and square. He was too tricky for me. I don't want your five hundred. In a way, I owe you something. The fact that you fear my poor skill enough to bribe me to throw down the Indians that are betting on me convinces me I have a good chance. Manson, I'm out to win that saddle!"

It was a fight to the finish, and Manson knew it. He watched the parade of greenhorns tackle their second steers. Bitter City rules provided that a contestant should be judged on his best time on two steers. None of the kids had a chance. One by one they were eliminated. Each one limped away with clothing torn, muscles sore, hands bleeding—utterly exhausted.

"Carter Manson!"

Manson leaned over as he passed Bud. "A thousand, kid, if you let me win this. My place in motion pictures will—"

Bud did not hear the rest. "Get out there and fight!" he snapped.

And Manson fought!

A tough steer carried him to the grand stand and half into the field be-

fore he could get the desired hold. Then with a mighty heave he brought the steer to its side with all four feet off the ground. The gun cracked. Time, twenty-eight seconds.

"Bud Tuttle!"

Mike Porep slapped him on the back. "You can beat that, kid!"

Bud did not answer. He was trying to recall the various little tricks the Indian girl had taught him. Rules gave the steer every advantage. A man could not, for example, "hoolihan" a steer. That is, fall on the steer's horns so hard that the animal makes a complete somersault. The throw must be clean. Nor is he permitted to aid himself by biting the steer's lips. Everything must be done with hands and weight.

"Now Tex!" he shouted, as a wild-eyed steer galloped into the open.

"Ooooh! What a tough baby!" some one yelled from the grand stand.

"And a tough baby is going to bulldog it," muttered Mike. "There he goes!"

Steer and youth came down in a cloud of dust. Inexperience cost Bud his grip for a moment. A horn slashed and tore his overalls from hip to knee. A crimson line formed on the white flesh. As Bud regained his grip, the steer headed for the fence. Women screamed and turned away. Men grew strangely silent. Somebody yelled, "Let go, Bud!" It was Mike Porep.

Bud managed to clear most of the fence, but his body smashed through the top board. His face drained of color for a moment. He ached all over. Then his reserve strength returned. Bit by bit, the hardship of the range had built him up this reserve. It seemed to flow from an unknown source and fill every portion of his body. His hand caught a gleaming horn, his body came down partly on the other horn. He saw one hoof leave the ground, then touch. As the steer swung his

head to hurl him clear, Bud went along with the animal. For a moment he was head down and feet in the air between the steer's horns. Then a knee hooked on the other horn and his entire weight shifted at once.

With a mighty bellow, the steer fell over on its side. All four feet left the ground. The gun cracked. Bud's hazer rushed in and freed him. Bud half staggered to the waiting Tex—that wonderful horse—and his battered saddle. Bud was still dazed. The crowd was cheering both his time and gameness.

"Twenty-five seconds! Twenty-five seconds!" A score of voices shouted the time.

Then Bud saw Mike Porep. But Mike had five heads and all of them grinned at once, then grew serious. Mike's arm went around Bud. "Kid! You cut the mustard!" Mike said, but he was a thousand miles away. Then blackness enveloped Bud.

Bud Tuttle opened his eyes.

"Feelin' better?" inquired a familiar voice. It was the round-up doctor. Mike Porep was there, too. But Mike now possessed but one head, and he was not grinning.

"What happened?" Bud muttered.

"You got shook up plenty when the steer crashed through the fence," Mike explained, "but you're all right now."

"Huh!" Bud grunted in disgust. "So I passed out, eh? But I had the darnedest dream. I dreamed my name was carved on the silver plate as the winner of the Cleghorn Saddle. And I dreamed old Chief Painted Horse was wearing Carter Manson's hat. That crash in the fence sure made me a bit loco."

"That wasn't no dream," Mike answered, "that's the real thing. You won the trophy and— There goes the chief now! He's hung up his war bonnet and is sporting Carter Manson's famous Stetson."



ORE-DRESSING PROCESSES

ANYTHING that has to do with ore and minerals is of interest to the Western reader, and even the layman far removed from mines must find interest in investigations made by the United States bureau of mines with a view to effecting economies in mining production. The department of commerce is authority for the statement that crushing is the most costly step in all ore-dressing processes. The object of this process of crushing is to free from each other the minerals composing the ore, and to produce grains of a size within the recovering power of the process to be used.

Coarse sand flotation is now being studied at the field station of the bureau of mines in Moscow, Idaho. Its purpose is to obviate, if possible, the large mineral loss in the slimes produced in such crushing. The problem of coarse sand flotation has been solved in the Michigan copper district, says the bureau. The flotation is followed by classification and table concentration. Flotation removes fine and intermediate size mineral grains; the classifier overflow is tailing. A great economic advantage has been gained by this process, and experiments indicate that it applies with equal effectiveness to ore of many other districts.



Chips from the Big Sticks

(Highclimbing)

By Howard J. Perry



A MIGHTY storm sweeps in from the expanse of the rolling Pacific. It screams across the sand dunes and races angrily over the timbered slopes of the Olympic Mountains. Monarchs of the forests—giant firs and spruces—bow before its force, as if they were nothing more than stalks of grain in a prairie wheat field.

The camp foreman of the Great Western Logging Co. stands at the base of a great fir, whose top is lashed with the fury of the wind. His eyes are drawn, and deep wrinkles crease his forehead as he studies the whipping crest of this tree.

Beside him, a slender youth, clad in flannel shirt, staggod trousers, and calked boots, is unconcernedly buckling a thick leather belt about his supple waist.

The foreman turns on the boy. "Gosh, 'Highclimber,'" he says, "it ain't a bit safe up there to-day. We ought to let her go. Of course, we need this spar tree rigged right away, because we'll be ready to log this section to-morrow morning, but this ain't any day for highclimbing. I guess we'll have to lose a little time."

The youth is down on one knee, strapping his climbing irons to his legs. They resemble those used by telephone linemen, only they are much heavier and the spurs are fully four inches long.

He finally completes the process, straightens up, and grins broadly at his boss. "Shucks, chief," he laughs, "I'll be up there in a jiffy and have her topped. This camp's loggin'—not loafin'."

He moves toward the trunk of the tree. It is fully five feet in diameter

and rises sheer for a hundred feet before the first branch protrudes from its thick bark. In one hand he holds a coil of rope, one end of which is attached to a stout ring in the front of his belt.

With a dexterous twist of his wrists, he throws this rope around the tree and grasps the loose part in his right hand. With his left he takes hold of the fixed section about a foot from his belt. He darts an appraising glance at the towering column of bark above him, and then flings a careless smile over his shoulder at the foreman.

A clever flip of his hands, and the arc or bight in the rope shoots upward. With a jerk, he tightens it at the peak of its ascent. The next moment his spurs are driven into the thick bark. The tightened rope keeps him from falling over backward.

Now he starts climbing, first burying one spur in the tree and then the other. Again the rope flashes up, and again he follows, until all the movements of his feet and hands are synchronized in one rhythmic motion that takes him skyward at a rapid pace.

Halfway to the top, he pauses for breath and shortens his grip on the rope. The body of the tree is smaller here and he does not need as much length as when he started. He continues until he arrives just below the first branch. It is more than a foot in diameter where it protrudes from the tree.

Taking the loose end of the rope, he fastens it quickly, but securely, in another ring in his wide belt. Now his hands are free, and, reaching around behind him, he draws up a double-bit-ax that has been dangling on a short rope from his waist.

Braced at an angle of thirty degrees with the tree, he swings the sharp ax on the branch. It bites deep, almost a third of the way through. He swings again, and the branch cracks. Directly

underneath the branch, his belt rope runs around the tree. A third time he swings, but this time he turns the ax blade out as it strikes. The branch falls to earth with a hissing *swoosh*, the blade of the ax missing the belt rope by a few inches.

He drops the ax to dangle again from his belt and goes up to the next branch. The cutting process is repeated. And as he comes to each branch it is shorn off close to the tree. Higher up, they become smaller, and only one blow is needed to sever them. Those blows are struck with apparent carelessness, but this is due to a highly developed skill in judgment and muscular control rather than a lack of care.

Now he has almost reached the point where the tree is to be topped—two hundred feet up. The full force of the wind strikes here, and the whip is so great that at times it seems the high-climber will be shaken loose from his scant hold.

Having taken off another branch, he pauses and studies the weaving tuft above him. Then he moves around to a point where the wind strikes on his side, and with sure, swift strokes makes a gash in the tree, known as the undercut. Next he lowers his ax and draws up a short crosscut saw that has also been hanging from a rope attached to his belt, and starts swinging.

Below, the foreman, with face up-tilted, watches apprehensively. In spite of the calm indifference of the youth above as he continues to draw his hand back and forth, the foreman knows that Death lurks in several places, ready to leap and take its toll. Should a spur tear loose as the treetop lunges back and forth, there would be a sudden fail that would crush the youngster.

As the saw nears the halfway mark, the man on the ground holds his breath. Under the power of the wind, should the tree begin to split, the bight in the rope would instantly spread, drawing

the boy up until the rope broke. But even if it does not split, there is the ever-present danger, in a windstorm, of the stub or base of the tuft kicking or springing back when it is cut through, and crashing down, wiping the high-climber off as though he were nothing more than an ant clinging there.

The cut is halfway through. Will the tree split? The foreman watches closely; the boy works on coolly. The wind charges again. The tuft bows, but holds. The fir straightens, and the highclimber saws faster. Three quarters of the way through, he nears the undercut. A few more long, fast strokes. The wind increases and the gap of the cut widens.

Instantly, he withdraws the saw and lowers it. Then, his muscles tense, he focuses his eyes on the bending top. It starts to circle, and instantly the boy leaps part way around the tree. Then it starts downward, but at the same time the treacherous wind strikes from another angle, and the tuft wheels crazily. It rips from the few splinters that hold it and kicks back.

The foreman gasps. The boy makes a supreme effort to leap clear to avoid the heavy stub of the top as it crashes straight down at him. Only muscles of tempered steel can make the jump which must be halfway round the tree.

In that instant the boy springs, and the top shoots past his head, so close that it takes his hat with it. The tuft strikes the earth with a thunderous roar. The foreman wipes the moisture from his forehead.

The highclimber is coming down. He drops the hight of the rope ten feet at a time and then leaps. In several more bounds he strikes the ground and approaches the older man, his face rimmed with a careless smile.

"Dog-gone that top!" he laughs. "That's the second hat I've had brushed off this week. I'm goin' to quit wearin' 'em after this." He lights a cigarette

and starts away. "I'll have 'er rigged by three o'clock, chief," he calls over his shoulder.

Every winter in the big sticks of the Pacific Northwest scenes similar to these are enacted, most of them without the audience of even the foreman. It is all in a day's work—part of the routine of the great logging camps, where the thrill of the battle with the elements and against odds is the only spice that is offered for the daily bitter struggle of sinewy men with nerves of steel.

Highclimbing is, of course, the top job of every camp. It is the goal of many youngsters who enter the logging camps; but, like every other position of its kind in the world, the youth who succeeds must have courage, coupled with reflexes that act with instantaneous accuracy.

It is the highest paid job of all in the timberlands. The risk accompanying it makes it so. Also, the highclimber is the hero of every camp. His duties are confined strictly to topping the big spar trees and rigging them with guys and blocks, and his work is limited to that above the ground. Helpers do the rest. If anything goes wrong on the top of the tree, he is called.

There is a considerable discrepancy in the dates and places claimed for the originating of highclimbing, but most old-timers agree that its birth was in the Pacific Northwest. There are at least a hundred old camps that insist highclimbing started in their outfits.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that it has had a rapid rise. About 1911 or 1912 were the years during which it was first used, according to most loggers; but these dates are given advisedly.

Highclimbing is the outgrowth of the extending of logging back to the more mountainous and irregular sections of the timberlands. When the trees were

first logged, there were plenty on the level lowlands, and ground logging—dragging the logs over the ground to the loaders—was satisfactory and speedy enough.

Later, however, when the timber on the level became scarce and the demand for lumber greater, it was found profitable to undertake to log the mountain-sides. One serious obstacle immediately confronted the operators. It was impossible to drag the logs as formerly over the rough terrain. When it was attempted they became jammed, and expensive cables were snapped like so much string. And when a log did arrive at the loader, it was badly battered on the end, and much good lumber was spoiled.

Therefore, it became necessary to find something that would remedy this. Finally, one operator conceived the idea of attaching a block to a high stump. By running the main line through this and then out to the logs, they could be hauled easily, because the height of the stump caused the front end to be lifted, thereby permitting it to pass over the obstacles.

But logging expanded. Production increased, and there was ever the driving demand for greater efficiency. Donkey engines were constructed with more power, and logs could be dragged in from longer distances.

There was only one thing to be done, and that was to go higher in the air with the main blocks. And the trees used for these, which were named spar trees, had to be climbed and topped. This was a risky job, and those who could do it were rewarded with higher pay.

At first, the ascent was made by cutting a notch in a tree and sticking in a pointed plank. Then the highclimber,

if he could be called such in those days, would stand on this board and cut a notch a little higher up and place another plank in that. And when he had climbed on this he would bring the first plank up and place it still higher.

But when it became necessary to haul logs across deep ravines, and the cry for higher spar trees was made, this method became obsolete.

Then the equipment used by telephone men was adopted. First, only spurs were donned by the daring pioneers of the art, and their belt ropes were nothing but a hemp cord, thrown around the tree and looped behind them. But after many loggers had suffered death by the knot coming undone, or the rope dropping down at a relaxed moment, the leather belt came into use, with its heavy rings and supporting width.

For a long time, even with these belts, the ordinary hemp rope was used, and many were the highclimbers that pitched to earth when a misjudged blow of their trimming ax severed this cord. Manufacturers next made a rope with a steel core, which is used at the present time. This steel core, however, is not invulnerable to a heavy blow from a swiftly descending ax, and accident reports of the big companies still contain brief accounts of highclimbers meeting their death when their belt line was cut.

The highclimber himself has gone through the metamorphosis of progress. Operators, seeking fewer accidents and greater efficiency, demand young men with clear heads and agility of muscle for this work. As a result, the profession to-day draws the best from the young men of the woods, and for that best the reward is high and the honor is great.





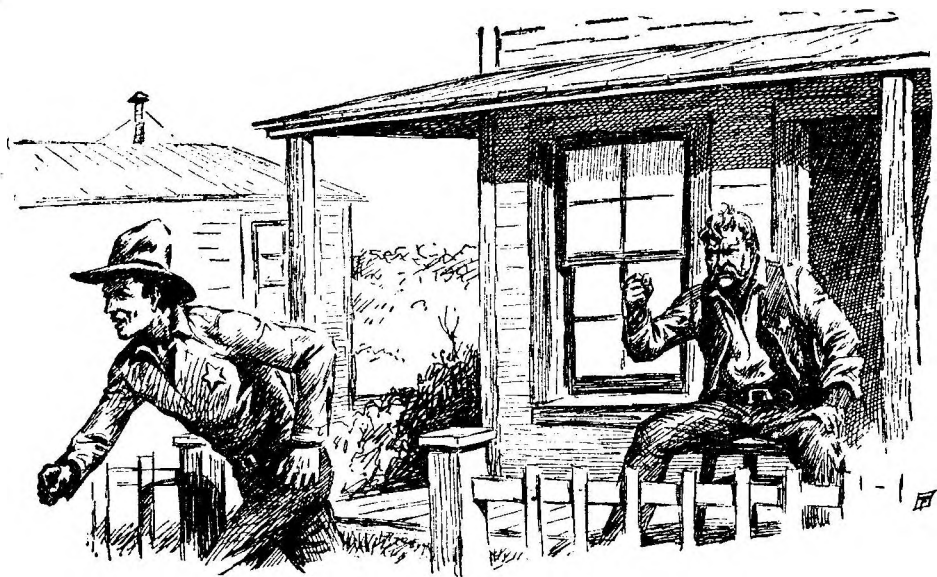
Three Singers

By C. Wiles Hallock

THERE was "Caliente" Charley, "Longhorn" Luke, an' "Buck the Kid"
Cuttin' loose high, wide, an' han'some up to Taos;
'Cause they've took 'em a vacation,
An' they aims to raise tarnation—
So they serenades around from house to house.
For their hides was full of licker, an' their souls was full of song;
An' the three of them emits a mighty whine—
So they yodels "Swanee River"
With a mournful, wailin' quiver,
An' that heartstring-tearin' hymn, "Sweet Adeline."

But it seems like Charley's tenor ain't exactly up to par;
'Cause he's half a tone too sharp—or else too flat—
So the Kid remarks sarcastic:
"Charles, yore voice is too elastic!
They's more music in the meowin' of a cat!"
"Them there words has all the earmarks of an insult!" Charley bawls.
"Didn't aim to knock no *cat*!" the Kid replies—
Waal, they bruised each other plenty—
Buck the Kid an' Caliente—
While their buddy Luke sets down an' softly cries.

"Are ye guilty or not guilty?" asks the magistrate, nex' morn,
Whar they took 'em fer disturbin' of the peace;
But the trio ain't replyin',
'Cause all three of them is tryin'
T' recall how they mixed up with the police.
Then ol' Longhorn, he remembered; so he told jest what occurred—
Sez the jedge: "Let's hear ye sing 'Sweet Adeline'!"
So they warbled off the ditty—
Sez his honor: "What a pity!
Buck was right! So, Charles, you'll pay ten dollars fine!"



Dead Men Do Tell Tales

By Ray Humphreys

Author of "Ring and Riders," etc.



HERE happened to be only two customers in the Second National Bank in Valverde that morning when the three bandits entered, unmasked and cool as cucumbers. The leader, a broad-shouldered, unshaven giant, barked out a crisp order:

"Everybody—hands up!"

The outlaw chieftain, as he spoke, flipped up his coat tails, and a pair of big six-guns whisked into sight to back up his command. In the meantime, the other two bandits had darted straight for the two teller's cages. George Tobin, in cage number one, looked into the muzzle of a gun.

"Shove out that dough, dang quick!"

George shoved obediently, seeing that he was looking death square in the face. He had been counting cash, preparatory to the day's business. The bank had

been open only a few minutes. Harold Popham, the bank patron who had been at George's window, had been shoved aside by the catlike gunman.

"All of it—all of it!" ordered the gunman, briskly.

"I had passed out a bunch of silver and a lot of five and ten dollar bills, purposely overlooking a batch of fifty and one hundred dollar bills at my elbow." Tobin later told Marshal Andy Reynolds and his deputy, "Slim" Baird, "but when the tough hombre demanded all of the dincro, I didn't hesitate—I shoved it all out!"

The gunman, with one swoop, swept the currency into a canvas sack. Meanwhile Todd Walker, teller number two, was having his own troubles. When the gunman who had rushed his cage demanded that he "push that money out," Todd pretended to fumble with the cash drawer, and as he did so he

managed to touch off the electric button that set a big gong banging in hoarse alarm outside the bank. Then he shoved out the cash in his cage. The bandit at his window, hearing the gong clanging, hesitated.

"Grab up that dough!" whooped the leader, backing toward the door, and glaring at the gunman at Todd Walker's window. "Too late now to get chicken-hearted! All your fault, anyway, that smart-Aleck set off the alarm! Bring him along, Jim, you hear? Bring him along—hurry up, now, both of you!"

Jim brushed his loot into a sack.

"Come on you, out of that cage!" he cried, with an oath, to Todd Walker. "We'll teach you tricks! Out of there, hands up!"

Walker had no choice but to obey. He stepped back out of his cage, came around behind it, and passed through the small half-door that let him into the bank lobby. All three robbers were backing toward the front door now. The fellow who had stuck up Walker was extremely nervous. He probably figured that his blunder in failing to prevent Walker from sounding the outside alarm would cost him dear. The gong was still hammering away. The bandit leader, guns swinging to cover all in the bank, shouted at Walker.

"Come up here, smarty—come on up here!"

Walker did—seeing that four guns seemed to be trained on him. As he reached the door, the bandit leader jammed one of his guns into its holster. At the same second he seized Walker by the shoulder and pushed him through the door, using him as a screen from any menace that might be waiting outside. The nervous bandit who had held up Walker followed; the third bandit backed out slowly, shouting a last warning as he slipped through the door.

"Don't nobody dare budge out of here—we'll shoot!"

There was plenty of excitement outside, too. A fourth bandit, who had been waiting with the outlaws' horses, had already opened fire on "Doc" Dawson, a retired cattleman who had heard the alarm and had opened up with a six-gun. Both the outlaw and Dawson were too excited to shoot well, so there had been no casualties. Men were running in from all directions, however. A rifle bullet from the vicinity of the Waldron Hardware Store took the bandit leader's hat off; the nervous bandit fired, and at that second Todd Walker, the bank teller, dropped like a stone. Those inside the bank groaned aloud.

"Look! They've done for poor Todd!"

"Shot him down, in cold blood!"

The bandit leader, however, appeared to be unruffled. He picked the fallen Walker up as if he had been a fifty-pound sack of flour and swung him over a pony. The next second, in a rain of hot lead, the four bandits galloped around the corner, into Pecos Street. One lost a gun in the escape. The gang exchanged shots with a group of citizens clustered at the corner of Pecos and Lipan Streets, swung into Lipan, tore along for a block, cut through a vacant lot to Kalamath Street, then ducked into the river bottoms.

"They killed poor Todd Walker!" cried Jimmy Burke, president of the bank, as Marshal Reynolds and his deputy, Slim, tore up, a few minutes later. "They shot him dead and carried off his body! They took about two thousand five hundred dollars in cash from the two tellers' cages! The big alarm going off scared them from trying the vault, which was open."

"Horses, everybody!" sang out Marshal Reynolds, wasting no time in words. "Get your horses and guns and be back here inside of ten minutes, everybody! Slim, write down the descriptions of these killers! All right, Burke, you stay

here—and talk—hard! Tell me the story like you were telegraphing it at a dollar a word!"

Whereupon Burke immediately told his story briefly.

"They came without warning. We had no chance to fight back. Todd Walker, though, managed to start off the gong. It cost him his life! They used him as a shield to get out of the door. Then he was shot! The nervous bird who had been at his window did it. Todd never moved after he fell, but the leader tossed him on his horse and then they all rode off. The leader was a six-footer, muscular, black-whiskered—hadn't shaved for a week. The guy who shot Todd looked like a youngster, light, about Todd's build; the other inside man was heavier and older, around thirty-seven, I'd say; the outside bird was too far off for me to see well—but he had whiskers!"

Slim, scribbling like mad, got the descriptions, vague as they were, down on the back of a card. The posse began assembling.

"Come on, men!" roared Marshal Reynolds, pivoting his big black horse. "Let's go! Stragglers can follow later. Burke, you stay here and send the boys as they came up out to follow us. How many have we now? One—two—three—five—eight—twelve—fifteen——"

"About twenty-two, all told, boss!" yelled Slim.

"Come on then, and remember, we're dealing with desperate hombres!" cried the marshal, leading off. "They've got Todd Walker still with them, seemingly—maybe he isn't dead yet and they mean to use him for a shield. Maybe they figured he recognized them and they aren't taking chances on letting him stay behind to get well. Dead men tell no tales, you all know. Now, we have got to get them—you hear that, boys?—we have got to get them!"

There was an ominous rumble from the little posse.

"Come on, then!" whooped the marshal, spurring on.

The outlaws had twenty minutes' start. Slim and the marshal, riding ahead of the posse, had no trouble tracking the bandits' trail as far as the Cherry Creek River bottoms. But there the hoof marks of the four horses led straight into the water—and a quick survey by Slim, who splashed across the river, showed that the gang had not emerged from the water on the opposite bank, at least not within a couple of hundred yards of the point where they had entered the stream. The marshal called a halt.

"In a case like this, we have to make haste slowly!" he commanded, rising in his stirrups so that all the posse could hear. New riders were galloping up from the rear. The marshal now had fifty men or more. "Slim, take some of the boys and go down the river until you meet some one who can positively say whether the bandits went that way! Tom Egan, take Eddie Owens, and Doc Healey and 'Red' Feeney, and Louie Flax, and go up the river, as far as Annie Ryan's house—see if she saw anything of them in that direction! She doesn't miss anything passing her place. The rest of us will wait here. Hurry!"

Fifteen minutes later, Egan and his party came tearing back.

"Yes—four men dashed by Annie's place, on the south bank, going like blazes!" reported Egan breathlessly. "There's no doubt it was the robbers, because one was carrying an extra fellow in his arms—that was poor Todd Walker—and——"

Marshal Reynolds' eyes blazed.

"Heading for the Red Rock Park country," he shouted, "and with a good jump on us! Egan, you wait here until Slim and his bunch come back and then bring them on after us! The rest of you boys follow me! Every minute counts! If that gang gets to the Red

Rocks, they can play hide and seek with us for three or four days, and if, by chance, Todd Walker is still alive, we have got to do what we can in the way of a rescue. Come on!"

The marshal and the posse clattered off, up the river. A few minutes later, Slim and his party came thundering back up the river, met Egan, and started in pursuit of the main body. The two forces combined again at the Wettengel ranch, where they found Ed Wettengel, the ranch owner, with a rifle in his hands.

"Some one in town telephoned me a gang of cutthroats might pass here," cried Wettengel, as the posse pulled up, "so I got my rifle and planted myself out here in the road, plumb eager to dispute passage with them! I just got in two shots before they rode over me. They surprised me by coming out of the brush to the left there. I threw myself flat as they fired—otherwise, I guess I'd be tuning up a harp in the clouds right now!"

"You sure had your nerve with you!" grunted the marshal. "Which way did they go from here, Wettengel—down through your back pasture, or along the ridge, and was one horse carrying double?"

"There was no horse carrying double!" exclaimed Wettengel, positively. "Four horses, covered with lather, and four men! They cut through the pasture, marshal, heading toward Red Rocks and——"

"Come on!" shouted the marshal, but Slim, cutting through the mass of horsemen, stopped him. "Wait a second, boss!" begged Slim. "I'm thinking that patch of brush might give us a clew! If Wettengel saw only four men, they must have dropped Todd Walker."

The marshal signaled for more delay.

"Slim figures they've dropped Walker," yelled the marshal, "maybe in the brush. He may be in bad shape. We had better look into that. They'll beat

us to the Red Rocks sure, anyhow—and if Walker isn't dead, he may be able to give us some help by telling us what they said. Anyway, he needs attention."

The posse scattered and charged the brush forthwith. But it was only after they had penetrated the rough country for almost three quarters of a mile that Tony Zarlengo, sharp-eyed cow-poke, let out a shrill cry.

"This way, fellows—quick!"

And there in a little clearing, the fuming posse soon clustered. The body of a man lay sprawled on the earth. The marshal, and Slim, and Eddie Owens, and Doc Healey, dismounted, but the man was beyond all human aid. The doctor ran practiced hands over him, but the crowd had already doffed their hats.

"Shot half a dozen times, at least!" reported Doc Healey softly. "Twice through the body—three times in the face. I—I kind of guess it is poor Todd, isn't it?"

Tom Brown, the only member of the bank force along, nodded.

"Yes," he said, "it's Todd! That's his hair, there, and his clothes! He wasn't dead, after all, when they took him away. They shot him to death here—in cold blood! I'll pay them back for that!"

"Todd was too much of a burden for them to lug along any farther," said Marshal Reynolds miserably. "Two or three of you boys get the body home. The rest of you——"

The marshal spurred off. The posse followed silently—all except Ralph Cummins, Ramon Fell, and "Squint" Reynolds, who remained with the body. The marshal gritted his teeth as he rode. He'd show the outlaws that a Valverde posse would give tit for tat in a matter like this! Once the bandits were sighted——

But they weren't. Night found the posse tired, horses played out, and no

luck. The four bandits had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened up and swallowed them. The marshal eventually sent Slim and Tom Egan out to round up the riders, and when they were all assembled, he aired his views.

"Boys, we haven't got a chance of finding those rats to-night. They've got a good hole to duck into, you can be sure of that. We have no food. Our horses are through. I figure those rats will stay holed up in the Red Rocks country here for several days at least. I think the best plan is to go home, send out telegraphic warning to Hillrose, Lupton, Greeley, Craig, and Eagle, to the south and west, in case they try to break through; and then, in the morning, come back here and start a real search—bringing extra horses, packing outfits and supplies so we can stay here a week, if necessary. What do you say to it, boys?"

"You're right, marshal!"

"We couldn't locate them to-night!"

"They can't get out of the country, anyhow!"

So the weary posse jogged back. Ed Wettengei, at his ranch, dished up a supper for the whole crew. He supplied several head of fresh saddle stock to replace the most jaded animals in the bunch. He was in accord with the marshal's plan.

"Why, those cookies have planned everything down to the last notch!" he declared. "Like as not, they've got a real camp in the Red Rocks, fortified and everything. If you don't know that country, you might as well try to find a minnow in a swamp! I know it, though, and I'll go back up there with you in the morning. Meanwhile, here's grub for those who feel in need of sustenance."

When the posse pulled into Valverde, it was nearly ten o'clock. The marshal, putting his tired black in the corral, turned to Slim with final instructions.

"You'd better turn in, now, Slim.

We've got to get an early start, and we've got a heck of a siege ahead of us. You'll need all the rest you kin grab off in the next four hours."

"I'm needing a lot of coffee," cut in Slim briskly. "I don't aim to go to bed to-night at all. I have plenty of ideas to kind of work out on this case, boss. I am not satisfied. I think I'll have a good look around the bank, for clews, and likewise see if——"

"Great grief!" exploded Marshal Reynolds hotly. "Can't you leave your danged sleuthing go hang when it's a dead open-and-shut case such as this is? This isn't the time for magnifying glasses and gumshoes—all we need is horseflesh and bullets. We know who did it and where they are. What more do you want?"

Slim cupped his hands to light a cigarette. The momentary glow of the match illuminated a face set in hard lines.

"I'm not sure of anything at all," he objected, tossing the match away. "Maybe that gang isn't where we think they are!"

The marshal opened his tired eyes in amazement.

"We tracked them to the Red Rocks country and we know they didn't double on us; and they can't get through the other side before morning, and the towns over there are warned and waiting," said the marshal grimly. "Those are facts and, as such, are better than all the fancy clews any one can work up his imagination. If you're going to stay up all night, you can ride and wake me up at three o'clock, so we can get going again by three-thirty—see?"

"Sure!"

"Good night, Slim!"

"Good night, boss!"

The marshal went home and went to bed forthwith, for he was tired and he sensed fully—or thought he did—what the morrow held for him. But Slim went straight to the Feeny Waffle

House and downed a number of cups of steaming coffee. Then he was ready for work. Borrowing a horse at the livery stable, he rode to the home of President James Burke, of the bank. He found Burke awake, figuring out the bank loss to the last penny.

"Burke," said Slim, "I guess we've got the bandits bottled up in the Red Rocks country. At least, the marshal says we have. I've got an idea that we don't know all about that job yet, however. I'd like to know what you know about Todd Walker?"

The banker started.

"I know the poor fellow is brave—and dead," said Burke sadly. "He had nerve enough to push the gong buzzer even if the robber did have a gat on him. They killed him for that! You don't mean to insinuate that Todd had any knowledge——"

"I want you to go to the bank with me and show me Walker's recommendations and anything else you've got on him," said Slim. "I am not making any accusations, but——"

"I am not going to any bank at this hour," said the banker sharply. "You may go, however—here are the keys! Hold them until morning—I think you are off on the wrong foot!"

Slim hesitated at the door.

"Did that robbery clean you out, Burke, or have you a lot of money left in the bank yet?"

"There's a point for you, Slim!" said the banker earnestly. "They didn't get the bank roll, after all. If Walker was in with them, he never would have pushed that buzzer, seeing he knew that we had about thirty-five thousand dollars in currency in the vault—the pay rolls for the Alamosa mining companies on the fifteenth. I figure the outlaws may have known of it, though—and would have got it if it hadn't been for poor Walker!"

Slim made no answer. Ten minutes later, he was in the big bank, alone.

With his flashlight, he had no trouble finding the personal record of Todd Walker in the file in the president's office, where Burke had told him he would find it. There was little there—a picture of the teller, his record from a Denver bank where he had worked before coming to the Second National in Valverde, and a number of letters of recommendation. Slim read them all carefully. Then he locked up the bank and returned to the marshal's office, going from there to the morgue, after making sure that the coroner was still there.

It was just eleven-thirty when Slim reached the home of Luke Parslow, on Inca Street. Luke was still up.

"Luke," said Slim, "I've got a whale of an idea. You've heard that old saying that criminals always return to the scene of their depredations, haven't you? Yes. Well, I've got a good hunch that those bank robbers are liable to appear down to the bank again to-night, and I was wondering if you are game to wait for them with me?"

Luke gasped in astonishment.

"Sa—a—ay, Slim, didn't we shag those pests clear into the Red Rocks no longer ago than this afternoon?" demanded Parslow. "Why would they come back so soon? They must have worn out their horses the same as we did, and they are running no chances coming back here——"

"That's just my idea—they'll figure they really are running no chances coming back here so soon," said Shorty. "I haven't time to argue, Luke; if you're afraid, or to tired——"

Luke Parslow's eyes blazed—as Slim knew they would.

"You wait until I get my coat on!" he said.

In much the same manner, Slim gathered up Barney Tierney, and Frank Campbell, and Bert Clark, and Eddie Moore, and several other dare-devils—and crack shots. They all scoffed at Slim's idea that the murdering bank

robbers might return to the scene of their late crime, but Slim paid no heed to their derisive remarks. He led his army to the bank and placed them inside, as he saw fit, and then he announced the final instructions.

"You boys better have your gats ready. Of course, I am not saying for sure that we'll have visitors, but we may. If we hear any one coming in, I'll switch on the lights when I think the proper time, and after that, you gun-slingers are in charge! Don't shoot blind, however, for old Burke may get nervous and come down to see if I left his keys in the door; or he may have duplicate keys and come in. Wait for the lights and be sure who our visitors are!"

After that the bank was silent again, except for the hoarse breathing of a few of the more excitable members of the little army waiting there. An hour passed and then another, and Slim himself was beginning to weaken when there was a noise outside. The next minute, there was the rasping of a key in the lock. The waiting men in the dark needed no warning from Slim to be alert. Some, behind the counters, rested their guns on the ledge and waited. Those who stood around the lobby stiffened, bringing their "rods" up to cover the door. It swung open and a number of dark shadows seemed to flit through the opening. The door closed—carefully—and at that moment, Slim switched on the lights that illuminated the lobby.

"Hands up—all of you!" he cried.

The visitors were taken completely by surprise. Three of the men lifted their hands. The fourth did not. Luke Parslow and Eddie Moore were about to drill this particular individual, when Slim cried out.

"Hello, Walker—so it's you!"

Walker didn't answer. He stood, stock-still, where the revealing light had caught him. In a twinkling, Slim's band

had swarmed up and disarmed the three men who had lifted their hands. Slim and Frank Campbell attended to Walker. They cut the rope they found binding his chafed wrists. Then they removed the gag that had held him mute. It was then that Walker let out a cry of delight.

"Thank Heaven, Slim, you're a smart one!"

"Luke," said Slim, "tie those three babies up tight! They've got plenty of nerve, and we aren't going to run any chances with them. We'll plant them down in the jail coop as soon as I have a little parley here with Walker. Reckon the boys will be glad in the morning when they hear that they don't have to ride out to get the outlaws at Red Rocks because the outlaws have come meekly into town to be caught!"

Slim's men crowded in closer after the captives were tied up.

"Todd, we thought you were dead! What happened?"

"Your twin is dead, Todd, down to the morgue!"

"How come they brought you back here, Todd?"

Todd Walker, the rescued teller, was so excited—and so happy—that he could hardly speak. He put out a hand to Slim.

"I was praying somebody would be smart enough to outguess those snakes, and my prayers have been answered, sure enough!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I'm not dead, but I would have been if this little surprise party hadn't been arranged here for us! I figured they would have killed me after they had made use of me. You see, they kidnaped me, and on the way out one of the bandits who had been shot in the get-away toppled off his pony and died. As he was about my size, and build, and complexion, the gang decided to dress him up in my clothes. They did. They then fired a few shots at the poor dead man's face, to kind of make identifica-

tion impossible, and then we tore on. They had fresh horses in the Red Rocks, and as soon as they found out that I had keys to the bank and to the vault and guessed I had the combination, too, they decided to swing on back in, get the whole works, and skin out for the Northwest, thinking the posse would be back to the Red Rocks bright and early to try to ferret them out—and find nothing but a few worn-out horses!"

The group in the bank gasped at the audacity of the plan.

"Well," said Slim, "that's nerve, sure enough! But there were a few things that happened that kind of gave me some thoughts on the subject. First off, one of the bandits lost a gun in the get-away from town this morning. That spelled just one thing to me—that one of them was badly wounded. Any tough nut who will hold up a bank unmasked isn't going to lose a gun through carelessness, I guessed. When we came upon the body of the dead man—up near Ed Wettengel's ranch—I noticed that he was badly shot in the face, making complete identification impossible. The boys all swore it was you, though, Todd, and I didn't have enough to go on then to make any argument on the matter.

"When we failed to catch up with these hombres in the Red Rocks this afternoon and the boss decided to come back home for the night, I put on my thinking cap, however. I made up my mind to investigate. I guess I gave old Burke, the president, the impression that I was suspecting you of being one of the gang, Todd, when I questioned him about you; but that wasn't it. He let slip that there was a lot more dough in the vault that the robbers didn't get, and that he thought both they and you knew it. I borrowed his keys to look up your personal record down here—and I found more than I had hoped to find. I found that Denver bank report on you, bearing your finger prints.

Now, it's like this, finger prints are my meat——"

Slim paused to grin at the staring bank robbers.

"I got my own outfit for printing from the office and took the prints of the dead man, compared them with the bank record prints, and satisfied myself that the dead man wasn't you. At your boarding house, I learned that you were known to faint at times, and that, to me, explained how you flopped at the get-away this morning. I guessed that the outlaws, knowing you had fainted, meant to use you as a shield in case of a pitched battle until their own gang member passed out and they hatched the scheme to use you to help them get the big dough here to-night. I decided that they would make use of you and your keys to make a stab at the thirty-five thousand dollars in the vaults and then clean out in a different direction, hoping, as you just said, Todd, that we would go back to the Red Rocks to look for them in the morning while they were streaking it for New Mexico!"

Todd Walker shook hands again with Slim.

"They would have bumped me sure, after this second robbery," he said, with tears in his eyes, "for dead men tell no tales, and I knew too much about them for them to ever let me live! I want to thank you once more, Slim, for being smart enough to outthink these brutes and thus give me a chance to see my wife and kiddies again!"

Slim smiled and shook hands and then his eyes strayed to the big clock on the wall. It was just twenty-five minutes after two o'clock. Slim whirled to face his men.

"Fellows, I've got to beat it up to Marshal Reynolds' house in a hurry!" he exclaimed. "Luke and you, Campbell, take these outlaws and stick them in the cooler. I'll be down there right soon!"

At the marshal's house, Slim pounded

a wild tattoo on the door. The marshal, yawning, opened it finally.

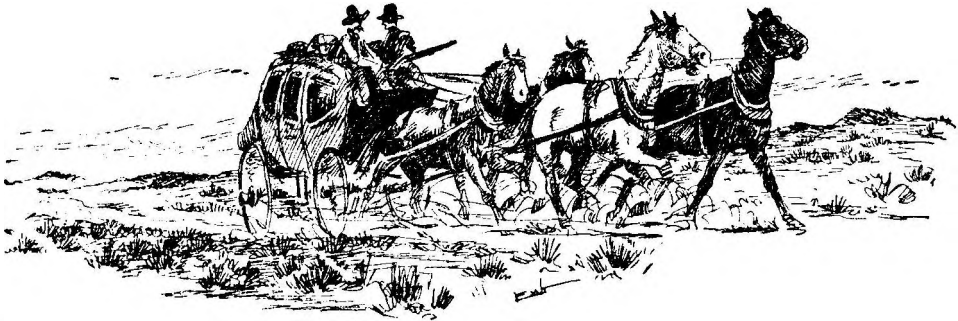
"What in blazes!" he growled, squinting from Slim to his watch, which he held in his hand. "Why can't you let a body get what sleep he can? I told you, you keg head, to wake me up at three o'clock. It's just two-thirty now. You've done me out of half an hour's sleep, and me all in as I am! I've got a good notion——"

But Slim dodged the fist the marshal aimed at him.

"You don't understand, boss," he

cried, in protest, "I'm doing you a favor! I come up to tell you that the bandits are all in jail, nice and safe, so you don't have to get up at three o'clock in the morning to go riding out after them. You can go right back to bed, without any worries to bother you."

The marshal flung his watch as Slim fled down the path to the street. And the marshal didn't go to bed, either. Ten minutes later found him in the jail, shaking hands with Slim, and telling Slim's sleepy-eyed army how proud he was of his smart deputy.



In Next Week's Issue of Western Story Magazine

CAYENNE CHARLIE

By George Owen Baxter

"Cayenne" is a regular Baxter hero. An irresistible fellow, he carries all before him, and his adventures are as thrilling as his name.

WAITING NOOSE

By John Briggs

A short, sharp story that will set you wondering—what would I do?

MAKE IT HORSE STEALING

By Hugh F. Grinstead

The old-timers agree on one thing, and that was that three uncles were one too many for any girl.

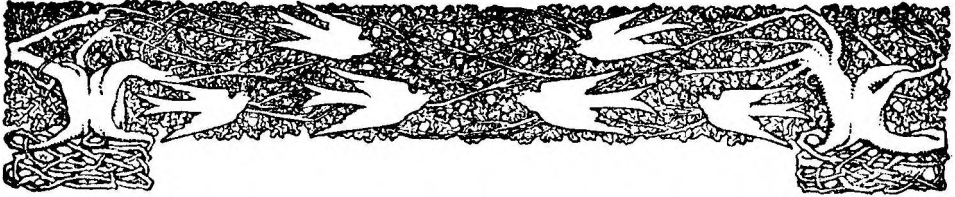
Also Features by

Max Brand
Russell A. Bankson

Frank Richardson Pierce
And Others

15c a Copy

At All News Stands



BIRDS OF THE WEST AND NORTH AMERICA

The Loggerhead Shrike

(*Lanius ludvicianus*)

WHAT a tremendous name for so small a ball of fluff! The loggerhead shrike sits on a tiny limb, a truly artistic color combination. It has a snow-white breast, a beautiful gray head and back, strikingly marked, with black-edged wings and tail, nicely set off by bands of white.

This bird is neither a songbird nor a bird of prey, although it has habits of each group. Its notes are few and not very melodious.

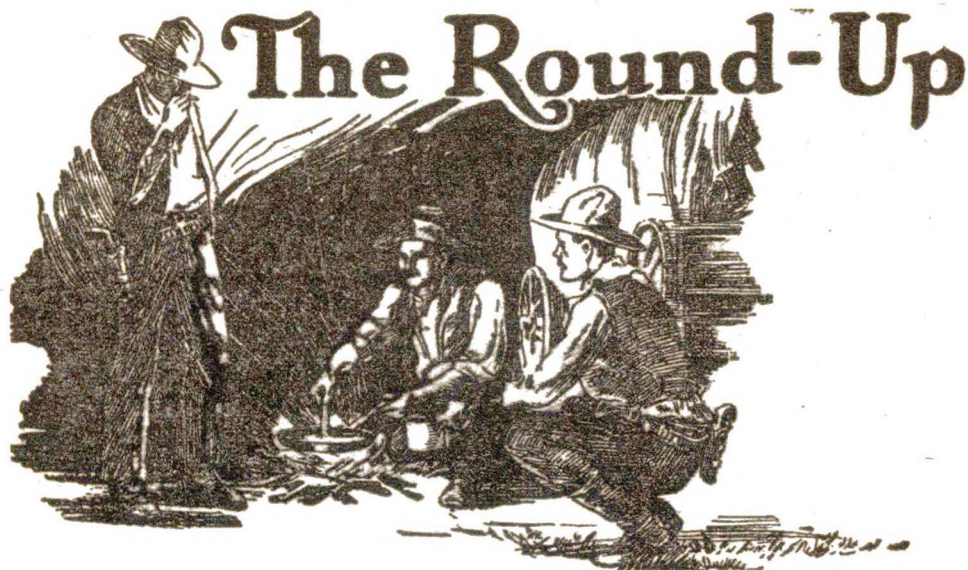
The toes of the shrike are sufficiently developed to aid it in procuring food in the form of small animal life upon which it preys. It is fond of grasshoppers, crickets, small lizards, and beetles, and even field mice. This bird has a curious way of placing its food in storage. A beetle may often be found sticking on a thorn where the shrike has placed it, and where it remains indefinitely, perhaps never used.

In winter and when food is scarce, the shrike resorts to attacking and eating small birds. Keepers of game farms attest to shrikes capturing young quail or newly hatched pheasants. The shrike's manner of getting food is not to hunt it, as many birds of this kind do, but to wait in seclusion until some unsuspecting morsel comes in view. The bill of the bird is heavy and the upper mandible terminates in a short daggerlike point which bends sharply downward over the end of the lower bill.

In some sections the shrike is called the French mocking bird. It is more abundant in the Southern and Southeastern States than in any other part of the country. Farm lands and open forests are favorite locations. Usually an isolated bush or small tree is chosen for a nest. During the mating season the shrikes are especially noisy. The nest is a substantial home, being made of twigs, weed stalks, bark, and grass, lined with chicken feathers or other soft substance. Four or five eggs are laid, white, covered with brown and lavender spots. After leaving the nest the young are fed by the parents for some time. The shrikes are brave birds, defending their nests against intruders with great fearlessness. They have even been known to attack a hawk or crow.

It is said that there are two hundred species of shrikes throughout the world. In America, there are only two, and they are often referred to as "butcher birds" because of their habit of hanging up dead fish or other small prey on thorns of trees, much as a butcher hangs up his meat. The larger of the two birds is called the Northern shrike and breeds throughout Canada and as far north as Alaska. It spends the winter in the United States as far south as California, Texas, and Virginia.

The smaller species is divided into four groups: The white-rumped, California, Migrant, and Loggerhead, the general habits of all being about the same.



FOLKS, here is a nice letter that Bob Case received from Leslie Sykes, No. 1765 West Broadway, Vancouver, British Columbia. Bob sent it on to us, and we found it so interesting that we're going to read it to you. So, here goes:

"DEAR CASE: In the first place, I want to tell you how much I enjoyed reading your serial, 'The Yukon Drive.' I know the southern Yukon fairly well, and it is a great treat to read a story that is so completely accurate in details and conditions.

"Having got that off my chest, the rest of my letter deals with a subject that I'm sure will be of interest to you.

"Shortly after the drive, on which your story is based, took place, another party set out from the more northerly part of Alberta, also with Dawson as their aim. They not only drove the cattle, but also fitted them with pack saddles, or, perhaps, judging from the yarns I've heard from their guide, I should say tried to.

"After I read your story, I wrote this man, Frank Gregory, of Millstream, Victoria, British Columbia, asked him if I might mention his exploit, and re-

quested further details of it. I will quote from a letter just received from him:

"The outfit which I joined at Fort Saint Johns on the Peace River, belonged to Lang and Mansfield, of Los Angeles. It comprised thirty-four head of prime Edmonton oxen and eighteen horses, and was billed through to Dawson via the Peace River. This was the year after the great rush. We took the Laurier Pass, head of the Peace River, and the outfit died of hardship in the northern Cassiar country.

"The snow fell to the depth of fourteen feet and three inches that winter in this very rough and wild country. Many of the animals were hamstringed and partly eaten alive by the great wolves to be found in those high valleys.

"We had followed the Peace and Finlay Rivers on the east side of the mountains, and the Black Mud and Dease on the west. The various and considerable streams running into these rivers gave me, as guide, many a mean time finding fords. Only three oxen and six horses survived the winter, and they were left behind when our party

Missing Page

Missing Page



Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

FROM Benito Pass to Stone Canyon, north and south, and from the canyons of Coalinga to Priest Valley, east to west, there is a range land that is trekked by the old-timers of the Fresno and the Monterey country of California.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Here in Priest Valley, stretching to the west of us, we have the biggest oak in the world—and any one who is welcome on Jim's ranch can take the measurements—the old oak is forty-five feet in circumference at the butt, thirty-six feet around at man's height, and is one hundred and sixty-five feet tall. The branches are broken off by age, which is estimated at many hundreds of years. And on my own ranch, folks, in this country east of Priest Valley, and among the canyons out of Coalinga, is said to be the largest jack pine on earth. The jack is fifteen feet in circumference at the butt, and two hundred and fifteen feet high. And, folks, right within an easy trek of our ranch in one of the canyons we have the largest oil well that's known.

This is a grand country, folks, when the canyons and forests are free from forest fires. Last summer and fall was the time we folks fought forest fires day and night, and they came pretty thick and fast. Yes, it's a sure-enough gorgeous country when it's not being swept by the raging forest fires.

I left the ranch at five the other morning, folks, and had the good luck to watch a bunch of full-grown turkeys fighting a rattlesnake of the flathead, copper type. They were all running circles around the snake until it moved. Then they ran in and pecked at the rattler, jumping away to resume the circling when the rattler coiled. All this while they were whistling and squawking at the tops of their voices. But as I couldn't stay there until the battle was finished, I decided to make sure of their work. So I stepped in and made short shift of the rattler.

This is a hunter's paradise, folks, and a fine country when there are no forest fires to fight and no feuds going on between the old-timers of these hills. I'll be glad to tell you folks about this Fresno and Monterey country of California.

WHITE WOLFER.

Care of The Tree.

Bronc breaking.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I was visiting at the ranch of an uncle some years ago when all hands got to talking about horseflesh. Uncle remarks that there was never a balky horse that couldn't be cured, and shortly after that uncle had a chance to prove his saying. Another horse was needed for the fall work, and one morning we found ourselves admiring one of the most beautiful specimens of horseflesh that ever wore a shoe. As the week wore on, every one was too busy with the fall work to note the absence of the new arrival. But

when Sunday morning came and uncle failed to respond to the breakfast bell, we decided to go in search of him. We went out to the corral, and there, in the center of a large circle, whip in hand, driving at breakneck speed, was uncle, with a long lead line hitched to our largest gray mule harnessed up with tugs and single tree, to which was tied the largest log chain on the place, the other end around the neck of our newest piece of horse-flesh. We took our departure, knowing uncle too well to interrupt him at this undertaking. At three o'clock we made him a nice breakfast, and all hands gathered round to hear the story. It was a short one. "Well, when I have a job on my hands," uncle said, "I always do it right then and there, and I did. This hoss sure was a mountain to move when I started in on her."

Afterward I heard him tell of the mare being the best horse on the place, and she sure was ready to go at the sound of a chain.

M. M. QUIGG.

811 Rives Strong Building, Los Angeles, California.

Homestead seeker.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I am interested in the West and I'm aiming to locate there as soon as possible. I'd like The Hollow Tree folks to give me as much information as they can on New Mexico. Who-all can tell me about homesteading in New Mexico?

BEN CARTRETT.

Route 1, Box 107, Bristow, Oklahoma.

Looking for a camping pard.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I'd like to get in touch with some young hombre who would like to plan a camping trip in the spring. Yep, I am at home in the great outdoors, folks, and am looking forward to the spring thaws and the wide, open spaces.

JACK BURKINSHAW.

3918 McGraw Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

Lumberjack.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Although at the present I'm a lumberjack, I've turned my hand to almost everything, and although most of my time has been spent in the Lone Star State, I am sure familiar with about a dozen of the Western States and am not a stranger in Mexico. As for the countries across the big pond, I can tell you-all a little how the Rock of Gibraltar looks from the aft deck of an ocean-going freighter, and can tell some about

the home town of Columbus. And to cap it off I can tell you-all how good you feel when the orders are given fore and aft to tie up to the docks of the good old U. S. A.

I am now up in the cold Sierras, folks, and would like some of the pencil pushers, young and old, to drop me a line.

PAT ASKEW.

Tuolumne, California.



Among the canyons out of Coalinga and in the Priest Valley country of California there are stomping grounds familiar only to the old-timers of the West. Wear your friend-maker badges, folks, and meet these old-timers of the Fresno and Monterey country.

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to The Hollow Tree Department, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you either the pin style or the button for the coat lapel. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.

Queenslander.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I've been all over Queensland, in the northeast of Australia, and I've been on lots of sheep and cattle stations. No, we aren't ranchers, but we have plenty of ranching stations here in Australia, I can tell you.

I'm only sixteen, but when I'm two years older I'm going to join the navy. My brother is a cadet, and I have three uncles in the Australian navy. I would like to hear from some of you boys over on the other side of the water. I'm all for the United States, although I'm a true sticker for Australia and Scotland.

ALEX. ROSS.

19 Constance Street, Valley, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Hidivide.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Although Hidivide is just a little jumping-off place here in northeastern Wyoming, it is our home, and where our ranch is located. I herded sheep on my dad's upper ranch this last year. I'm fifteen. My sister, Dorothy, who is only fourteen, has herded some, and Glenn, who is only eleven, herded part of the time. Yep, when I herd,

I herd alone, but when my younger brother or my sister are on watch they always have some one with them. Dorothy doesn't like to herd sheep, and neither does Glenn; but Irvin, who is only seven, often goes with them, and he is quite a young sheep-herder.

We will all be glad to get letters from the boys and girls of the Gang.

DAAPHNE SPENCER.

Hidivide, via Lawner, Wyoming.

North Arizona country.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I wonder if you-all would help me make some new friends? I have left my wise little pony on the ranch and have come to the teachers' college in Flagstaff. And I am lonely. I will burn up dozens of candles, if necessary, to get all the letters answered. Flagstaff, folks, is in the heart of Arizona's wonderland of scenic beauties. My home is in the southern part of the State, where I spent most of my twenty years. I have traveled in New Mexico, too.

ELLORA McLAUGHLIN.

Morton Hall, Flagstaff, Arizona.

"Here's a letter from a lonesome nineteen-year-old señorita 'way out here in the eastern part of Washington. I want Pen Pals, folks, from all over, but especially from the mountains and big woods. And I want you-all to write with the idea that you will continue for a while, and not stop after the first letter or two. Now, folks, all of you write to me." This hopeful new Gang Sister is Betty Harlan, 2808 West Fifteenth Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

"As you see by my address, folks, I am a resident of Brighton, England. I would like to request that some of you boys of about sixteen or seventeen write to me. I am sixteen myself, and have lived in England all my life." This new member, folks, is Ernest Funnell, 37 Regent Street, Brighton, England.

"I've traveled quite a bit and wonder if there's some hombre who would care to write to far-away Hawaii. I was born in west Texas, and worked on a ranch until ten years ago. Then I got the travel craze and began my trek. I've visited almost every State in the Union,

touched a bit of both France and England, been in Canada, South America, Porto Rico, Panama, ol' Mexico and now the Hawaiian Islands. Perhaps some of you folks would like to know about these places. I'll guarantee an answer to each and every hombre who writes. So let's go, pardos." W. Neil "Tex" Dillon's address is Eleventh Tank Company, Schofield Barracks, Honolulu, Hawaii.

"We are two girls from Dakota. We like to ride, and we are anxious to learn about the West, its ranches, and cow-girls. We are collecting all the cowboy ballads we can get, and would like to have folks send us copies of the songs they have. We will exchange copies in return. We will soon be sixteen, folks." These girls are Margaret Buehholz and Florence Schopen, Harrold, South Dakota.

"I was raised in the West and came to New York City only a short time ago. I have been lonesome ever since, so I'm sending out a plea for Pen Pals. When I head West again, folks, which I hope will be soon, I shall make El Paso, Texas, my destination. I'd like to hear from some of the Texans, especially from those around El Paso. I'm twenty-three, folks," says LeVora Slater, whose address is 171 West Twenty-third Street, New York City.

Earl Wilmoth, Box 402, Elkin, North Carolina, is a lonely boy of fifteen who would like to hear from anybody in the Western part of the United States. It will be a red-letter day for Earl if one of the old cow-punchers writes to him.

"I live in the far western part of Pennsylvania and am hunting some folks to write to. I want to hear from folks in all parts of the globe and will answer every letter I receive." This hombre is Charles Fish, 1133 Eleventh Street, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO GET THERE

by
John North



It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

NOT so many months ago there was a big jollification out in Tombstone, Arizona, when that famous "bad town" of the Wild West celebrated its fiftieth birthday. Things were mighty lively during the three days when this old mining camp relived its Helldorado, and a lot of folks trekked out that way to participate in the events. We reckon some folks who didn't get there read about the golden jubilee and, judging from the queries we've received lately, that made 'em want to journey out to the Baby State.

Nor do we blame 'em, for Arizona has much to offer in the way of unusual sights, as Ken G., of Tulsa, Oklahoma, has discovered. "I'm planning on taking an auto trip out to the Southwest some time soon, Mr. North, and I'm especially interested in seeing the Wonderland of Rocks out in Arizona. What can you tell me about this spot? Just where is it located, and how does one get there? Would it be possible to camp there and hike over the region?"

Needless to say, we are mighty glad

to hand on to Ken all the facts in our possession about this scenic attraction. The Wonderland of Rocks, which takes its name from the varied and fantastic shapes assumed by the giant rock structures that dominate the district, is certainly well worth a visit. Located in the southwestern section of Arizona, about thirty miles distant from Willecox, the vast area of sculptured rocks stands out as one of the finest examples of nature's handiwork known to man. It was formerly known as "Rhyolite Park," but its name was changed to the Wonderland of Rocks just prior to its establishment as a national monument in April, 1924.

The area is located on the west side of the Chiricahua Mountains in Bonita Canyon and its tributaries, Rhyolite and Pickett Canyons. It comprises in all approximately twenty-five square miles, and we would advise Ken to spend at least two or three days on his sight-seeing trip through the monument. He need not fear being bored, for there is something new, different, and strange

to be seen along almost every foot of the trip.

Ken can make the trip to the Wonderland of Rocks from either Willcox or Douglas by way of Faraway Ranch in Bonita Canyon. Horses for the park trip can be obtained at this point. If Ken wishes to camp and hike he will find a camp ground about two miles beyond the ranch. From either Willcox or Douglas shady trails lead through Bonita and Rhyolite Canyons into the very heart of the Wonderland.

As one enters the park he is greatly impressed by the strange and fascinating models that rear their heads over the surrounding domain. Overshadowing the camp ground is the mighty pipe-organ rock, guarded by an immense ape which crouches above the canyon. The Garden of the Gods at the foot of Pikes Peak in Colorado has one balanced rock, while the Wonderland of Rocks has literally hundreds. The Top is the name that has been given to the most remarkable example of balanced rock in the Wonderland. It is stupendous in size, twenty feet at the top, twenty-five feet in height, and weighs one thousand and eighty tons. It balances on a base of three and one half feet, and to the casual observer looks as if it were ready to fall at any moment. On the contrary, however, scientists declare that it will remain in its upright position probably for centuries.

Close by this attraction are the mighty hammer and the anvil, while Rhyolite Rock is the perfect profile of a woman's face carved in stone. In other places are to be seen the sheep, the mushroom, the bull, Uncle Wiggly's duck, and the mighty Totem Pole. In still another part of the park, Ken will find a natural bridge, which adds interests to the scene. Altogether, the Wonderland of Rocks is one of the outstanding attractions of southeast Arizona.

But although the Baby State is rich in scenic beauty, it has other things to

offer, among which are a fine climate and many industrial opportunities. It is this latter combination that is luring Bill D., of Duluth, Minnesota, out to the Southwest. "I find that I have to move to a milder climate, Mr. North, on account of my wife's bad health, and I have been considering the town of Bisbee, Arizona. Can you tell me something about the altitude, climate, and business opportunities out that way? As I understand it, mining is the main industry. That is one reason I'm interested, as I've had experience along this line and think I might land a job."

Bisbee has an altitude of fifty-three hundred feet above sea level, which gives it a rare atmosphere and accounts for its cool summers, while its southern latitude and its surrounding mountains make for mild winters. Temperature rarely goes higher than ninety-eight degrees or lower than twenty degrees, and the humidity is very low.

This Arizona town is located seven miles north of Bisbee Junction on the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Bill will find a modern motor bus waiting at the junction to whisk him and his wife to Bisbee. On the way they will pass through the town of Warren, about three miles south of Bisbee and its residential district, also through the town of Lowell, a bustling little place about halfway between Warren and Bisbee. If Bill is traveling by auto he will find Bisbee on United States Route No. 80, which is the official government route from Savannah to San Diego.

Bill will get the best view of Bisbee by approaching it from the historic town of Tombstone. There is a fine paved road from Tombstone to the foot of the Continental Divide where one encounters a splendid hard-surfaced road, which winds around through a canyon leading to the top of the divide, an elevation of six thousand feet. From here you gradually drop down to the city of Bisbee. We'll bet Bill will never

forget his first view of the city from the top of the divide, for it lies spread out before the visitor, an impressive sight in daytime, and a veritable wonderland of lights at night.

The pavement begins again at the foot of the divide, and runs for two miles down Tombstone Canyon where it becomes Main Street in Bisbee. The city spreads out along two canyons—Tombstone and Brewery Gulch. Stores line the two streets, and the residences are perched up on the hillsides behind the stores, sometimes five and six deep and in most cases are reached by long flights of concrete steps.

The population of the Bisbee district, that is to say Bisbee proper, Lowell, and Warren, is about eighteen thousand. Between three thousand and thirty-five hundred men are employed directly in mining operations, and about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars is distributed in monthly pay rolls. The Bisbee mines have the reputation of being among the safest metal mines in operation.

A great many folks prefer to live in Warren, although their jobs are in Bisbee. This is very easily managed, as Warren is only three miles from Bisbee and is connected by motor busses and a paved road. The canyon spreads out when it reaches Warren, forming a basin surrounded by mountains, and here Bill will find many of the best homes in the district, as well as a park with big shade trees and plenty of grass.

And now before our enthusiasm for Arizona and its attractions runs away with all our space we must answer the queries of F. K. O., of Lincoln, Ne-

braska, who is interested in a certain town in the Northwest. "What can you tell me about the town of Omak, Washington, Mr. North? Is lumbering the principal industry? How large is the town, and what are the opportunities for outdoor recreation? In fact, I'd like all the information you have about this place."

The city of Omak is the center of an important fruit, dairy, and poultry farming district, and is also an important industrial town. The white pine lumber mill and box factory, located here has a pay roll of over six hundred thousand dollars and the product of the mighty forests which lie back of the nearer hills is cut, manufactured, and shipped by this establishment to practically every part of the United States.

The city has a population of over fifteen hundred and is up to date in every respect. There is a fine tourist park with a golf course adjacent. There are churches, well-stocked stores, a theater, and two good bathing beaches. Opportunities for outdoor recreation are numerous. Many interesting and scenic trips may be made around Omak, chief among which are Concunully and the Meadows, which lie at an elevation of forty-five hundred feet. F. K. O. will be interested also in driving among the thriving fruit orchards on the bench lands and visiting the packing houses where the famous Omak apples are packed and shipped to the distant markets of the world.

Lack of space is cutting short any further remarks, but we shall be glad to tell interested readers where additional information may be secured.



MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," or return, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

BURROUGHS, MYRTLE.—Last heard from in Portland, Oregon, in September, 1928. Buddy is dead, and I am very lonesome. Please write to Happy, care of this magazine.

ABRAMS, HERMAN HOFFMAN.—Locomotive engineer. Last heard from in the Railroad Hospital, at Agua, Caliente, convalescing from injuries received in wreck of Mexican Central passenger train, about 1910. His mother is old and would like to hear from him. Information appreciated by Mrs. Lydia Dale, 1132 East Eighty-fourth Place, Los Angeles, California.

A. E. C.—We have gone back to Cleveland. Baby talks about you all the time. We still love you. Please come home or write to Mother, Cleveland, Arkansas.

CRAMM, GEORGE W.—Born in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, about thirty years ago. Six feet tall, dark-brown hair and eyes. Left Chatham, five years ago, with a Canadian barometer excursion to the Canadian West. Information appreciated by his sister, Evelyn Cramm, care of E. Nelson, 1248 Parent Avenue, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

LESTER C.—Please write to your sister, Rival C., care of this magazine.

PELKEY, LEONARD, and RHODA VELELA.—Last heard from in Vancouver, British Columbia. The son and daughter of James H. Pelkey. Information appreciated by their brother, LeRoy Henry Pelkey, Box 797, Monroe, Louisiana.

ALBERT, JOSEPH FREDERICK.—Five feet six inches tall, weighs one hundred and eighty pounds, dark-brown hair and blue eyes. Last seen in Washington Park, Illinois, in November, 1921. Lived for some time in St. Louis, Missouri. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Annie Butler, 2247 North Sixty-first Street, Washington Park, Illinois.

COUCH, RAYMOND D.—Born in Clayton, New York, March 27, 1881. Last heard from in Portland, Oregon, in 1913. Information appreciated by his nephew, Raymond Couch, Halesite, Long Island, New York.

EASTER, DANIEL GREEN.—His mother, Mrs. B. E. Sims, died November 9, 1929, and we need his assistance in straightening things out. Information appreciated by Louis Silberman, 311 Watts Building, Birmingham, Alabama.

MORGAN, WALTER V.—Mother is ill and needs you. Please write to Edna Thompson, Holbrook, Arizona.

GAYHAM, RAY, BLANCHE, and HAZEL.—Left Prairie Grove, Arkansas, about twelve years ago. Information appreciated by Charles Hartje, 832 S. A. Street, Arkansas City, Kansas.

MONTGOMERY, JAY.—Fifty-five years old, dark hair and complexion. Last seen nine years ago. Believed to be in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Information appreciated by an old friend, Madge Barrier, Box 105, Luddy, Oklahoma.

JOE or CHARLES.—Remember Clinton, Oklahoma? Please write to Taylor, care of this magazine.

CHARLES.—I have done my best for the children. If you cannot help them, they will have to be put in an asylum. Please write to Pauline, care of this magazine.

ANDERSON, EDWIN C.—Twenty-nine years old. Five feet eight inches tall, gray eyes, dark hair. Last heard from in St. Mary's, Idaho. Mother is ill and worried about him. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Selma H. Borg, Route 4, Valley City, North Dakota.

McBRIDE, or MacBRIDE, NETTIE.—Left her home, in Chesterfield County, Virginia, about twenty-four years ago. Had three brothers—William, Perry, and Richard—and two sisters—Aila and Mary. Information concerning her or her descendants appreciated by her niece, Ruth Louise, care of this magazine.

BOWLING, CHARLES EVERETT.—Thirty-five years old. Last seen in Brodhead, Kentucky, in December, 1918. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Lizzie Metcalf, Brodhead, Kentucky.

BEAVER, ADA BELLE.—Last heard from in 1920. Please write to your brother, Henry, care of this magazine.

BEAVER, ALICE.—Last seen in 1917. Please write to your brother, Henry, care of this magazine.

BEAVER, ARTHUR.—Twenty-six years old. Last heard from ten years ago. Information appreciated by his brother, Henry, care of this magazine.

SMITH, GEORGE.—Formerly of San Pedro, California. A brother of William Smith. Last heard from five years ago. Do you remember your friends, Edith, Jeanette, and Irene? Please write to Mrs. Stanley Norcavage, 75A Woodward Street, San Francisco, California.

NORCAVAGE, STANLEY.—Last heard from in Jackson, Michigan, in 1928. Information appreciated by his wife, Mrs. Stanley Norcavage, 75A Woodward Street, San Francisco, California.

CLAUDE.—Mother is seriously ill. Please write to your brother, Austin Merriam, 661 Gifford Street, Syracuse, New York.

PIOWS, MRS. NELLIE.—Last seen in Hepworth, Ontario, Canada, nine years ago. Information appreciated by Wilfred Piows, care of Frank Kennedy, Tara, Ontario, Canada.

NOTICE.—In 1902 a wooden railroad bridge was built across Caney Fork River at Buffalo Valley, Tennessee. Would like to hear from any one who worked on this bridge. Address Mrs. Andrew J. Moss, Box 65, Bridgeport, Alabama.

JONES, EVERETT S.—Important. Please write to your sister, E. L. H., care of this magazine.

BELMORE, RICHARD.—Anxiously waiting for more details. Please write to Anna Nelson, 3415½ Whittier Boulevard, Los Angeles, California.

OWEN, JOHN M.—Last heard from in Red Oak, Oklahoma, in October, 1928. Please write to Florence P., of Coffeyville, care of this magazine.

CARR, ELLIOT.—Five feet six inches tall, blue eyes, and black hair. Last heard from fifteen years ago, at which time he was working for the Pacific Steel Co., in California. Information appreciated by M. C. Carr, Route 2, Snow Hill, North Carolina.

BROWN, JAMES E.—Last heard from in Los Angeles, California, ten years ago. Believed to have gone to Illinois. Information appreciated by Charles J. Brown, R. R. 3, Box 205A, Bend, Oregon.

HAGEN, or WILLARD, LLOYD.—Please write to Wife, care of this magazine.

CULVER, JOHN.—Fifty-two years old. Blue eyes, black hair, slightly gray. Weighs about two hundred pounds. Last heard from in New York State, about two years ago. Information appreciated by his daughter, Elizabeth Culver, 200 East South Side Boulevard, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

SKINNER, EDWARD.—Your wife is very sick. Everything is O. K. Please come home or write to H. S., care of this magazine.

HUBER, E. G.—Discharged from the navy in 1928. Believed to be in Provo, Utah. Information appreciated by an old shipmate, Raymond King, Q. M. C., Fort Mills, Corregidor, Philippine Islands.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any sailor who was in Company D, training at San Diego, California, in 1927. Also from any sailor on submarine duty at Pearl Harbor, at Honolulu, in 1927 and 1928. Address Raymond King, Q. M. C., Fort Mills, Corregidor, Philippine Islands.

DREW, MRS. ELIZABETH, nee BRAYTON.—Last heard from in Waterbury, Connecticut, in June, 1919. Please write to Clyde Harrison, Route 3, Skohemish, Washington.

BOORZMA, CLARENCE JACK.—Six feet tall, light-brown hair, and dark-brown eyes. Last heard from in Chicago, Illinois, about four years ago. Forty years old. Information appreciated by James Selimos, 5160 St. Paul Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

MAC.—Please write immediately to Louis, care of this magazine.

BAKER, THEIRLE RALPH, and CHRIS STUMPF.—An old pal of yours has been seriously injured. Please write to Martin, care of this magazine.

MORRIS, BOBBIE.—I found a 1922-23 diary of yours in Rhyolite, the ghost city of Nevada. Please write to Phillip Russell, Route 9, Box 600, Phoenix, Arizona.

HARCOURT, MAJOR H. A.—Everything is O. K. Please write to L. S. R., Royal Palm Hotel, St. Petersburg, Florida.

KING, JACK.—Have you entirely forgotten Kaylla? Please come or write to L., St. Petersburg, Florida.

PARKS, EARL, and ADAMS, A. J.—Fifteen and forty-five years old respectively. Last heard from in Riverside, California. Information appreciated by Perry Parks, 311 East Ninth Street, Burbank, California.

MCGOY, VICTOR.—Last heard from in South Dakota. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Perry Parks, 311 East Ninth Street, Burbank, California.

NOTICE.—Some time in January, 1888, a baby girl, with light hair and blue eyes, was left by parties unknown at a doctor's office in Indianapolis, Indiana. She was taken to the orphans' asylum in Indianapolis, and later adopted from there. She is looking for her people. Information appreciated by Hazel Stegnall, 3932 West Seventh Street, Fort Worth, Texas.

BLISS, J. M.—Five feet five inches tall, dark hair and complexion, weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds. In 1922 was working for the United Piano Co., in Mattoon, Illinois. Information appreciated by Au Revolv, care of this magazine.

DUCOLON, FRED J.—Has been stationed on the U. S. S. "Maryland," the "Montana," and the "Wyoming." Have important news for him. Information appreciated by D. M. Goddard, 8718 Avalon Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

MAYTAGER, LYNCH.—Please write to Box 323, Miles City, Montana.

HAMLIN, LEE.—Light hair, blue eyes, about five feet six inches tall. Last seen in Detroit, Michigan, in October, 1929. Information appreciated by C. B., care of this magazine.

L. E. D.—Where are you? I need your help until I can look after myself. Please write to Mrs. Lee Dossou, care of this magazine.

BAUMIER, VICTOR.—Left home in St. Sophie, Quebec, Canada, in 1882. Last heard from in California. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Claudia Baumier Dupuis, 137 Court Street, Laconia, New Hampshire.

MOTHER.—Please write to Bobbio, Box 41, Howard, Colorado.

ATKINS, IRA.—Last heard from in Arlington, Texas. A steamfitter. Please write to your old friends, Slim and Irma, 155 Jefferson Avenue, Washington, Pennsylvania.

CANNON, PAUL D.—Twenty-five years old. Medium height, brown hair, and blue eyes. Formerly of Denver, Colorado. Was at one time in the army and stationed at Honolulu. Discharged in 1927. Last heard from in June, 1928, in Salt Lake City, Utah. Information appreciated by La Crosse Dillie.

SHERMAN, HENRY.—Twenty-one years old. Six feet tall, dark hair and eyes. Formerly of Ogilola, South Dakota. I love you and need you. Please write to your wife, Cresco, Iowa.

TONGUE, MARGARET.—Twenty-four years old. Left Norfolk, Virginia, for Kingston, New York, when she was six years old. Information appreciated by her mother, Mrs. Lora Condon, 135 Port Watson Street, Cortland, New York.

SCOTT, FRANK.—A reporter. Five feet five inches tall, blond hair, and blue eyes. Quite frequently in Bonner Ferry, Idaho. Information appreciated by Louis Bilcowski, Eden, Manitoba, Canada.

SHREVE, ALBERT HAROLD.—Born November 5, 1911, in California. Five feet eleven inches tall, blue eyes, fair hair, and weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds when he left home in Clarksburg, West Virginia, in April, 1928. His father is dead and his mother would like to hear from him. Information appreciated by Mrs. Emma Shreve, 1118 North Seventeenth Street, Clarksburg, West Virginia.

JOHNSTONE, RUTH.—Remember Mac, at Fort Douglas, in 1918? Please write to G. L. M., same address or care of this magazine.

MACKIE, MRS. JANE, nee SMITH.—Born in Scotland. Lived for some time in South Shields, England, and then went to Canada. Had one son, James Robert Smith Mackie, who was an engineer. Last heard from about twenty-five years ago. Information concerning her or her descendants appreciated by her brother, Robert John Minty Smith, 500 Chester Street, Topeka, Kansas.

LOGAN, RAYMOND.—Last heard from in Winslow, Arizona, in 1927. At that time he was cook in Riley's Lunch. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Glenn Sharp, 451 Scott Street, Springfield, Ohio.

GILDAY, JOHN.—Last heard from in the vicinity of Battle Mountain, Nevada. Have news to your advantage. Please write to Ed Hanover, care of "The Billboard," Chicago, Illinois.

LAFORREST, or LAFORRESTER, ERNEST.—Do you remember the time you came from Gateway to the Valley to see A. C., and the girl you were taken away from over five years ago? I have something interesting and important to tell you. Please write to Ida West, Dufur, Oregon.

BARNETT, TED.—Last heard from in Eugene, Oregon. Would like to explain a few things to you. Please write to your pal, G., Box 53, Dufur, Oregon.

ELLIOT, N. E.—Last known address was 418 South Gardner Street, Raymond, Washington. Information appreciated by an old friend, I. J. W., care of this magazine.

GARRISON, BILL.—Last heard from in Washington, about five years ago. Please write to Ida West, Dufur, Oregon.

SEVEY, HARVEY and JOSEPHINE.—Last heard from in Portland, Oregon. Harvey is nineteen years old, and Josephine about seventeen years old. Both have brown hair and blue eyes. Information appreciated by Ida West, Dufur, Oregon.

C. D.—I have news for you about the house. Please write to L. L., at the same address or care of this magazine.

NOTICE.—About 1870 a family by the name of Berg landed in New York City, from Sweden. For a time they lived with a German family by the name of Smith or Smythe, on the water front. Later they moved to Jersey City, New Jersey. When they left New York, they also left a young daughter with the Smiths. Information concerning this girl would be appreciated by her brother, John, care of this magazine.

HOLLINGSWORTH, LEE.—Was in Los Angeles during November, 1928. May be in Seattle, Washington. Information appreciated by Nat, Missoula, Montana.

JACK.—Remember the Central Louisiana State Fair, in 1924, held at Alexandria, Louisiana? Please write to "Honey Cake and Ice Cream," care of this magazine.

PETERS, MRS.—A nurse in Texarkana, Arkansas, in 1920. Information appreciated by Mrs. Margaret Lawless, Crystal Springs, Mississippi.

AQUADRO, THELMA.—Nineteen years old. Last heard from in Nashville, Tennessee, in December, 1924. Do you remember the boy who went to sea in 1924? Please write to Jim, care of this magazine.

FISHER, or RIDER, JAMES.—Last heard from in Massillon, Ohio. Have never forgotten your friendship. Please write to T., care of this magazine.

BUSHBAUM, LOUIS.—Last heard from in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Please write to H. Brock, care of this magazine.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from members of Company E, Fifth U. S. Infantry, Army of Occupation, in Germany between December, 1919, and December, 1921. Also from members of Company B, Eighteenth Tank Battalion, from January, 1922, to June, 1922. Please address Eithu L. Venable, Route 4, Seminole, Oklahoma.

JARNAGIN, BURLSON.—Last heard from in Dundee, Texas, in 1913. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Lula Whitehead, Englewood Station, Fort Worth, Texas.

DENNY, NEIL.—Last heard from in Seattle, Washington. Information appreciated by his nephew, Joseph Denny, Cape Vincent, New York.

HACKER, RIENOLD, and wife, BERTHA.—Last heard from in Chicago, Illinois. Information appreciated by sister, Mrs. Emma Hacker Hanson, Box 357, Missoula, Montana.

COMISKEY, MRS. LOU.—Please write to your sister, Mrs. Emma Hacker Hanson, Box 357, Missoula, Montana.

LEATHERWOOD, THOMAS FRANKLYN.—Your baby is very sick and needs you. Please come home or write to your wife, Lillian, 434 Meigs Avenue, Sandusky, Ohio.

MORRIS, BERTON.—Nineteen years old. Black hair, six feet tall, weighs about one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Last heard from in Wichita, Kansas. Believed to be working near Augusta, Kansas. Information appreciated by Beatrice Cumpston, 2226 Bath Avenue, Ashland, Kentucky.

KOSTONINK, ARTHUR.—Left Scooby, Montana, in the spring of 1926, en route to Rochester, Minnesota. Information appreciated by his nephew, Steven, care of this magazine.

MANNING, REGGIE.—Last seen in 1922. Please write to your friend, Aubrey Trollman, Acme, West Virginia.

PELLING, ANNA.—Last seen in Detroit, Michigan, in December, 1914. Believed to have gone to Canada. Please write to R. V. V., care of this magazine.

Need \$500?

Send Me Your Name I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO GET IT!

Yes—here's a wonderful chance to get \$500. Just follow my instructions and before you know it you can have money to pay your bills—to spend for new clothes, furniture, a radio, or whatever you want. There's no waiting. You can begin at once—in either full time or spare time. You don't have to take any course of training. You don't need any capital or experience. I explain everything and tell you just what to do. John T. Tyler, of Pennsylvania, followed my instructions and has often made \$30 to \$35 in a day. David Cramer, of Missouri, who used to work hard for \$3 a day, now says, "I can make \$10 to \$15 a day without effort." And Mrs. Eva McCutchen, of Oklahoma, quit a \$10-a-week office job and cleared \$26.55 the very first day with my new plan. Of course, some people make more than others. But these big earnings of a few of my Representatives show the wonderful opportunities. And now I'm offering you a proposition *even better* than the one I gave these people.



\$125 in a Single Week!

I am President of a million-dollar manufacturing Company. We distribute Groceries and other Household Necessities direct from factory to user through Authorized Local Representatives. We have thousands of customers in every State. Last year they bought fifteen million packages of our products. This put nearly two million dollars in the pockets of my Representatives.

Now I invite you to share in these huge profits. Just call on your friends and my established customers in your territory and take care of their orders. They must order from you because *I never sell through stores*. So you alone get the profit on all orders from these customers.

Just send me your name and address and I'll show you how L. C. Van Allen, of Illinois, accepted my proposition and made \$125 in a single week. Arthur Zabel, of Minnesota, cleared \$20.00 the first day. The chance to make big money is waiting for you. Will you accept it? Mrs. B. L. Hodges, of New York, accepted it. Now she writes, "I never fail to make \$18 to \$20 a day." I don't say that everyone can do as well as this, but these splendid earnings PROVE what unusually big money can be made.

Start Right In

There's no waiting—no red tape—no delay. When I get the coupon from you I send full details by return mail. I'll give you every opportunity to make \$500 or more—just like I said. It's your big chance to say goodbye to money worries—a chance to live as you ought to and get some fun out of life. Men and women from all walks of life are doing it—farmers, housewives, mechanics, ministers, laborers, office and factory workers, etc. Aren't you as good as they are? Then why hold back when the coupon gets you started?

Send No Money

If you want \$500 or more for pleasant, interesting work, you owe it to yourself to investigate this wonderful money-making opportunity immediately. You have everything to gain, and it's so easy to get started. You don't need any capital—you have no expenses. Your own home will be your headquarters and you can start in spare time if you wish. So mail the coupon without delay. I will give you full details of my amazing new plan without cost or obligation to you. I'll give you the big opportunity you've long been waiting for. Don't lose a moment. Mail the coupon RIGHT NOW!

MAIL THIS NOW

Albert Mills, Pres., American Products Co.,
5547 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tell me about your wonderful new proposition that offers a chance to make \$500—in full time or spare time. Also explain your FREE Ford Offer.

Name

Address

(c) A. P. Co. (Print or Write Plainly)

FREE
NEW
FORD
TUDOR
SEDAN



NOT a contest. I offer a brand-new car free to producers as an extra reward or bonus—in addition to their large cash profits. Mail coupon for particulars.

KALAMAZOO SPRING SALE

Book Saves You $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$

FREE to You

All prices slightly higher in the far West

**RADICALLY REDUCED
DOWN PAYMENTS
STILL
GREATER
VALUES
FREE
FREIGHT**

FREE—NEW—ready for YOU . . . this sensational, money-saving Kalamazoo Book . . . Still Greater Values, Radically Reduced First Payments, FREE FREIGHT. Spring SALE prices now in effect. Mail coupon today!

100 Styles and Sizes
More colorful, more attractive Coal and Wood Ranges and Combination Gas and Coal Ranges with new features—NEW Gas Stoves—NEW Oil Ranges—Improved Furnaces—Cabinet Heaters—Gasoline Ranges—Electric Ranges . . . 200 styles and sizes of quality stoves, ranges, and furnaces. Also Washing Machines, Refrigerators, and other Household Goods—all Big Values.

Factory Prices Save You $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$
Write today—a thrill for thrifty families on every page! More bargains than in 20 big stores. Factory Prices that save you $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$. Values that are unbelievable. Quality that is unbeatable. Easy terms that make your dreams of beauty and comfort come true.

750,000 Satisfied Customers
Send for this new book! Read how 750,000 satisfied customers have made big savings by buying direct from factory. Learn about Kalamazoo's 29-year reputation for highest quality. Find out about Kalamazoo's easy terms, as low as \$3 down, \$3 monthly and a Year to Pay—Kalamazoo's 30-day FREE Trial and 90 days' approval test—Kalamazoo's 5-Year Guarantee on materials and workmanship—Kalamazoo's \$100,000 bank bond guarantee of satisfaction—Kalamazoo's 24-hour shipments.

Choice of 3 Colors
Mail Coupon! See how you can brighten your kitchen and lighten your work with a cheerful, colorful Kalamazoo Porcelain Enamel Coal and Wood, or Combination Gas and Coal Range. Your choice of Nile Green, Pearl Gray, Delft Blue, Ivory Tan, or Black, trimmed in glistening nickel—as easy to clean as a china dish. Modernize your kitchen—beautify your home—all Kalamazoo ranges approved by Good Housekeeping Institute.

Beautiful Cabinet Heaters
There's a lot of winter left—order your new Kalamazoo Cabinet Heater now. Enjoy it for several months. The newest ones heat 3 to 6 rooms. Hold fire overnight. Handsomely finished in Black or Walnut Porcelain Enamel, \$38.35 up. Several models shown in this new FREE book.

Above All Else—Quality
You simply can't get better quality. Why? The reasons are: First, Kalamazoo specializes—Kalamazoo stoves and furnaces are built complete in our big 13-acre factory. We make nothing but stoves and furnaces. Second, Kalamazoo has tremendous buying power—that means purchasing the best raw materials at lowest prices. Third, big scale production enables us to manufacture efficiently at extremely low cost. By selling direct, eliminating all "in-between" profits, you get absolute rock-bottom factory prices. Mail coupon today for new FREE book.

Send Us a Rough Sketch of Your Home—We'll Send You FREE Furnace Plans
If you are interested in a furnace just send us a rough sketch of the floor plan of your house. We'll furnish FREE plans—show you how easy it is to install your own furnace. Thousands have. Exclusive Kalamazoo furnace features are: Hot Blast Fire Pot—new ring type radiators—easy shaking grate—up-right shaker. You save from \$40 to \$60 on a Kalamazoo furnace. You get another saving of \$50 by installing it yourself.



Kalamazoo Stove Co., Mrs.
2329 Rochester Avenue
Kalamazoo . . . Michigan

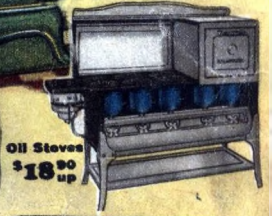


$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$

All prices slightly higher in the far West



Kalamazoo Stoves and Ranges approved by Good Housekeeping Institute



Oil Stoves \$18.50 up



Ranges \$41.50 up



Furnaces \$61.95 up



MAIL COUPON
for Free Book

750,000 Satisfied Customers Have Saved Money by Mailing This Coupon

Coal and Wood Ranges	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important: Be sure to put an (X) in column at left to indicate articles in which you are interested.
Gas & Combination Ranges	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Gasoline Ranges	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kalamazoo Stove Co., Mrs.
Cabinet Heaters	<input type="checkbox"/>	2329 Rochester Ave., Kalamazoo, Mich.
Pipe Furnaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dear Sirs: Please send me your FREE Catalog.
Direct Heat Furnaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name
Oil Stoves	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Please print name plainly)
Household Goods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Address
		City
		State

A Kalamazoo
Direct to You