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EVERY WEEK

NOV. 6, 1926

Western Story

Magazine

Lillian Bennet Thompson and George Hubbard

Frank Richardson Pierce

George Owen Baxter

Max Brand

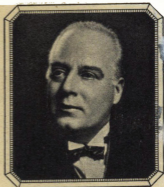
Cherry Wilson

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Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXIV

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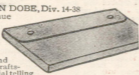
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By KENNETH PERKINS

"John Sontag's Last Stand"

How a Famous Train Robber Eluded the Sheriff and His Men


By H. C. WIRE

Other Stories



GOOD READING

BY
CHARLES HOUSTON



FOREIGN visitors to America go away with odd notions as to the sort of people the one hundred million of us are. The other day one of them revived the hackneyed accusation that we are all gross materialists, with no "sense of romance."

Just where did that individual spend his time when he was in this country? Certainly he must have gone about with his eyes pretty well closed to the facts of American life. For if there was ever a people who showed their deep hunger for romance, it is the inhabitants of this North American continent. Romance on the stage, romance on the screen, romance in printed form, is always assured of a thunderous welcome on this side of the Atlantic. Those who are in closest touch with the public's demands are aware that you can't give them enough romance.

I would like to have our foreign critic come with me to a great publishing house in New York which is sending a constant stream of romance out into the nation. Detective stories with the romance of the criminal and his pursuers, stories of the old West in the days before it became tamed, stories of love and adventure the world over, come regularly from the presses of Chelsea House, one of the oldest and best-established concerns in the city, and instantly they find a far-flung audience.

It may be true that modern civilization lacks some of the romance of the old days and that the derby-hat is by no means as picturesque a headgear as the plumed helmet. But it is also true that human nature being what it is, the love for sheer, good romance will never die. The story teller is one of America's most honored citizens.

Here are some of the latest books from Chelsea House that are made to order for those who find delight in good fiction.



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Continued on 2nd page following

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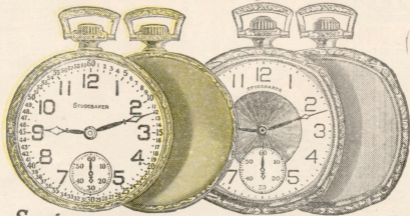
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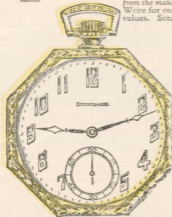
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Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXIV

NOVEMBER 6, 1926

No. 6



The Bells of San Filipo by George Owen Baxter

Author of "Trouble Trail," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN ON THE MOUNTAIN.

ON the eighteenth of June the sun rose only a very few minutes after four o'clock to shine over Sierra La Viega. At the same moment Jim Gore rose from his blankets in the little lean-to which he had built beside his diggings, and blinked toward the east.

The red sun was like a thing of fire, rolling along the edge of the next mountain through the foresting of great pines which crowded swiftly across its face. There was only one

gap in the thick woods, and just as the sun reached that open space, a man laboring up the slope under the weight of a heavy pack came into the clearing and turned, instantly, into a jet-black silhouette pasted on the face of the broad sun. It made a startling illusion, but only for an instant. Then the stranger was across the gap in the woods and lost far away in the next stretch of trees.

Even such a small thing meant a great deal to Jim Gore. For his life was composed entirely of events of two kinds. Some of them were very great; some of them were very little. When a man faces a blizzard, or when

he risks his life through a frightful mountain winter for the sake of drilling away at a hole in the ground, or when he stands gun in hand and barks profane insults at another, ready to kill or be killed, it may be said that he has entered into great moments.

But there were not many such moments in the life of Jim Gore. There were so few of them, indeed, that it often seemed to Gore that his life was like the running of a still water, picking up nothing on its clear current. He was thirty-five years old, and yet his achievements were astonishingly few. Once, in a burst of passion, he had risen to such a height that he had stood up to a gunman with his own weapon in his hand and a stream of ringing insults on his tongue—but the gunman had not chosen to fight. It had not been fear of Jim Gore; rather it was a touch of pity, for all men who knew Jim knew that however much strength was in his hands, there was no peculiar skill with guns in him.

He was a laborer, pure and simple, a cow-puncher at times, and even a sheep-herder one summer in his youth. But most of his life had been spent wandering through the mountains, chipping at the more promising rocks with his prospector's hammer and looking at the unweathered interior of the stone with a wise eye. Or else he found some little streak of pay ore and blasted away at it, breaking ground slowly, and grinding up the pay dirt in a "coffee mill" as he was doing now. In the last twenty years, Gore had spent more than fifteen by himself. So one can understand why that one great moment, gun in hand, oaths on his lips, lightning in his eyes, still filled Jim Gore with a comfortable content. For that scene was the proof to himself that he was not a coward. He had faced death in that moment. For if it had developed into a gun fight, he had known well enough that he had not a chance.

Perhaps you will feel that such a man is hardly worthy of being the central figure of a narrative. Perhaps he was not, but we must look at Jim Gore exactly as he was.

He was thirty-five years old, then, and he was without peculiar talent. Any Mexican could handle a knife better than he. Any cow-puncher could manage rope or gun better than Gore, and with a rifle he was, as he put it, "no great shucks!"

He was neither young, nor handsome, nor particularly neat. If he scrubbed himself on Saturday night with laundry soap and a bucket of cold water, he felt that he sufficiently possessed the virtue which is next to godliness until another Saturday rolled around. If he shaved on Sunday morning, it was his nearest approach to a prayer for that holy day. He observed Sundays, moreover, by boiling up his soiled clothes, by a hunting trip through the near-by mountains, by fishing in the first promising stream, and by returning to his camp to pick up a much-worn copy of "Robinson Crusoe" which he spelled out with a never-increasing speed. When he had finished a page he felt that he had accomplished a worthy labor. Often he dwelt for a moment with a serious frown and his blunt forefinger jammed close beneath a word while he pondered its meaning. When he read in this manner, he felt that he was drawn within hail of the world of art.

Not that he pretended to culture or that he really hoped to attain to it; but when he read his one book, he was like the mariner who scans the dim, unknown shore and tingles with the delightful strangeness of it.

So it was with Jim Gore.

He was a man of middle size. He stood about five feet nine or ten and he weighed a hundred and seventy solid pounds. When it is said that he had strength in his hands, let no false

hopes be awakened. He was not one of those men who have romantic possibilities even in their finger tips. But he had worked hard all his life, and having worked most of the time for himself, he had put in far more blistering, grinding hours than he would if he had worked for another person.

He was hard from head to foot. There was no fat on him. A thumb drawn over his ribs would have numbered them one by one. His chest arched out boldly; his belly shrank against his hips, and he had to draw his belt so tight to keep up his trousers that it seemed to be cutting him in two. On this morning, when we see him for the first time, his face is less heavily masked than it will be by the end of the week—for it is only Wednesday; and though his bristly beard grows fast, it has not yet thickened to the dark cloud which it will be on Saturday, say. One can draw all his features, particularly the sunken cheeks and the sad mouth. For he who works hard, even for himself, carries the story of it in his face, eventually.

Then there are his eyes which deny all the rest of the story; they are pale blue, clear as the eyes of a child, ready to smile beneath the shaggy brows. Let me tell you the whole truth of Jim Gore: He *is* a child!

If he had not been a child he would never have taken up the prospector's life, knowing as little as he did of geology. But when he was able to read the chapter heading, as one might say, of the story of the stones, he felt that he could guess at all the details. So he joined the ragged army which still explores the uplands and the deserts of this continent and finds the millions which make others rich.

If he had known a whit more, he would not have been so happy. Geology would have become a science to him; as it was it remained a rich, bookless mystery—a thing to dream over, to pray

about! He lived among crowding symbols which pointed toward vast happiness, vast wealth. If he struck it rich, he hardly knew what he would do with the money, except to buy a pair of good mules to pack his outfit, and then a quantity of the finest powder, and the single and double jacks of the truest balance, and the drills which keep the best temper, and a thousand other little conveniences which would turn his camp life into a heavenly existence! For instance, if he could buy a jointed fishing rod—and a fine repeating rifle.

He did not even indulge in such dreams as these, very often. His passion was for the gold itself, and not what he would do with it. To rip the rocks apart and unlock the treasure for the world was his yearning. He wished to handle the key; instinctively, I suppose, he knew that the gold would never stick long to his fingers! Yet the love of this great adventure never died down in him. He never lost sight of it except in towns where the crowding faces and the crowding voices filled him with homesickness and sorrow, so that he fled back to his mountains in haste.

We must not consider that Jim Gore was a peculiarly sensitive man. But he was very free, and being very free, he was wild also. Perhaps you will no longer feel an interest in him when I tell you what joys made up his life—next to the gold thirst. Well, first of all, he liked to waken slowly, to lie blinking as the first daylight warmed the sky, to drink a few deep breaths of the mountain air, cold and satisfying as water.

Then to take a filthy black pipe, eight years old at least, with the stem thrice chewed away and new grips whittled into it, to fill this pipe with the rankest plug tobacco which he cut up and mixed on Sunday mornings. To inhale a few breaths of this terrible smoke, and then slowly to rise and

dress—this was how he liked to begin his day!

His dressing, I should add, consisted of drawing on his trousers, and then his boots.

After that, he enjoyed a breakfast of black coffee taken from a great smoke-incrusted pot in which the supply was brewed freshly every third day, and no more frequently. Indeed, the third day's brew was the brew which he liked the best. He was a man of hearty tastes, as you may see. He made pone every second day, and ate it cold the rest of the time. It was soggy, but he did not mind that. Besides the pone, his breakfast was completed by slices of bacon. He did not cook this meat to crispness. In fact, he never could understand why finicky people insisted on cooking all the "good" out of their bacon.

When his breakfast was finished, he lighted the pipe of which he had smoked a few drafts upon waking in the morning. He smoked it through deliberately.

As a rule, he would pick out some object to be gazed on while he smoked. Since he had started his drift against the side of this mountain of the Sierra La Viega, he usually matched the ruins of the crumbled Spanish town of San Filipino, which stood on the bank of the yellow little San Filipino River, in the heart of the valley beneath him. It was a good two thousand feet down and several miles away, but the pitch of his eye reduced it to a clear-cut view. He could see everything so distinctly that he no longer wondered how the soaring owl could see the darting field mouse so far below.

Ordinarily, then, he enjoyed musing over the old wrecked village which had once been a populous frontier city of New Spain. It had remained a place of some importance until the gringoes came and rubbed out the old without writing in the new in many places. They drove railroads through the land.

They hewed out new trails. And the town of San Filipino had depended upon a more leisurely time, a more leisurely people, who were content to travel a week, a fortnight—they hardly cared which. The Americans, however, reckoned time even to minutes—so San Filipino dwindled. There were still a few white drifts of morning smoke above the houses, and it seemed to Jim Gore, as he brooded over the picture on other days, that these were the last breathing of San Filipino, the last misting of the mirror.

On this morning, however, he had something better to muse upon.

CHAPTER II.

OLD TREASURE.

IT was the picture of the traveler which had come across the red face of the sun. You will say that this was a very small detail to hold the thoughts of a mature man, but it must be remembered that Jim Gore had not been able to see the face of another human being for eight months. And, during eight months, he had not seen even the figure of a man as near by as he who had strode across the circle of the sun. Only, from time to time, he made out the tiny form of horse and man herding the cows in the valley of San Filipino—cows which were dull spots of color, and whose lowings welled faintly up to him when the wind was still. But even a breath through the trees near by was loud enough to cut away those noises.

So, having only the moldered town in the distance and the ghostly small life in the valley, this nearer sight of a human being filled the simple mind of Jim Gore.

The pack on the back of the stranger was not large, but either it was very heavy or else the man had struggled hard up the slope and spent a great deal of his strength, for he was bent low, with legs sagging at every step.

He was not an American—that was certain. An American walks with his head up, an American pauses a fraction of an instant at least on the top of a hill. But this fellow had gone on with head down like a mute beast tugging at a load, and he had hurried on without pause where the sun looked through the timber gap at the top of the hill.

What manner of man might he be, then? What was his destination? And whither had he come? Was he some trapper who had risen before daylight and struggled up from old San Filipo with this little pack? Was he a hunter? Was he a Mexican miner, burning with new information which made him eager to take up the trail of a hint of gold?

But only some burning necessity could have made him rise so early and labor so hard. By his step and his carriage it was plain that this fellow had done his day's work even before the sun looked sidewise at him!

It was an intriguing problem for Jim Gore, but just as he was enjoying the relish of it, a bubbling in the bowl of his pipe announced the end of his breakfast smoke. Automatically his mind stopped working. He tapped the bowl out on his heel, stamped on the fuming refuse of tobacco, and shoved the pipe into a hip pocket where its warmth came through the jeans and burned against his flesh. Then he started for his hole. In another moment the single jack was chiming against the head of the drill. The sun grew hotter. Perspiration began to collect under his hatband; sweat began to pour out beneath the pits of his arms, and across his back broad black stains began to come shadowy through his shirt, already dusted with white from the dried salt of this week's labors.

He knew his strength so accurately, that he was aware of just what he could do in a morning. He could gauge the

number and strength of his rapid hammer strokes so that he would be completely spent at exactly noon.

When noon came he cooked his lunch, which was simply another breakfast. Then he stretched out in his lean-to and dozed until a sudden guilty stir of his spirit warned him that he had been resting for an hour. He sat up, glanced at his watch, smiled as he saw that old habit was a most accurate chronometer, and then went back to his labors.

At four o'clock he had finished, fixed his shots, and fired them. When they had exploded he went back to look at the broken ground. The vein had neither expanded nor pinched down. It was just the same—a glimmer, a streaking of hope, and no more. In his eight months of labor on this spot he had gathered not more than a scant five hundred dollars in gold. However, that was better than nothing. And who could tell? If he left this difficult ledge of hard rock where every foot of broken ground was purchased at such infinite cost of pain and patience, might not some luckier man come along and, digging deeper, open another Comstock Lode? Such things had been in the past. They would never happen to Jim Gore! He had decided that much in the early days and stuck patiently to his first ideals.

Now he took his rifle and went out hunting, but a pair of squirrels was the only result of his labors until he turned back toward his drift. Then he managed to shoot a rabbit which had crouched foolishly in a bunch of grass with its long ears cocked out. Jim Gore laughed at the silly thing until the rifle shook in his hands—but he succeeded in putting a shot through it. It meant fresh meat for supper, fresh meat for the next day. And fresh meat meant easier work, deeper, sweeter sleep.

A deep sleep indeed! For the day had been hot and the work a little

tougher than usual. He remained not more than a scant hour after his supper was finished, letting the cool air of the evening bathe his body and relax his nerves. Then he pulled off boots and trousers, twisted a blanket around his body, and lay down to sleep.

This was a typical day for Jim Gore, in fact, it was rather more excited and eventful than usual, for its annals included the shooting of two squirrels and a rabbit. Perhaps a whole month would pass, after this, without bringing so much action. During all that time he would dwell upon that pleasant afternoon!

You who live in cities cannot understand, of course. But it makes little difference what happens to make the heart swell. It is the sense of joy which counts, and not so much the cause of it. And I doubt if many of you have lain down to more contented sleep than that which passed over the mind and the eyes of Jim Gore on this night.

He slept like a child, perfectly, without a dream, without a stir of body or mind. And so complete was his rest that it was not the rising of the sun which roused him, but the first rosy glowing dawn that made him sit up in his blanket and yawn widely as he looked eastward, glad of the early beginning of his day.

He reached for his pipe automatically, but his finger froze suddenly upon it as though it had been the hot shaft of a drill. For yonder, across the open gap among the trees, dimly marked against the pink of the east, walked the vision of the morning before—the very same outline, the same hanging head, the same sagging stride of weariness, the same tugging at the same small, heavy pack.

Jim Gore glanced over his shoulder with a guilty start, as though he had seen a ghost. He was so disturbed that he forgot his pipe and stumbled out with a frown to cook his breakfast.

Such a thing as this, such a perfect coincidence, had never happened before in all his life.

It followed him through the day. Sometimes, with a hand closing on his throat, he swore that his eyes had lied to him. And when the sun was rising high and the rock dust was churning around the shaft of his drill as he worked the hole deeper, it seemed that the morning's vision had been no more than a dream indeed!

But when the dark of the evening drew over the mountains again, the thing grew more real.

There was broken sleep only for Jim Gore on this night. A dozen times he wakened and sat bolt upright. Once a wolf was howling, a great timber wolf hunting on a blood trail. Once it was the dreary hooting of an owl. And again, it was no more than the sudden flurry of his heart.

There was an ache behind his eyes when he sat up again in the pink of the morning and fastened his gaze on the gap among the trees to the east. The minutes went by him; the rim of the sun began to prick above the mountain's edge; he was on the verge of congratulating himself because the vision had not come again, when once more the slumping form came from the trees into the clearing, waded leg deep in the red fire of the sun, and disappeared into the shadows of the trees beyond.

It was more than enough for Jim Gore. He could not work that day with such a burden on his mind.

After breakfast he trudged across the intervening ravine and found the clearing itself, and there he cast anxiously about for some sort of a trail. He was not long in finding it. In a spot covered with soft soil he found a trail worn which could not have been made by less than a score of passages of human feet—human, naked feet!

How long had this thing gone on? How many weeks, how many months,

while he dozed in his cabin? From what place did the man come, and where did he go?

He looked northward into the tossing sea of mountains. It would be useless, he felt, to try to follow that trail where it would soon disappear among the hard rocks that could have taken the falling of shod hoofs without giving a trace to anything but a microscope. But from the south, where could he have started his journey except from the valley of San Filipo? And might he not have come from the dying town itself?

Jim Gore went back to his camp to smoke many pipes and turn the matter over and over in a restless mind. In the afternoon his lack of sleep the night before was compensated by a pleasant nap. But that night was more broken than ever. Well before dawn he awakened and dressed. He could not live, he felt, unless he had deciphered the meaning of that traveler's many journeys.

He took his rifle, therefore, and trudged heavily through the darkness of the ravine and up the farther side of it to the clearing on the edge of the hill. There he found a covert in a nest of jutting rocks and waited. The cold wind of the dawn began to blow. The east turned gray, the mountains were tall and black against the growing light, the rose began, and then the full brightness of the morning fell around him.

He heard not a sound. But out of the southern edge of the trees on the far side of the clearing stepped a bare-footed Mexican, head down, long black hair falling raggedly across his eyes, hatless, with his white trousers rolled halfway up his muscled calves. At his back was a dirty canvas bag, and his left hand gripped a rolled edge of it that came over his right shoulder. He was very tired. His breast heaved with the labor of his climb, and his knees sagged deeply with every step.

Yet when Jim Gore rose from his concealment with the rifle in his hand, the Mexican leaped into sudden life. The heavy pack dropped with a thud upon the pine needles; his hand whipped a knife from his belt, and the glittering blade hissed close beside the head of the miner.

As for Gore, he had had no thought of an attack. He threw his rifle against his shoulder with a startled oath. But even then he did not shoot, for he saw the Mexican rush away through the northern trees with a yell of terror.

Gore did not need to examine the canvas bag. It had dropped upon its side and from its open mouth a bar of solid silver bullion had rolled forth upon the brown needles!

CHAPTER III.

A TRIP TO SAN FILIPO.

FAR to the north he could hear the fugitive crashing recklessly through the brush. There was a startled yell again, as though some sound behind the Mexican—perhaps an echo cast up by his own flight—had made him feel that the American was running close behind. At least there was little danger that the barefoot man would return at once, and Jim Gore rolled the contents of the canvas upon the ground.

There were five bars, each blackened by the tarnishing of long time. He weighed one in his hand. It was close to ten pounds! It was not strange that the Mexican had been spent by the burden of this pack up the long, steep slope. Fifty pounds of solid silver!

He shaved the surface with his knife. It revealed beautiful, pure silver, glistening like ice in the morning light. Fifty pounds! Hundred of dollars!

He sat down and figured in the dirt with his finger just how much it would be. Almost twice as much money as he had broken out of the face of his moun-

tain with more than half a year of bitter labor! And this on the back of a Mexican?

He examined the bars more carefully. In spite of their apparent age, and their black tarnishing, they seemed fairly crisp from the mold. There was no great blunting of the edges, as from much handling. The corners had not been rounded. Surely they had not been shifted a great deal since the day of their making.

Each was marked with a stamp, and over that stamp Jim Gore brooded for some time. Small trifles could hold his mind, and here was a unique trifle indeed. It was the design of an odd-looking creature with the body of a horse, erect on its hind legs, but clothed with a sweeping pair of wings and additionally garnished with a great horn projecting from its forehead. Beneath this monster lay crossed swords and over its head was arched a motto inscribed in a language which Jim Gore could not read. He had never seen such a design as this before, and why it should be inscribed on a bar of silver bullion was more than he could make out.

What was of more immediate importance, however, was that this mass of silver, with a value of nearly a thousand dollars, now lay unclaimed upon the ground. And though the Mexican who had carried it to this point might return for it, Gore was practically certain that he had very little right to it.

Otherwise the man would not have shown such emotion when a stranger crossed his path. A thief, like a dog with a bone, will fight instantly as soon as he is alarmed. An honest man carries a treasure in his pocket without suspicion of the world. The whole bearing of the Mexican had been so wild and wolfish that Jim Gore had no doubt of his own right to pick up that load of silver and cart it back to his cabin.

But when the little treasure was there, he could not help wondering how he could protect it. For yonder from the woods he might lie in constant danger of the escaped Mexican's revenge. He was only comforted by the reflection that the brown-skinned carrier had not shown a more formidable weapon than a knife.

It was not the present bag filled with silver that mattered most. There were other things of more moment, and the chief food for thought was this: What was the source from which this parcel of silver had been drawn? Furthermore, how much had been drawn from that source before the load which he intercepted? And whither had it been taken?

A keener mind than that of Jim Gore would have been excited by the thoughts which these things conjured into his head. To follow up the trail of the silver carrier was not to his taste, in the first place. He could follow up signs as well as most. But a trail which wandered through a forest over pine needles which received a tread and sprang up elastically when the weight was removed, a trail which then passed on to a barren region of rocks—this was not to his liking. Even an expert scout might have shrunk from such a problem.

As for the source of the treasure, he felt that he might have some luck if he could search among the ruins of San Filipino, though how precious metals could remain in it after it had been swept by fire and successively plundered by Indians, Americans and Mexicans in turn, he could not see.

But what he finally decided upon was to hide the silver as well as he could and go down to the town to find out what he could—though how to go about it he hardly knew. His hiding spot was the raise which he had sunk, or started to sink, at the top of his little shaft. There he disposed of the silver

bullion behind broken rock fragments. And after this was done he started toward San Filipo.

It was the warm and lazy middle of the afternoon when he reached the smooth bottom of the valley, and there he turned onto the old road to San Filipo. It was soft and deep with dust, but here and there a scouring of wind, or the grinding of a rare wheel, had cut down to the broken face of the stone paving which the Conquistadores had laid many and many a generation before. To Jim Gore, as to many another simple heart, those men of old seemed giants. In the West legends grow quickly. Many a man has become a half-fictitious figure before his death. Five years of adventure will establish a romantic background upon which eager imaginations can build around the camp fire, or in the long winters of the lonely crossroads towns. But for what has passed a century before—that is as far distant, as colored, as misty, as the dark ages are to present Europe.

So the picture of the Conquistadores, to Jim Gore, was composed of colorful dreams of fierce-eyed, mustachioed, armored, sword-bearing men. He saw them in velvets and in leather, in silk and in steel, with great-mouthed purses full of gold and ever emptied by the handful. He saw them on glorious horses brought at frightful cost from Spain and Africa — slender-limbed, tender-eyed, great-hearted steeds whose worth in the New World was the value of half a dozen lives of men. He saw them turning native princes into beasts of burden and slaves in their train; he saw them ride in blood through a thousand battles against fearful odds. He saw them building, by means of their hosts of bondmen, forts and castlelike homes. He saw their servants rip open the stout ribs of the mountains and tear out the gold ore and the silver; he saw the Indians die in swarms in the dark

bellies of the mines, or clambering with their baskets of ore up the long, rotten, weaving ladders to the day above; he saw them like great and evil spirits out of a story book.

No wonder, then, that he looked upon the moldered, time-crushed outlines of San Filipo town with an interest that no tourist could have shown. The village was only a tomb now, but it was a tomb of greatness. To Jim Gore, it excited as much awe and reverence as some cloudy aisle in Westminster raises in the breast of an Englishman to-day.

A herd boy, bareback, hatless, his long hair sneaking behind him in the wind, galloped out from the town toward the pasture lands beyond. He was not changed from his ancestors, the Indians, who had watched the fierce Spaniards first come. Yes, his skin was a few shades lighter, but his soul was the soul of the Indian. But the horse he straddled, lump-headed and roach-backed though it was, showed in its fiery eye and in its slender legs of iron that the blood of the Spanish horses flowed in it. It tossed up the fine sand behind it. Time had been, in the days of the Conquistadores, when those drifting sands, pinned down only here and there by knots of bunchgrass, had been overcast by a network of little channels through which the rich waters of the San Filipo river flowed and covered the face of the valley with greenness. And in those days five hundred cattle lowed and five hundred horses pranced and played where there was one to-day.

Jim Gore thought of these things, not with a real regret for that vanished glory, but as an exciting fairy tale, something more unreal, by far, than the written agonies of Robinson Crusoe. For to him Crusoe was more a fact than was any man he had ever known!

He entered the outlying edges of San Filipo. It was a compact little

town, as seen from the mountainside above, but when one walked through it, one could view its ruin and its magnitude more fully. He passed, on either hand, broken-backed houses, and adobe walls which had melted into shapeless mounds, or were fast melting now! He passed casements which had widened in ruin to great fissures. He saw walls well preserved for two stories' height, but above that shorn away suddenly—like standing corpses without heads. He saw, here and there in long-untenanted courtyards, great heaps and tangles of wreckage—rotting parts of wagons, twisted cordage as brittle as dirt, and tangles of iron junk. Yes, even a junkman could have found nothing worth salvage in this dead town.

Not entirely dead, either. There were traces of life, just enough to mark a trail here and there across the deep white velvet of the dusty streets. And through the air the sensitive nostrils of the mountaineer found occasionally streaks of familiar scents—wood smoke, or cookery.

These things Jim Gore took note of, one by one, and found them symbols of existent life in the dead city as strange as ghostly whispers in a town thronged with voices.

Here he turned from the street by which he had entered the old place to the main thoroughfare, a wide avenue pointed toward that central plaza where once the currents of the town had drawn and pooled in noisy circles. He wandered on toward this point until he found, squatted in the dust upon his heels at the side of the street near the entrance to an old patio, a brown-faced youth with sandals on his feet, and soiled cotton trousers, and in his hat a few dry leaves of tobacco and a few corn husks for the manufacture of potent cigarettes. If he had had a sweet-heart he would have worn at his breast a little package of made smokes, tied

with gayly colored ribbons. Yet he was so good-looking and so amiable of eye and smile that Jim Gore knew the lack of a lady was due to the absence of girls rather than a lack in the young Mexican.

He stopped close by before the youngster saw him and started out of his dream to his feet with: "Señor, señor! Where have you come from to San Filipo?"

The miner waved toward the lofty mountainside. So crystal clear was that mountain air, that the eye could strike through the distance to the dark shadow which was the mouth of his mine and even to the tiny shack which stood beside it.

The boy understood at once.

He said, half earnestly and half smiling: "You are one of the eagles, then, señor? You have been sitting up there on your rock watching us field mice! Well, we make a small diet for great birds!"

CHAPTER IV.

RAMIREZ TELLS A TALE.

JIM GORE felt the neatness of this compliment and grinned his acknowledgment.

"You live here, then," said he, rather without point.

"Forever, señor," said the affable youth.

There was just a touch of solemnity in this answer that made Jim Gore gape at the other.

"Oh, well," said he, "you are young. You'll be off, one of these days, what? You'll be off for a better place!"

"This is well enough," answered the youngster. "My people have lived here always."

"What may you mean by that?"

"Oh, a great time!"

"Well," said Jim Gore, "I've seen a year that I'd call a great time, and I've seen two hours on the desert when

I could see water, but when I thought that I'd die before I got to it. That was a great time, too!"

The other rolled up his eyes and under the shadow of his broad-brimmed hat, he looked at the sun-flooded sky. "Consider, señor, how long you have lived, and if your father is an old man before you, and if his father that is dead was old also—that is three lives, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Then, ten times those three lives—that would be a great time, would it not?"

"A thousand years!" murmured Jim Gore, vastly impressed. "That *would* be a long time, my friend!"

"Well," said the boy, "we have lived here forever, as you see!"

And he pointed behind him toward the broken gate of the patio, and behind the patio extended the vast ruins of what had once been a huge house—a veritable palace of adobe. How wrecked it was now! One might have thought that a furious giant, in a rage, had trampled it down. Here the roof had fallen in; here the madman's heel had stamped roof, wall, casement and all to the dust, and tumbled into the patio half-decayed bricks of adobe, fast turning into dust. Yet there were signs of life. A wisp of smoke hung above the top of the building; there was a bucket by a door; and through the unshuttered, unglazed casement, Jim Gore looked upon sundry signs of life within the place itself.

"You and your mother," said Jim Gore, "you live here together, do you not?"

The youth made a gracefully eloquent gesture, shrugged his shoulders and amiably answered:

"What should I do with a mother?" said he. "Could I keep her? Could I support her?"

"Why not?" said Gore, with an Anglo-Saxon terseness. "What's a

woman to do if her own son ain't gonna work for her?"

"Ah, señor, but where shall one find work here? What is the work that is to be done at San Filipo?"

He made another wide gesture of expostulation, and Jim Gore looked into the palm of his hand. It was as pink and as soft as the hand of a child. It was the hand of one who has never bruised the flesh of his fingers with labor.

"You are your own man, then?" asked the miner.

"I am my own man."

"But how do you live if you do not work?"

"What work does a bird do in the air?" smiled the boy. "What work does a grasshopper do in the field?"

And again he made one of his eternal Latin gestures.

But Jim Gore had grown so interested that he almost forgot the serious purpose which had brought him to San Filipo—which was to ask questions. He forgot everything, except the smooth, handsome face of this lad—more sun-tanned than brown by nature, as he could afford to suspect since he had seen the pale inside of the boy's hand.

"Well, well," said Gore, smiling rather sternly at the indolent beauty of the youth, "this here satisfies you, maybe?"

"Perhaps it does, señor!"

"And perhaps it don't," said Jim Gore. "Because what happens in San Filipo to keep a smart kid like you in fun?"

"What happens," smiled the other, "on the side of the mountain yonder?"

"Gold!" said the miner briefly.

"So? But here, señor, we have heard the bells!"

"You have heard what?"

"The bells, señor."

"What the devil might you be talkin' about, now?" asked Jim Gore. "I dunno what this drives at!"

The other stared at him in some surprise.

"Is it true, then?" said he. "You have not heard of the bells of San Filipo?"

"I have never heard of them!"

The boy took corn husk and tobacco from the band of his straw hat, and while he crumpled the brittle tobacco leaf in the hollow cup of his palm, he looked earnestly at Gore. The latter knew by this that something worth while was about to be uttered, for every light thing will run out from the lips of a Mexican as freely as water from a snow-fed spring in the May of the year. The smoke was made and lighted and Jim Gore accepted the token by stuffing and lighting his own pipe and then squatting in the shadow of the crumbling wall. The Mexican sat at his side.

"Three hundred-years ago—" The Mexican began.

"Three hundred years!" murmured Gore. "Lemme see. That was—dog-gone it, that was before there was any United States."

"Before there was a white man yonder!" said the Mexican, and waved his hand widely, north and east and west.

"What might your name be?"

"I," said the youth, looking him full in the eye and speaking slowly, "am Diego Ramirez!"

"All right, Ramirez, go on with your yarn. You handle centuries as easy as I can handle a drill. Go on with your yarn."

"Three hundred years ago," said the boy, "a Ramirez came to this valley and gave it its name."

"That ain't a third of a thousand years," said Gore, a little sharp.

"Very well. But my people were here long before."

"Ah!" said Gore. "On your ma's side, then? Well, ramble along."

"He came with a good padre who founded the mission church."

He waved toward the structure.

Half of its height was lost and the roof line was a wavering thing like the tops of three crowded waves jumbled together. But still the great mass of masonry loomed above the wrecked city like a prehistoric monster crowded about by pygmy life.

"He staged a right big job," admitted Gore.

"When the church was built, they brought nine great bells which had been cast in Barcelona. They hung them in the bell tower—you can see its great shoulders now, above the ruins!"

"I see them very well."

"Well, it happened that the first day the bells were rung, the canals were opened to water the valley, and while the bells were ringing—and they rang them half a day without ending—the water from the dam up the valley poured into the canals and streaked across the desert and traced the sands all across with tangles of silver. Do you see?"

With both hands he drew mazy lines in the air.

"Think how that sand must of drunk it up!" sighed Gore. "I can hear 'em and I can feel 'em!"

"And people said, señor, that so long as the bells could ring in the tower of the church, there would be water in the valley—there would be happiness and there would be wealth!"

"Water would make it a rich place. There ain't any doubt of that," admitted Gore.

"So the bells rang for two hundred years."

"A long time, son!"

"Until there was war and there was great trouble. And the valley was filled with fighting. In that fighting, San Filipo burned, and the flames reached the church and cracked the walls of the bell tower, and the timbers were burned from the walls which supported them, and the bells fell and were lost in the ruins!"

"That was sort of too bad," said Jim Gore.

"That same day, señor—mark what I say, for it is very true—on that same day the dam was broken, and a great yellow wave went down the valley from the lake, and the canals ran dry, and from that moment San Filipo Valley has been a desert!"

"Wait a minute," broke in the miner. "There is one thing that you was sayin' that I don't quite follow."

"Say what you will, señor."

"A little spell back you was sayin' that you had heard the bells of the church?"

"I have heard the bells of San Filipo, señor."

Jim Gore grinned.

"Might you be a hundred years old, Diego Ramirez?"

"What I said is the truth. The other day we heard the bells of San Filipo."

"The devil! Who hung 'em up ag'in?"

"No man, señor."

"But where are they?"

"Lost for a hundred years, señor."

Jim Gore opened his eyes.

"Are you jokin'?" said he.

"I am telling you the very simple truth. I myself heard the bells ring, and so did every one in the valley—great thick notes that seemed to come up out of the ground at my very feet!"

"H'm!" murmured Gore, and scratched his chin. "And who might 'a' found 'em and rung 'em?"

"Señor, did you not speak of the devil?"

"Look here, Diego Ramirez," said Gore frowning. "I'm a tolerable sensible man and I'm a patient man, but dog-gone me if I don't hate foolin'!"

"And I, señor! But I tell you that the bells have been heard to ring. It was the very day of the earthquake. All of us heard them ring. And the meaning is that San Filipo shall be rich again!"

"Earthquake?" said Gore. "I didn't feel none!"

"Look!"

He pointed to a mass of wreckage which was strewn halfway across the street.

"It fell at the same time!" said he.

"So the bells rung?" said the miner. "And San Filipo cannot help but be rich again?"

"It is the prophecy," said the youth. "And who can tell? The Almighty does not lie!"

CHAPTER V.

THE TALL STRANGER.

IT was such a legend as Gore had heard before from many credulous miners and trappers. There were even more miraculous tales to be told of the past, but this was of the present! And here was a youth speaking of supernatural things with as grave a voice and as clear an eye as he had ever heard or seen in all of his life. He could not think that Diego Ramirez was perpetrating a hoax. There is a certain open self-confidence that shines from a man who speaks what he believes to be verity. That radiance was in the face of Ramirez.

"All right—all right," murmured Jim Gore. "I'll go as far to believin' that as most folks. But I dunno that I see San Filipo showin' much signs of gettin' rich ag'in! The waters ain't flowin' in the valley, so far as I can see!"

And he could not help grinning in triumph at the boy.

"Ah, that is very true," said Diego Ramirez. "But the water did not give the city all of its wealth. Perhaps the silver mines will begin to give out good ore, again!"

Gore started violently. And he clenched his teeth upon his pipe so hard that his jaw began to ache.

"Silver?" said he, a little huskily.

"Silver? Have you not heard? Once

those mines poured it out in great white rivers!"

He waved to the southern mountains which framed the valley. The sides were spotted and marred by great heaps which had been dumped there in the past ages and since then, weathered to some sort of harmony with the color of the rest of the slopes, had gradually been sinking out of easy view.

But here was the explanation of the silver which the Mexican had carried across the mountain. There could be no reasonable doubt of that.

"How long ago," said Gore, "did the mines stop paying?"

"Why, perhaps a generation before the dam across the upper valley was broken," said the Mexican.

It was enough for Gore. Five generations—in a damp place—would account for the coating of black tarnish which obscured the white metal of the silver bars as he had seen them. There were other questions which he could have asked. But they would have been too pointed. He decided to leave the young Ramirez to his place of sun and shadow and stroll on.

"And your people?" he asked. "Maybe they was mine owners in the old days?"

"In the other times," said Diego Ramirez, "there was a day when Ramirez owned great mines, and great farms, and besides that, the people of our name had half the city. Do you see the church? All the houses around it were our houses! Great places, as you see. And this ruin behind me was our home!"

So Jim Gore nodded and left him, and strolled idly through the streets of the town; but though his movements were leisurely, his glances to the right and to the left were the glances of a hawk, probing the odd corners of the ruins. Somewhere among them, he had no doubt, was the treasure hidden. No wonder if it were—no wonder if

even a hundred years of searchers and plunderers had been unable to find the proper place until, perhaps, that lucky Mexican whom he had stopped, stumbled upon it by chance.

For his own heart, patient as he was, failed him at the thought of digging systematically among these houses. What a moldering wilderness they made! Ten-foot walls, for strength and for coolness, had not been uncommon in the times when San Filipino first grew and prospered. And the sun-tempered bricks had been heaped together by such a vast deal of labor that the miner was amazed at it. He knew what hard work meant. He had been a molder and a toiler all his days. And how many days of skill and of sweat had been necessary to compose this decaying labyrinth! His work would have to be done at night and, like the Mexican, when the dawn came he would have to be on the height again.

He turned out of San Filipino, at last, and struck away toward the cabin. It was the last of the day when he reached it again. The sun was not a foot from resting on the top of a western mountain, and the first thought of Jim Gore was for his hidden silver. Night would be the time when the Mexican would return to hunt for the little treasure which had been taken from him. And Gore, feeling, like many another Western miner, that a Mexican can literally "smell" his way to silver, decided that he would take the stuff back to the shack.

So he gathered it from the mine and brought it into the cabin, where he rested the load of it in a corner of the place. Then he went out to smoke a pipe and enjoy the evening.

He had a guilty feeling. It was the first day—except Sundays—in a full six months that he had not completed a full quota of labor with his hands, and his conscience bothered Jim Gore. Besides, there was the question of that in-

fernal silver. His final decision, just as the sun slid down behind the western mountain and the world went suddenly a shade dimmer, was that he must covertly bury it the next morning.

He turned toward the shack filled with that resolution, and was hurrying to cook his supper before dark when a wicked singing darted past his ear, like a giant hornet blown down the wind, and a split part of a second afterward the report of the rifle clanged, sounding small and far through the thin mountain air.

It struck at Gore like a hand clapped across his face. He started back, tripped his heel on a jutting rock fragment, fell heavily and rolled half a dozen turns of his body down the slope. There, with surprise and the shock of the blow, he lay half stunned and only vaguely saw the form of a man race into his shack and instantly dart out again, lunging along under the weight of the silver pack, a rifle slung in one hand.

It was a long shot—far too long for such an inexpert hand as that of Gore. But he scrambled to his knees at once and tugged out his revolver.

A nearer enemy, however, rose in the path of the Mexican as that worthy fled. For here a tall man jumped out from the edge of the woods and thrust a revolver fairly under his nose.

The Mexican did as he had done when Gore first surprised him. He dropped the canvas sack—he dropped his rifle also—and darted at full speed toward the woods.

"Stop!" barked the stranger, poising his gun with a carelessness which made Gore wonder. "Stop, or I'll salt you down, greaser!"

The Mexican merely dodged like a teal shooting down the wind. There was no bullet from the revolver of the newcomer, and the fugitive was once more safe.

"Well, old son," said the tall man, "if

my damned gat has clogged, I'll get you with my bare hands."

He was off at once, at a speed which made heavy-footed Gore gasp with amazement. There was a brief crashing among the shrubbery followed by a wild screech of terror that sent waves of uneasiness through the body of Jim Gore. He hoped that the tall stranger had not sent a bullet through the body of the greaser. No, there had been no sound of a gun. A knife thrust, then—

A crackling began in the brush. Out stepped the Mexican with his arms tied securely behind his back and the tall youth sauntering in the rear. As he passed the fallen sack, he gave it a thrust with his boot and out tumbled a blackened bar of silver. At this, he whistled softly—leaned for a single glance which, Jim Gore felt, probably told that eagle-eyed youngster as much as his own patient observation and study of an hour had told him—and then marched his prisoner up to Gore.

What the miner saw was a flat-faced Mexican with a very dusky skin, bright little eyes—a stupid and honest face rather than a malicious one, Gore thought. The fellow was very frightened; he was trembling visibly. But Jim Gore could not pay much attention to such a person with the tall youth so near. He was a flame of a man, tall, and as supple and strong as a steel spring, with a face as manly as it was unhandsome—a bold, keen, hawklike face.

Striding against the wind on an untracked mountainside, Gore had once come upon a cougar crouched over the body of a deer, and he had jerked up his rifle and fired—and missed. Then, as the tawny monster slid away among the rocks, a sense of terror and helplessness had passed through the soul of the miner. The same sensation went through him now.

"Here you are," said the stranger.

"Here's your greaser. You can serve him up boiled or fried, or put him on a spit and roast him, or beat him up like dough first and then bake him on a slow fire!"

The smile of Gore was rather forced, for something told him that this wild young man was making these remarks rather in earnest than in jest. Certainly his expression remained serious.

"But," went on the stranger, "what's it all about? I'm not curious, but when I find bar silver wearing a coat of arms in its buttonhole and a couple of generations of black on its face—I begin to wonder."

In half a minute Gore had told the story. The young stranger listened with a polite attention.

"Then," said he, "I have an idea that you're on the trail of something rich. A regular treasure, stranger!"

This polite cordiality was not exactly what Gore wanted. He looked at the greaser first, and then down to the yellow curving of the San Filipo through the valley and the tiny white ruins of the town—a toy which one could put in the palm of the hand. It was a very large task which lay before him, Gore felt, and it would require for its solution a good many more brains than he himself possessed.

"My name is Gore," said he.

"My name is Chris," nodded the other.

"Chris," said the miner, "I ain't got a claim staked out on this job. But I'd like to stake it out if I could get a man-sized partner to throw in with me."

The smile of the other was like a flash of light.

"I think that's sense," said he. "You'll find I'm worth my keep before the party is over. Do we shake on it?"

Their hands closed. The grip of the young man was as light and as soft as the touch of a girl's hand. That un-

calloused hand was not familiar with labor, Gore could guess. But no matter what this fellow might be, Gore felt that he already knew too much to be excluded from the mystery. Whether he was worthy of it or not, he would have to be trusted!

"The first thing," said Chris briskly, "is to find the back trail of the greaser. And the best way is to make him talk."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTOR EXPLAINS.

THERE was no doubt as to this, and Gore asked the first question.

"Where does this stuff come from, partner?"

No light came in the dull eyes of the Mexican. Chris broke into the smoothest Spanish:

"We are your fathers, my child," said he. "And we do not wish to see our children worn out with hard work carrying such heavy stuff. Tell us where you found it, and there will be no more trouble for you. We will take the labor off your hands!"

He grinned broadly as he spoke, but still the eyes of the Mexican were unlighted by comprehension. Chris winked aside to the miner. Then he tore out his gun and proved that it was now in working order by blowing the corner off a jagged rock near by. After that he jammed the fuming muzzle into the belly of the Mexican.

"Yellow-faced dog!" said he. "Our friends the buzzards are hungry and it is time that we should feed them. Do you understand?"

A flash of terror crossed the eyes of the poor man. But in an instant his face was as blank as ever. Chris shoved the gun back into its holster with an oath.

"He's a tough old egg," said he. "We'll have to put on the screws, Jim!"

"Which?" said Gore.

"Toast his feet for him. That'll make him chatter a bit!"

But Gore shook his head resolutely.

"I can't stand for that sort of a game," he declared. "It goes sort of ag'in me."

"Turn your back, then, and go up and do some housework. I'll promise you that I won't hurt him much. He'll be able to do a day's work after I'm through with him!"

It was very much against the grain of Jim Gore. But when a man has been half an inch from death he is not apt to be too tender with his would-be assassin. He turned his back obediently. But he was sweating when he reached the cabin. There he sat down and faced the wall, his muscles tensed, his jaw set.

Down the hillside he could hear the voice of his new partner talking softly to the prisoner—then a pause—then more soft talking. What was happening in those pauses? It turned the soul of the miner cold to think of it!

Presently a frightful groan brought him leaping to his feet, and he whirled with a shout.

"Stop it, man! Damned if I can stand it!"

What tall Chris had done he never knew, but he saw his new companion rise slowly from beside the body of the Mexican, which was stretched upon the ground. He stirred the other with his boot and the Mexican staggered to his feet. A touch of the knife freed his hands.

"Get out!" commanded Chris, and waved toward the woods.

There was no speed in the departure of the Mexican. He went staggering, with his head fallen on one side and a contorted face which made Jim Gore sick for days thereafter. It was a sight which haunted his dreams.

But Chris was perfectly cheerful.

"You should have held out five minutes more—thirty seconds more," said

he amiably. "I was working him up to the right point. I was kneading him, you might say, and getting him just ready for the oven. He was just on the point of getting talkative when you yapped, Gore!"

Jim Gore was sweating with cold horror. He broke out: "What sort of a man are you, stranger? I've seen 'em big and little, hard as wood and hard as iron, but I'm damned if I ever seen 'em hard as you!"

He felt that he had gone a little too far, for the cold eyes of the younger man studied him gravely for an instant. Then Chris shrugged his shoulders, as though he had decided not to take offense.

"I don't mind telling you," said he, "that you ought to drop down into Mexico. When you get below the river you find that things have a different face. I was only talking to that fellow in his own language—which I understand as well as he does. I've talked—and I've listened to that sort of thing! Look here!"

He rolled up the sleeve of his left arm. It exposed to the eye of Jim Gore a surface curiously engraved with white scars, some of them short, some long, and twisting well around the surface of the arm.

"How the devil did that happen?" asked the miner, horrified.

"You'd never guess," said Chris, smiling as he rolled down the sleeve. "It would make a story that would cost you a bit of sleep—and I don't wish to shock you. But that will help you to understand me when I say that I know their language—all of it!"

Jim Gore could guess at enough to make him stare.

"All right," said he. "Maybe I yapped too soon. But when I heard that poor cayuse snort, it sort of curled up my stomach inside of me. How come you to fall out with 'em—south of the river?"

"That's too long a story," said the other carelessly. "But I'll tell you this much—that is my own country!"

"What?" cried Gore.

"My own country! I've only borrowed the States. I don't really belong here."

There was no real mirth in his smile.

"My full name," he went on, "is Señor Don Cristobal Jose Rodrigo Orthez Estaban."

"Good heavens," murmured Jim Gore. "How can a gent wear all of a name like that—in hot weather, too!"

"I like to travel light," grinned Señor Estaban. "That's one reason I came north of the river. Partly because you might say that I was invited to travel north, and partly because I like to go with a light pack. Well, I got what I wanted. If you've ever heard any of my names up here, you know that they're short."

Jim Gore scanned him again. Every moment he had increasing doubts about this hawk-faced youth.

"I live sort of lonely," said he. "You might say that I live sort of without hearing news. I dunno that I've ever heard of Chris before. What's the last name?"

"Some people call me Chris Estaban," said the other, looking fixedly at him. "Others call me simply Chris. I think I prefer that name. Then there are chunks of the range which call me 'The Doctor.'"

"The Doctor?" echoed Jim Gore. "How come? Are you a sure-enough sawbones?"

"I'm handy in all sorts of odd ways," smiled the young fellow. "But you might say that some folks drive right at the heart of things and some folks just trim around the edges—the same way that a doctor does!"

He cast at the miner a glance of mingled amusement and recklessness.

"You see?" said he.

"And, at the same time, he brought

out not only the gun from the holster but as expertly with his left hand another Colt which had been hidden in his clothes.

"Some folks," said The Doctor, firing with his left-hand gun as he spoke, "aim for nothing but the bull's-eye."

He fired with the right-hand weapon and Jim Gore noted two white splotches on the face of a black stone thirty paces away.

"But other folks, like a doctor, just trim around the edges, because they don't like to take chances with the real inwards of a man. They simply cut off the spare timber—as you might say!"

While he spoke, the guns chattered alternately, at every pause. Eleven shots in quick succession, and now a beautifully symmetrical pattern appeared on the stone. It was a perfect circle, each white splotch where a bullet had struck the heavy stone being placed with geometrical exactness at an even distance from its neighbors—eleven white spots sketching the circle on the rock.

"And so," said The Doctor, as he broke open his guns and began to reload them with a lightning speed, "some folks have called me The Doctor because they've noticed the way I operate—without any losses of life. Except," he added grimly, "a couple of times when the knife slipped—as you might say!"

Jim Gore walked slowly down to the rock and knelt almost reverently before it. He touched those deep indentations one by one. He picked up the flattened bits of lead which were scattered under the face of the stone. He examined the truth with which that circle had been drawn. Then he rose with a sigh and walked even more slowly back toward his companion.

"I see," said Jim.

"What?" asked The Doctor, a little sharply.

"I dunno," drawled Jim Gore. "I hope that I don't see too much."

"I guess you don't," admitted The Doctor. "However, I've been in jail only three or four times, and never stayed long enough to carve my initials on the stones."

"Maybe," suggested Jim Gore, speaking with the same thoughtful slowness, "maybe you wear other names, too?"

"Only a few," confessed this talented rascal. "A good many people call me 'Colonel Dice,' however."

"Colonel Dice? You been in the army?"

"Why, they gave me that name, I suppose, because at times the ivories seemed to be pretty well under my command. But there's never been more than two in my regiment!"

He chuckled as he spoke, and Jim Gore blinked. What amazed him most of all was the perfect frankness with which this man admitted that he was a combination of gunman and gambler. The explanation he determined to get if he could.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SOUND OF BELLS.

COLONEL," said he, "I dunno that I quite understand how you come to spill all the facts out like this."

"Not all," said The Doctor with a touch of grimness. "Oh, not all, Gore—just a part. And I'll tell you why. Sometimes I have a lot of crooks and slick birds around me, and then they never know me. But sometimes I meet an honest man, and when I do, I don't want to pull the wool over his eyes. Now, Gore, you've had a chance to hear the facts about me. I haven't explained them. Perhaps if you had more of the explanation I wouldn't seem such a hard chap. But I'm hard enough, at that. Oh, I'm plenty hard enough. But I give you a chance to look the whole

affair over. Now that you know a bit of me as I am, you can back out of the deal that we've just made. Say the word and I pike down across the valley and into the hills on the far side, the way I was headed when I stepped out and met you. Or, if you want, I'll stay on and we'll try to work out this silver game together."

Jim Gore, like the honest soul that he was, brooded upon this matter for a moment, and then he spoke his thoughts, singly and aloud.

"If I tackle this job alone, I got an idea that I'll run into a nest of foxes with wolves' teeth. And if I take you in with me, I'm liable to work with a gent that argues with lead. I've got to put the whole game into your hands—or else have nothin' to do with you. And if I tackle the job all by myself, most likely the only thing I'll gather in will be six inches of knife stuck in my back. Take it all in all, I think that I've got to hand half the cards to you, Colonel Dice!"

"That sounds good to me," murmured the youth. "I like the way you talk, Gore. You don't dodge around the corners. You keep out in the open."

"I aim to do that always," announced the prospector.

"Now, look here," said The Doctor, "I've showed you my hand. You know what my trumps are, and how I'm apt to play them. I think you understand, too, that you haven't enough aces up your sleeve to beat me if I want to use all of my cards. But I'm going to tell you this, besides: as long as you keep in the open and treat me honestly, you'll find that I'm the straightest man that ever pulled in harness with you. The minute you dodge into cover and play fox, I'll play wolf—and damned pronto! Do we understand each other?"

Jim Gore cleared his throat and then wiped his brow. But after a moment he was able to smile again.

"After all," said he, "when a man is breaking hard ground, he has to work with high-power powder. Doctor, I guess that you and me may hit it off pretty well together!"

"Good!" said the Colonel. "Then we're fixed. And the first thing is a bit of chuck. I don't mind saying that I've eaten nothing but my belt for the last day and a half."

Jim Gore, looking down at the mid-section of his companion, saw that the belt, as a matter of fact, had been drawn to the very last notch. The tall youth was as lean-bellied as a grayhound.

So they set about their preparations for the evening meal, and those preparations were made with wonderful speed. For the stranger, though he could have known nothing about the arrangements in the cabin, seemed to guess them by instinct. It was as though he smelled out the location of the bacon and the other provisions and knew by instinct where the pots and pans were kept.

And, where Jim Gore made one movement, the stranger made half a dozen. Never had Gore seen such smooth, unhurrying activity. The fire was swept together as by magic and the flame commenced leaping until Gore cried out: "We're lightin' a pretty bright candle, partner. Maybe the greaser will come back and use it to sight a gun by!"

But The Doctor merely laughed as he worked.

"That greaser friend of mine," said he, "figures that he has had a face-to-face conversation with one of the principal devils, and unless I'm very wrong, he's going to avoid this section of the mountains as though it were the hottest part of hell from this time on. He might have come back to pot-shot at you. But now that I've arrived—and remained—I think that you won't have any more trouble with him!"

It was not spoken in vanity, but rather as a calm presentation of facts of importance, and Jim Gore straightway dismissed all care from his mind. This young man was not apt to be wrong!

And then the cooking of supper being finished, Jim Gore sat back and watched such trencher work as he had never seen before. Yet The Doctor found time and ability to talk even as he consumed his food. All that was within reach slid down his gullet with amazing steadiness; and when all else was ended, the great pot of beans began to disappear, until finally the big iron spoon was grating on the bottom of the kettle. More than this, when the food was gone, there remained the coffee—a quart of it—of which Gore accepted one half cup and the tall stranger took the rest and stowed it boiling hot as though it were water. After that, his belt loosened to the first notch, he jumped up and scoured the dishes clean, singing as he worked. And Jim Gore looked on and helped as he could, admiring and pleased. He foresaw that this man would be an excellent camping companion. And that is the highest praise which one Westerner can give to another.

Then The Doctor stretched himself on the outer rim of the light of the dying fire with his coat rolled under his head. He uttered one deep groan of satisfaction and relief, and lay for a moment with his eyes closed.

Jim Gore had an impression that this man had not closed his eyes for whole days before this moment. And he had an impression, also, that the man could have gone on for other days, delving for his support into a mine of inexhaustible energy supplied by a well of nerve power which could hardly be drained dry.

Then Colonel Dice began to smoke, consuming a cigarette in a few swift inhalations, and then rolling another

with marvelously active and sure fingers. One hand shook in the tobacco and the other hand, without the supervision of the eyes, twisted the paper into a cornucopia-shaped, Mexican-style cigarette.

How much Mexican was in this man the prospector could not tell. His eyes and his hair, to be sure, were black. But his skin was far whiter than the skin of Gore himself. Perhaps Spanish, rather than Mexican blood, flowed in his veins.

However, Jim Gore decided that it would be useless for him to attempt to understand his new companion entirely. There were sure to remain certain phases of his nature which were beyond the ken of his own simple mind. So Jim felt that he should accept the character of The Doctor just as it was unfolded before him, without attempting to guess too much at what might lie behind the veil.

In this silent fashion the next few moments passed, and then:

"You got riding boots on your feet," said Jim. "I suppose that they ain't the most comfortable for mountain travel."

"If you run on your toes," said The Doctor, "riding boots aren't so bad. Besides, you see that I don't wear the extra-high heels. Matter of fact, I've found that I've had to use the fast feet about as often as I've had to use fast hoofs, and I wear boots that serve the double purpose."

"But," said Jim, eyeing the boots carefully by the dim light of the fire and noticing that they were not greatly worn or scratched, "you haven't been tramping very long in those boots."

"Only half a day," said the gambler calmly.

"Your hoss give out?"

"The bullet," said The Doctor, "didn't hit him in a vital spot. The poor devil kept going for another ten miles. And by that time I had shaken

them off. I took a blind trail and the blockheads behind me thought that I had run into a trap. But where the trail stopped I went right on over the rough country and turned it into a short cut. The horse dropped in the next ravine—rolled a hundred feet down into the bottom of the cut, as a matter of fact—but I managed to jump out of the saddle just as he started falling. That's how I happen to be here. In the meantime, those two posses have——"

"Two posses?" gasped Jim Gore.

"Oh, yes. A couple of towns joined hands in the good work of taking me in a net. But there are holes in a net, you see. And there's always a little space between two nets. One of those gangs rode right on behind me. The other lot took the long way round and thought that they'd head me off. But I was gone before they came up with my trail."

"Then they'll be along here?" cried Gore.

"They will not," chuckled the fugitive. "I made a little trail problem that'll keep them busy for quite some time. And what they make out of it, unless I'm very mistaken, will head them back north again to hunt for me there!"

His chuckle turned into a laugh.

"It was a very pleasant ride, Gore! But a damned hungry one. However, it's better to play a game than to eat, eh?"

But Jim Gore returned no response. He was too busy fumbling toward the ideas which seemed to be moving in the brain of The Doctor. But he could make nothing out of them. This was a sort of man beyond his ken. He was glad that he had determined beforehand to make no real effort to decipher the hidden features of The Doctor's character. Here, already, he had come to a blind wall.

"What's that?" asked Colonel Dice, suddenly sitting up.

There was a faint chattering of glass-ware, a fainter chiming of pots and pans in the little lean-to of the miner.

"An earthquake?" asked the Colonel.

"They come pretty frequent here," said Gore.

"Listen!" cautioned The Doctor.

Out of the depths of the valley, like a deeper, dimmer echo of the noise which had ended in the shack behind them, the sound of distant bells welled up to them—the bells of San Filipo!

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.



HOW THE PRAIRIE DOGS CAME

THE following Indian legend is a piece of folk lore that tells the origin of the prairie dog.

Many, many years ago, the story goes, before the white man came, there used to be a good man. No one knew his origin. He was always hunting and liked to be alone. Hence he was called "Loneliness."

One day this man was out hunting a long way from home, and a small bear started out of the brush in front of him. He chased the bear for a long time, and finally it ran into a cave by a spring. As the man tried to follow it, he was seized by a monster from the spring that caught hold of him and pulled him in. He remained there a long time, and was mourned for as dead. When he was practically forgotten, he suddenly reappeared in the camp and told what had happened to him. The people laughed at him and would not believe him, whereupon he went away and was not seen again. He was still under the monster's control and had to go back to the spring where he studied magic.

Many summers afterward, a great famine came. There was nothing to eat, and the Indians began to die for want of food. The man known as Loneliness, feeling sorry for his people, then tried to steal the monster's rolls of bark containing his secrets of magic, for the monster was a very powerful magician. One night, while the magician slept, Loneliness crept out of his lodge and into the monster's camp. When he got there, he took some roots and laid them across the magician's mouth, thus making it impossible for him to wake up. He then studied the rolls of bark and learned that the magician had planned out the whole famine and that it was his work. On a corner of one strip of bark was written: "In my belt there is an arrow, which, when you shoot it into the air will bring a lot of little animals." The Indian then examined the magician's belt and there found an arrow about a foot long.

Seizing it, he went outside and shot it a good many times. Then he broke it into little pieces, so that a spell could not be laid over him. He then killed plenty of the little animals that had suddenly appeared, and called them prairie dogs, because they sounded like real dogs. He took the dogs to the starving Indians and so saved them. After the Indian men got stronger, Loneliness took them to the place where the prairie dogs were and showed them how to kill the little creatures and keep them from going into holes in the ground. So now the Indians have prairie dogs to eat and are not in much danger of starving. At any rate, that is the way the legend goes.



Wild River

By Lillian Bennet-Thompson & George Hubbard

CHAPTER I. CROOKED WORK!

EARLY as it was, an appetizing odor of coffee drifted in from the kitchen; and the table was already laid for breakfast. In the center of the clean cloth, a low blue bowl held a cluster of Chinese lily bulbs, from which sprouted several graceful stalks of bloom.

Boyd surveyed the decoration with approval, wondering the while what Louise would think of Wo Ling's housekeeping. He rather guessed she'd like it. And how much more attractive the table would look when laid for two! He pictured her sitting there opposite him—the prettiest girl in the Valley, her slim brown hands busy with coffeepot and cups, the sunlight slanting through the wide windows across her bright hair.

"Ho, Wo!" he called out cheerily; and the Chinese cook, bowing and smil-

ing, appeared in the kitchen doorway. "Bring on the feast. It's a fine, bright morning, Wo."

As a matter of fact, it was nothing of the sort. The sun had not yet appeared over the rim of the horizon, and an opaque wall of mist blotted out the view from the windows. But the young rancher's high spirits were not dampened. He was at peace with the world and all that therein was, and he had excellent reason for so being.

Young, vigorous, healthy, owner of one of the most prosperous ranches in Triangle Valley, the very night before, the "only girl!" had agreed with him that Louise Boyd was really a much nicer name than Louise Colcord; and she had promised to consent to the change before many weeks had passed.

Boyd broke into a snatch of song as he poured a liberal allowance of cream into his coffee cup and reached for the sugar. Wo Ling, shuffling in from the kitchen, carefully closed the door behind him, before shutting the hall door

and peering cautiously out onto the veranda.

"What's all the 'Third Conspirator' stuff for, Wo?" Boyd wanted to know. "Heap big mystery, eh?"

The Chinese made no reply, but sidled over to the table, and, from some place of concealment about his voluminous garments, drew a creased and dirty envelope, which he deposited daintily beside his master's plate. "He say, velly implotant," he observed confidentially; "Misser Gally must have velly early morning."

"Who said so, Wo?"

"He no say; Wo not know," returned the Chinese, and bowed over his clasped hands.

"The plot thickens," Boyd said and tore open the envelope, which, he presumed, had been delivered by some messenger, unknown to Wo Ling, while he was at the Colcord ranch the night before. Probably nothing more interesting than an inquiry from some neighbor about a new seed, or the pedigree of a cow!

Written on a sheet of ruled paper, evidently torn from a memorandum book, the note consisted of only a dozen scrawled lines.

DEAR GARRY: Can you manage to ride up first thing to-morrow—Monday—morning? Seems as if my being off the job has given somebody a chance to pull some pretty crooked work, and I don't like the looks of things a little bit. Particulars when I see you.

EVAN.

The smile left Garrett Boyd's face as he read. Something wrong up at the construction camp, and Evan Perry still unable to leave his shack! Something serious, too, or the chief engineer would never have written that he "didn't like the looks of things a little bit"; Perry wasn't a calamity-howler. Crooked work, eh? With the dam just about finished, and the spring thaw less than a month away! Why, it might mean anything!

Boyd's chair scraped back abruptly from the table; he snapped out an order that sent Wo Ling scurrying from the room. "Crooked work! The words nagged at him as he hastily gulped down his coffee and, leaving the rest of his breakfast untouched, hurried out to the veranda where his horse was already waiting for him.

Whatever was on Evan Perry's mind must have come to his attention very recently, for it hadn't been more than a week ago that he had expressed himself as completely satisfied with the way things were going. True, he had complained that Garvin, the company inspector, was drinking up the whisky in the valley faster than the moonshiners could make it and was, as a consequence, hopelessly drunk twenty-four hours a day. But there was Ralph Newman. He was competent and efficient; and Perry relied on him, rather than on Garvin, anyway, whatever the technical status of the two.

Newman's reports had been more than satisfactory. More than once, sitting by the bedside of the crippled chief engineer, Boyd had listened to the latter's glowing praise of his assistant—how the work was way ahead of schedule and was progressing as well, if not better, than if Perry himself had been in charge of it.

So, Boyd concluded, there couldn't be anything wrong with the dam itself. Some juggling with the accounts or the pay roll, probably, or maybe dissatisfaction among the men; they weren't an easy lot to handle, if one weren't used to them and their humors. But—

"I wish he'd given me a hint of the trouble!" Boyd muttered, frowning. "Shake a leg, there, Lady, I'm in a hurry—'Particulars when I see you.' Well, Evan, you'll do that little thing just as soon as this four-legged critter can get me up to the gap. 'Crooked work!' Evidently wants me to put it straight for him. Poor-old Evan! Rot-

ten luck for him, bustin' his leg and being cooped up all these weeks—I say, Lady girl, is that the best you can do?"

A little impatiently, he shook the bridle, and the mare responded instantly, stretching herself in a long, space-eating stride, as though she sensed and sympathized with the puzzled anxiety of her master.

CHAPTER II.

THE YELLOW BOARD.

IT was an anxiety not lessened by a fact that had become apparent to Garrett Boyd the moment he stepped out on the veranda of the ranch house—spring was in the air. The fields still slept beneath the withered stubble, brown as an old cigar; the river, shrunken to a sluggish thread, crawled along between drab banks of mud that were baked hard as stone and cracked into fantastic patterns. The hills that ringed the valley and towered around Moon Basin, were still heavily capped and patched with snow; and, where a hundred brooks slipped down over the granite ledges, thick ice barriers barred their way.

But spring was in the air. Up the long valley, between dark and dawn, the miracle had come, riding on the wings of the south wind, unheralded and unexpected. And, to Garrett Boyd, unmistakable! Too often had he felt that slow soft breath caress his cheek, too often sniffed the curious, indefinable fragrance of it, to fail to recognize it for what it was—an early spring.

In a few hours, the sluggish thread that was Wild River would rouse from its torpor; a thousand little tributary brooks and streamlets would come murmuring down from the hills; and the river would swell and widen into the swift-rushing torrent that, every spring, became at once the blessing and the curse of Triangle Valley.

Time had been when the river flowed through a deep cañon on the eastern

border of the valley, which, with its scanty rainfall, was then a dry and arid waste. It was shaped, roughly, like a long triangle, the base, its widest portion, being at the south, the truncated apex, at its northern extremity.

Then, at some remote period, a landslide had blocked the cañon; and the river had been forced to cut a new channel for itself. It had found its way through the gap, the deep cleft between the hills at the head of the valley that led into Moon Basin; and, flowing south, across the wide levels, it had turned the waste places into fertile grazing and farm lands.

But, as its name implied, Wild River was a treacherous stream. Erosion of its banks was constantly going on; and every spring, when the snow melted in the mountains and the heavy vernal rains fell in the northern hills, the river swelled to a raging torrent, threatening to sweep irresistibly over its banks and carry everything before it.

It was to avert this ever-growing menace that the construction of Wild River Dam had been begun at the northern extremity of the gap. Moon Basin, the great natural cup-shaped depression in the hills, would thus be turned into a vast reservoir, where the surplus water could be conserved and from which the flow would be controlled by sluice gates in the dam.

Garrett Boyd, in common with every one else in Triangle Valley, had been looking confidently forward to the completion of the work that meant not only an ample supply of water for irrigation purposes but also a guarantee of permanent safety to lives and property; and nothing could have been more disturbing than the statement of Evan Perry, the chief engineer, that he "didn't like the looks of things a little bit."

It was idle to speculate on Perry's exact meaning; yet the nearer he got to the gap, the more Boyd's uneasiness increased. Never before had he seen the

snow line creep so low on the white-capped peaks rimming Moon Basin; never had the ice locks on the granite ledges seemed so thick and solid.

A haze of translucent mist veiled the coulees and swung in undulating wreaths close to the ground. The wind was freshening a little; it came in quick, warm, moisture-laden puffs that rattled the dry leaves and moaned among the hemlock branches.

As Boyd rounded the base of a long hill jutting out into the Valley, the dam came into view: a great double span of steel and concrete that arched itself high in the air above the rock-strewn bed of the river.

It was still too early for the construction gang to be at work; the only sign of life about the massive structure was a couple of black dots that, as Boyd drew nearer, resolved themselves into the figures of two men, moving out from the embankment onto the wooden staging that stretched across the face of the concrete.

One was well in advance of the other, and, consequently further away from Boyd; yet it was this foremost figure which he first recognized. It moved in a series of hobbling jerks, and its silhouette against the gray white of the stone, was twisted and humped over.

"Why, that's Perry! Perry—on crutches! He's out to see for himself what's going on. Taking a chance, I'll say, with that game leg of his!"

Nearly two months before, a stone rolling under the chief engineer's foot, had sent him to bed with a badly fractured leg; and this early-morning visit to the dam was, to the best of Boyd's knowledge, the first time that he had left his shack since his accident, almost the first time that he had attempted to move about on crutches.

Nor was it simple, straight-ahead walking out on the false work of the dam, even for a man with two perfectly sound legs. In Perry's crippled condi-

tion, a slip or a stumble might very easily prove disastrous. But, apparently, he was observing all due care. Very slowly, he moved across the span of the first arch, the other man following well behind him.

"Too tall for Garvin; he's short and fat," Boyd mused, his eyes on the second figure. "Newman, I guess; looks about his height and build. They're on the trail of something, that's sure. 'Crooked work!' Perhaps, after all, there is something wrong with the dam. I wonder——"

Perry had stopped, turned, evidently to speak to his companion, who stopped also. Then both moved slowly on again.

The sun, a pale, watery orb, was up now, dissipating the mists, drawing the haze from the air. Against the sharpened background, the two figures on the long narrow platform were limned in clear silhouette. Boyd was able almost to distinguish Perry's features, as his friend stopped and turned once more; and he was sure, now, that the second man was Ralph Newman, assistant to the chief engineer. The tall, rather slender figure, the square shoulders, the narrow head with its thatch of thick blond hair, could belong to no one but Newman.

His injured leg crooked up at the knee, Perry was again swinging himself laboriously along. He had reached that part of the staging that led across the face of the second arch. The watery sunlight glinted from the polished wood of the new crutches, from the metal bands that gripped their rubber tips.

And then, all at once, it glinted from something else—from a long, shiny yellow board that flashed suddenly into the air, like the up-flung finger of a giant hand.

A cry of horror rose to Boyd's lips. His spurs drove into the mare's flanks, as, with a futile shout of warning, he dashed forward.

With the upward flirt of the plank,

Perry swayed, tottered. For one breathless instant, his body seemed to hang, as though suspended in space. Then, head downward, it toppled from the staging and plunged like a plummet half a hundred feet to the rocky bed of the river below.

CHAPTER III.

HIS STRENGTH.

DIZZY, whitelipped, Boyd flung himself from the saddle and half slid, half leaped, down the steep bank, stumbling across the caked mud that gave out a hollow sound beneath his feet. Men were running now, hurrying from all directions toward the spot where Perry lay, his huddled body well-nigh impaled by the jagged splinters of water-worn rock. One glance was enough to show that death had been instantaneous. In his wide, glazing eyes was frozen a look that made Boyd turn his own eyes away.

Newman, pale and shaken, had scrambled down the false work and was bending over the body. "Heavens, Boyd!" he said. "This is frightful!"

The young rancher wet his dry lips with his tongue. "How—how did it happen, Newman?" He had seen it happen; the ghastly tragedy had taken place directly in front of him; but, somehow, it did not seem real. Stupefied with the suddenness of it, he could only stammer out the inadequate question.

"He—he lost his footing—made a misstep. I told him he ought not to try it, Boyd. The boards were rough and slippery, and he wasn't used to his crutches. But he just laughed and said he'd be all right. I—I——" Newman gulped and swallowed hard, running his fingers through his thick light hair.

"I—he'd given me the order to have the sluices closed, and he was bound to have a final look at the work before I issued it. He was ahead of me on the

staging. I—I saw him slip, but I couldn't reach him in time, Boyd." He shuddered, his voice choking up. With a shaking hand, he reached for his handkerchief and wiped away the great beads of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead. "Heavens!" he said again. "This is frightful!"

"It's our first bad accident, Mr. Boyd," one of the men said in an awe-struck tone. "And to think it had to be the chief——"

Boyd did not answer; he could not trust himself to speak. Evan Perry had been his friend, one of the best friends he had in the world—— Through misty eyes, he watched the men reverently lift the poor mangled body onto an improvised litter and bear it away. But he did not follow the solemn little procession back to the engineer's shack.

Instead, he mounted to the embankment and stood there, with bent head, his chin sunk on his breast. The sudden stark horror of Evan Perry's death had left him dazed and uncertain of himself. But, even in the midst of his grief, the thought came to him that now Perry would never explain the reason for that scrawled note—would never tell what it was of which he hadn't "liked the looks a little bit."

Crooked work! What kind of crooked work had he learned of, only to take his discovery with him in that terrible plunge to death? Had he spoken of it to Newman, his assistant, and had the two of them been on a tour of investigation? Or——

From below, rose the faint swish and gurgle of the sluggishly flowing water; and the sound was repeated in a myriad diffused echoes from the hills, where the warm breath of the chinook was already unlocking the ice prisons of the mountain streams, melting the high piled drifts of the stored-up winter snows.

Sunk in his brown study, Boyd might have stood there one moment or ten——

he could not have told—when he became aware that young Thorne had come to stand beside him. Thorne was an odd youngster whom Perry had picked up in some out-of-the-way place and befriended. Thereafter, the lad had attached himself to the engineer and had shared his nomadic wanderings. During Perry's enforced inactivity after the accident with the rolling stone, Thorne had waited on him hand and foot, run errands, cooked, taken care of his benefactor with untiring loyalty and an inarticulate, doglike devotion.

"I guess you know how hard this hits me, Mr. Boyd," he said, winking his blue eyes to clear away the blur of tears. "He was the finest, whitest man that ever breathed, and the kindest. He—he did just everything for me, and I dunno how I'm going to make out now he's gone."

"There's always a home at Delta Ranch for you, Jimmy," Boyd said. "You needn't worry about that, you know. I can't take Perry's place with you, but—"

"You're awful good, Mr. Boyd. I guess I'll come, if you're sure I can earn my keep. With the chief—he let me do little things for him, kind o' look out for him lately when he wasn't able to do for himself. I'll never forgive myself for lettin' him go out there this morning when I knew it wasn't safe."

Boyd caught him up sharply. "You knew it wasn't safe? What wasn't safe, Jimmy? The staging?"

Thorne shook his head. "I didn't mean that, Mr. Boyd. I meant he wasn't really strong enough to try his crutches out there. The staging was all right, far as I know. Seemed strong enough when I tried it—right the same place, too, where he fell. I remember, it was just there I got the samples for him. He asked me where I took 'em; he wanted to know exactly."

"You knew he sent for me to come

up to see him this morning, did you?" Boyd asked.

"Yes, sir. I took the note down for him last night, after dark. You weren't home, so I left it with the Chinaman and told him to be sure you got it."

"Do you happen to know what it was the chief wanted to see me about?"

Thorne looked around to make sure there was no one within earshot, and drew closer. "Not exactly, no sir. I could give a guess, maybe, but— Well, Mr. Boyd, I reckon I better tell you the whole thing. Perhaps you can figure it out. It's got me pretty well jazzed up, thinking about it. There's something at the bottom of it, I know that; but I'm not bright enough to see what it is."

Boyd, slowly rolling a brown-paper cigarette, nodded his head. "Shoot!" he said briefly.

"Well, it was Saturday morning that I noticed something was botherin' the chief," Thorne began. "He'd been goin' through a stack of papers—receipts and such like—when Volanti comes in with the pay roll."

"Volanti?" The name sounded familiar to Boyd, though he could not for the moment recall where he had heard it.

"Tony Volanti, the foreman. It's his little kid, Phil, that Miss Colcord's had down at the ranch, you know."

"Oh, yes." Boyd remembered, now. Louise, with the kindness characteristic of her, had been looking after the child, whose mother had been taken ill during the late winter and been removed to a hospital, where she still was. "Go ahead, Jimmy."

"Volanti brought in the pay roll," Thorne went on obediently; "and the chief wasn't satisfied with it, somehow. He didn't say anything to me, but I could see he was doin' a lot of thinkin'. He got out another big pile of papers and studied over 'em a long time."

"Then, late Saturday afternoon, he

told me he wanted me to go out to the dam and knock off some pieces of concrete. I wasn't to say a word, or let on to anybody what I was doin', cause he didn't want anybody to see me gettin' 'em; and I was to take him the samples and let him know just the spot where I'd taken 'em."

"Yes?" said Boyd. "He wanted samples of the concrete; and he didn't want anybody at all to know he was getting them, eh?"

"That's it, sir. Well, I did just what he told me. After dark, when all the men had quit work, I got a stone hammer and sneaked out on the staging. I knocked off some pieces of the concrete—right there by the second arch—and carried them back to him. He looked 'em over, just as careful as could be, and kept scowlin', and shakin' his head.

"Then he told me to go to bed—he'd got some work he had to do. He fussed around 'bout half the night—he put the samples into a little bowl and ground 'em all up—"

"You mean, he analyzed them?"

"I reckon that's what you'd call it. He had a lot of little fine sieves and such. Anyway, he worked and worked, and I never did see him so mad, Mr. Boyd. He was clean up in the air. He got out all his papers and receipts again and made long lists of figures.

"I wanted him to quit and turn in; I could see with half an eye that he was doin' too much for his strength; but he wouldn't listen to me. Told me to shut up and go back to bed, because if he'd nothin' to worry about besides his strength, he said, he wouldn't have to get much worked up."

"Nothing to worry about except his strength, eh?" Boyd muttered to himself. His eyes had narrowed, and a fine line was deepening between his brows. "His strength! Yes. Well, go on, Jimmy. What then?"

"Then," Thorne continued, "first thing yesterday morning, he sent me

after Mr. Newman; wanted to see him in a hurry. They shut themselves up in the back room and talked—talked for hours, it seemed."

"You hear anything they said?"

"No. Once in a while, I could hear the chief's voice, loud, shouting something; and then Mr. Newman would shout back at him; but the door was shut, and I couldn't get the words at all. They sounded pretty mad, though.

"Finally, Mr. Newman went out and came back with a bucket of cement, it looked like; and they went to it again. Middle of the afternoon, the chief sent me after Volanti; and, when he came, the three of 'em had a session. I was sure curious to know what was goin' on; but it wasn't my business to ask questions, and the chief didn't tell me a thing; besides, I was to take that note down to you last night.

"I did that. And then, bedtime, he told me he wanted a cup o' coffee 'fore sunrise to-day; he and Newman were goin' out on the dam first thing. And—that's all," the boy ended abruptly.

All—

After a short silence, Boyd said slowly: "Jimmy, from what you've told me, I believe I see why the chief was so upset, and why he said what he did to you about not worrying over his strength. He wasn't thinking about himself; he was thinking about the analysis of those samples of concrete that you got for him Saturday night, and what it might mean for a whole lot of innocent, unsuspecting people. That's what was on his mind, Jimmy, worrying him. And I reckon maybe it's going to worry us some, too." He laid his hand on the lad's shoulder.

"You and I, Jim," he said earnestly. "The chief trusted us; and there were others he didn't feel he could trust. Maybe he'd been trusting somebody a little bit too much at that; and he wasn't certain of anybody but you and me. So it's up to us, you see. We've got to

find out whether I'm right or not, and then try to do what the chief himself would have done if he'd been here.

"First thing, we're going out on the staging there and get a good careful look at it. It held you all right, and it let go with him. We're going to find out why."

The boy's blue eyes widened as he stared at Boyd. "You—you don't mean you think it mightn't have been an accident, do you?" he whispered. "Why, Mr. Boyd, he couldn't——"

"I don't know quite what to think yet, Jimmy. You've certainly given me a-plenty to think about, though; and I'll sort all the pieces out and put 'em together again a bit later. Just now, we'll do something. If I'm right, there'll be a whole lot to do and mighty little time to do it in; so we'll just hustle right out there on the staging and see for ourselves what's what. Fetch the rope off my saddle, will you, Jimmy?"

CHAPTER IV.

AT A DISCREET DISTANCE.

THEN Boyd worked quickly. At any moment he expected to hear a shout, or to see some one running toward him; but no one appeared from the camp, and the embankment was deserted.

Followed by young Thorne, he strode along the crest of the dam until he reached the second arch. There, he uncoiled his lariat and fastened the noose over the projecting end of a reinforcement rod.

Directing Jimmy to watch the rawhide, so that there should be no chance of its scraping in two against the rough edge of the stonework, he carefully lowered himself from the crest and went down, hand over hand, over the face of the concrete. He had calculated the position exactly; and, when he reached the level of the staging, he found himself at the precise spot from which Evan Perry had fallen.

His mind was in a whirl. He had not even attempted to follow to their apparently logical conclusions the gruesome possibilities conjured up by what Jimmy Thorne had told him. But one fact was perfectly clear; there was a wide discrepancy between what he himself had seen, as he had galloped along the curving road toward the dam, and Ralph Newman's statement as to what had taken place.

"He lost his footing, made a misstep. I saw him slip, but I couldn't reach him in time."

Newman, only a few yards behind Perry, had "seen him slip;" yet Boyd was absolutely sure he had done nothing of the kind. Of course, the assistant engineer had been unnerved—as who would not have been—but, even so, that didn't account for him saying that the boards had been slippery and that Perry had made a misstep, when, right before his eyes, the staging had given 'way completely. Why, one end of a plank had swung right up into the air when Perry attempted to step on it. He must have seen; he couldn't have helped seeing.

Which plank, then? And why had it swung up at that particular time? That was what Garrett Boyd wanted to find out for himself. And one look at the staging was enough to show him.

Through a gaping aperture, one end of the cross piece was visible, still fastened to the upright. The other end hung loosely down—the end that had been nailed to the second upright, nearest the face of the dam. There, it had pulled out; and, deprived of its support, the planks had simply dropped the instant that Perry's weight rested on them.

Plain enough. But why should the crosspiece have pulled loose all at once? The staging had been in constant use; not one, but any number of men had been working from it every day for weeks. It had been erected by skilled

carpenters who knew perfectly well that it must be strong and substantial.

"Look out for that rope up there, Jimmy!" Boyd called out to the boy above him. Don't let it scrape!"

"I'm watching, sir," came the reply.

Bracing his feet against the concrete, Boyd swung himself out on the end of the lariat like a weight on the end of a pendulum arm, pushing himself out farther and farther until the dangling crosspiece was within his reach.

It was a ticklish business. Time and again he swung, stretching out his arm as far as he dared, only to miss his object and bring up with a jarring impact against the face of the dam. But at last he got a good grip of the timber, and, hooking an arm about the upright, gradually steadied himself, until he was evenly balanced.

A rough, unplanned beam, the crosspiece was splintered a little at the loose end; and from it half a dozen bent and twisted nails protruded. Only—Boyd's breath caught sharply—only, instead of the points of the nails, it was the heads that stuck out! The sinister significance of that fact struck him with almost the force of a physical blow—the heads, not the points, of the nails stuck out!

The heads would have been flush with the wood, had crosspiece and upright been wrenched apart by a strain on the staging; the points would have projected from the end of the beam. Yet Boyd could barely see the points at all; they were almost embedded in the rough grain.

"They didn't pull out; they were pulled out! Deliberately drawn, so that they'd let go!" He dashed the back of his hand across his eyes and peered closer. "And here——"

Beneath the nail heads, faint but clear indentations in the wood, tapering slightly toward the bottom, showed him how the nails had been drawn by the claw end of a hammer. Double-toothed dents, deepest at the narrowest part,

where the leverage had come, they were under every separate nail that had held the crosspiece in place. Every separate nail had been drawn, so that the slightest weight, resting on the planks above, would be enough.

The slightest weight—even the weight of a slim lad like Jimmy Thorne! Yet Jimmy Thorne had walked safely across those same planks on Saturday night. The nails must have been drawn, then, some time between Saturday night and Monday morning, and drawn by some one who knew that Evan Perry would be going out on that staging.

The whole gang of workmen had been constantly passing and repassing that very spot, and any one of them might have been caught in the death trap had it been set. But it hadn't. It had been planned for the man who had walked into it, the man who had announced his intention of inspecting the dam early Monday morning, before the men went to work.

Perry had told Jimmy Thorne that he meant to go as soon as it was light enough—go with Ralph Newman. Then Newman, too, must have known. And he——

Slowly, Garrett Boyd climbed up again to the crest of the dam. To Jimmy's eager questions, he returned brief, rather evasive answers. "I don't know yet, Jimmy; I can't be sure. You go back to the shack and wait. I've got to think this out."

Before his mind's eye, a picture was growing, clear and ever clearer—the memory of two black figures moving across a gray-white background in the mist-blurred light of the dawn. The space that separated them! One stopping, the other stopping, too! Always a gap between them! Always a wide gap between the chief engineer, who had plunged headlong to a horrible death, and the man who had followed him—at a discreet distance!

CHAPTER V.

THE DOOR CLOSES.

AND now—what did this mean? A few brief questions, and Boyd was striding through the construction camp toward the rough board shack that served as an office. He tapped on the door and entered, to find Ralph Newman at the desk, while a short, powerfully-built Italian, in overalls and jumper, sprawled in the chair beside him. This was the foreman, Tony Volanti, the father of Louise Colcord's small protégé. Volanti got up at once, smiling and showing his very white teeth, and bowed Boyd toward his chair.

The rancher, however, did not sit down. Instead, he said, "Thanks, Volanti; I won't be a moment. Mr. Newman, the men are closing the sluices; by your order, they tell me. I don't want to seem officious; but do you think it should be done now, under the circumstances?"

The engineer looked surprised. "Certainly! Why not, Mr. Boyd?"

"Didn't I understand you to say that Mr. Perry wanted to make a final inspection of the dam before the gates were closed? Wasn't that what you told me a short time ago—that he went out this morning for that purpose?"

Newman nodded. "I did tell you that," he said. "But, of course, Mr. Perry's inspection was merely a matter of form—a sort of official rubber stamp, you know."

"'Merely a matter of form,'" repeated Boyd. "It seems to me it must have been something more than that, Mr. Newman; certainly, Perry himself must have so regarded it. In his crippled condition, it was no small risk that he took when he went out on that staging; and he undoubtedly knew it. Yet he insisted, against your advice, on taking the risk—which he wouldn't have done, surely, for something that was a 'mere matter of form.' He must have

felt pretty strongly the need of making a personal inspection of the work."

"He did," said Newman promptly. "He felt very strongly about it indeed, Mr. Boyd. Technically, he was in charge of Wild River Dam; although, as you know, he hasn't been able to do any active work on it for several weeks. And, when the unexpected change in the weather came last night, and the chinook made its sudden appearance, he thought it his duty to look over things himself before I gave out his order to close the sluices.

"But the regular official inspection had already been made by Mr. Garvin. That's why I said the chief's visit was merely a matter of form. The final word is, of course, up to the company inspector. You understand, don't you, Mr. Boyd? There's a regular way of doing these things."

"Yes. But, on the other hand," Boyd persisted, "you probably are aware that Mr. Perry had no great confidence in Garvin. That being the case——"

Newman laughed shortly. "You're right; he hadn't. Did you ever know a teetotaler who had any confidence in a drinking man? However, the chief did have confidence in me, you see. I really completed the dam, you know, Mr. Boyd; and Mr. Perry was good enough to express himself as well pleased with the way the work went along under my direction. I believe you were present one evening last week when he spoke about it.

"He and Volanti there"—Newman made a gesture toward the Italian, who was standing by the door and whose eyes had never left his face—"and I were in conference for some time yesterday.

"Mr. Perry was entirely satisfied—more than satisfied, he said—with everything that had been done. But, as I've already explained to you, as nominal chief here, he felt in duty bound to make a personal visit of inspection

to stamp the job with the seal of his official approval."

"In that event," Boyd said slowly, "since the accident resulting in his death made that impossible, don't you agree with me that some other responsible representative of the company should be called in to make the official inspection that Perry could not complete?"

Newman's thick, light eyebrows lifted a little, "Mr. Garvin is here; and he is the accredited representative of the company, which considers him eminently reliable, whatever Mr. Perry's personal opinion of him may have been. And, personally, I have no fault whatever to find with Garvin. To suggest calling in some one else—to go over his head—is perfectly absurd, Mr. Boyd. If we asked to have some one sent, they'd think I'd gone crazy, that's all. Garvin and I are both satisfied——"

"But I am not," Boyd interposed quietly.

"You are not?" Newman echoed. He pushed his chair a little back from the desk and thrust his hands into his pockets. "I hope you'll pardon me for observing that I fail to see where you come in."

"Well, I happen to live in Triangle Valley, Mr. Newman. Every dollar I've got in the world is invested in the Delta Ranch."

"Oh, you're the chap with the Greek letter brand, are you?" Newman inquired with interest. "Rather clever idea, I thought, when I saw it. Delta Ranch—delta of Wild River, of course! It——"

"And I have a lot of good friends and neighbors," Boyd pursued steadily, ignoring the interruption, "whose lives and property depend on this dam here. Unless I'm very much mistaken—and I don't believe I am—we're going to see the highest water this spring that we've ever known. The snows back in the

mountains are very deep; the ice is unusually thick. Besides, there's rain on the way, the clouds are piling up now, and we have rain in the valley about once in a blue moon.

"All that means a quick heavy thaw, and a big freshet. The water'll be down on us with a rush; and, if anything should be wrong with the dam——"

Newman laughed outright. "Wrong with the dam? What on earth could be wrong with it? Every specification has been carried out in accurate detail. Mr. Perry himself superintended the foundation and reinforcement work, and I've just attended to the concrete."

"Exactly; you've attended to the concrete!"

"Which is nothing in the world but filling in the forms with sand and cement—the simplest sort of a job."

"Of course," Boyd agreed sardonically. "Nothing could be simpler, really. A boy of ten could do it. But——" and there was something in his voice that made Newman give him a quick glance—"but a boy of ten isn't usually trusted to do it, because he might make some serious mistake. Even old and experienced engineers have been known to make mistakes, Mr. Newman; nobody is infallible. And if, by any unfortunate chance, it should turn out that one had been made in the concrete mixture used in Wild River Dam——"

"Mistake in the mixture?" Newman exclaimed sharply. "What do you mean, sir? Are you trying to tell me that I don't know my business?"

"I'm not trying to tell you anything, Mr. Newman," Boyd replied steadily, "except that, as a resident of Triangle Valley, I protest against the sluices being closed until some responsible and sober inspector from the construction company examines and O. K.'s your work. Will you telegraph for such a man at once?"

Newman eyed him with frank hostility. "Most certainly not, Mr. Boyd!"

he said coldly. "You are insulting, sir. You said when you came in that you didn't want to seem 'officious'. I consider you both officious and offensive.

"Now"—he rose from his chair and stepped around the corner of the desk—"now, please let me make this quite clear to you; I am the engineer in charge of Wild River Dam, and Mr. Garvin is the company inspector. Neither of us is obliged to—nor will—submit to ignorant meddling and dictation in our affairs. When we want your advice, we'll ask for it. And that's that. Good morning, Mr. Boyd."

The young rancher lifted his shoulders in a slight shrug. "Very well," he said. "If you won't do it, I shall. I'll go to the telegraph office myself at once."

"You can go to the telegraph office or to the devil, Mr. Boyd; it's all one to me." Newman's manner was an admirable combination of contempt and insolent indifference; but over Boyd's shoulder, he flashed a quick look at Volanti, who, swiftly and silently as a cat, slipped outside the shack, leaving the door ajar on a crack, so that he could listen to Boyd's reply.

"Thanks," said the latter dryly. I prefer the telegraph office. I'm not at all sure that the alternative destination you suggest might not result for me, and the whole valley, as well, if I didn't. I intend"—and his gray eyes were like two boring steel points—"I intend to advise your company that the residents of the valley are apprehensive over the situation here, and that the chief engineer was worried enough to take a chance which resulted in his violent death. And, at the same time, Mr. Newman, I shall request the local authorities to institute a rigid investigation into the manner of that engineer's death. I happen to know that he fell from the staging neither because he slipped nor made a misstep, but because the boards had been deliberately tampered with."

The color drained from Newman's face, leaving him deathly pale under his tan. He gave an almost imperceptible jerky nod toward the door, which instantly closed without a sound. Then he said, slowly "You will do exactly as you see fit, Mr. Boyd. And so shall I. Whatever action your local authorities may choose to take on your absurd suggestion has nothing to do with the fact that I am in charge of and responsible for Wild River Dam. The sluices will remain closed. The work here has been completed, inspected, and passed. I am not going to be threatened and bullied by you or any other officious meddler, sir; and, if you set foot in this camp again, I'll order you put out of it."

Boyd bowed. His face was set in stern lines. "It might," he said grimly, "have been better if you'd given that order before this morning, Mr. Newman." He turned on his heel and strode out.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHOT FROM THE TREES.

THE sun had ridden again behind a thickening veil of haze when Boyd galloped out of the camp. The freshening wind, blowing directly into his face, was sultry and moisture-laden. From the rocky slope that rose steeply at one side of the road came the gurgling murmur of a thousand tiny trickles of water, whispering among the gnarled roots of the trees and over the thick carpet of leaves and hemlock needles. The whole world seemed alive with the sound, the ominous, menacing music of running water.

As Boyd galloped along, it sang through his brain in a low, rhythmic dissonance, like a sinister accompaniment throbbing in time to the surge of his thoughts. There was no doubt whatever in his mind that Evan Perry had been put out of the way because he knew too much; and Boyd was

grimly determined that whoever was responsible for the dastardly act should pay the full penalty for it. He wanted to see David Colcord, who, better than anyone else, would be able to advise him just what steps to take.

Yet, when he came to the cross road leading to the Colcord ranch, he did not even hesitate; there was more at stake than the apprehension and punishment of Evan Perry's murderer, and Perry himself would have been the first to say so. Perry was dead and needed the help of no man now; but in Triangle Valley there were men and women and helpless little children who were in terrible danger. The lives of all of them might hang on the message that Boyd was going to send.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the mare flung up her head and shied violently to the far side of the road. Simultaneously, the sharp crack of a rifle sounded, and Boyd's sombrero spun from his head and sailed down into the dust of the road, while a bullet flattened itself with a savage spat against a granite boulder. The rancher did not stop to congratulate himself upon the narrowness of his escape, nor, then, to consider that he was exposing himself recklessly as a tempting target. In a flash, he was out of the saddle and bounding up the slope in the direction from which the shot had come.

A gray pine mole dived into a hole among the twisted roots of a towering hemlock; from a bare branch, an impudent chipmunk sent down a vociferous scolding; with a swift, soft whir of downy wings, a woodpecker took flight from the bole of a dead tree. But there was no other living thing in sight. Nor did Boyd's hurried search reveal a sign to indicate that a human being had been before him upon the hillside. Not a footprint in the earth; not a freshly broken twig of the sparse undergrowth; not a trampled place in the sodden leaves!

Yet there were a hundred, a thousand, places where some one might have hidden—might still be hidden, perhaps. Behind the huge boulders or the thickly-set tree trunks, any number of men could have found concealment.

Boyd descended to the road, wary, alert, his revolver ready for instant use. Could he have found his would-be assassin, it would have gone hard with him; for the young rancher had not a doubt that the evil brain that had spawned the idea of taking Evan Perry's life, was responsible for this cowardly attempt on his own. And for the same reason—he knew too much.

He mounted Lady and turned her head around, back in the direction from which he had come. He meant now to get to David Colcord as quickly as possible. Some one else must send the message to the construction company; he, Garrett Boyd, did not dare to ride the miles of narrow, lonely road that lay between him and the telegraph office!

It was not that he held his life so dear. But, as he had picked up his sombrero from the road, the sight of the small, round hole in the crown of it had brought to him, all at once, the realization that his life was of more importance now than it had ever been before in the twenty-seven years of its span. More important, not to him, but to others! For the sake of all those innocent, ignorant souls in Triangle Valley, his friends and neighbors, to whom this early coming of spring meant only prosperity and plenty for the year, he must be prudent and cautious. He must take no unnecessary risks until he had shared his knowledge.

The sky was overcast by a thick, lowering mantle of cloud, now; and rain was beginning to fall. Heralded by a spatter of big, warm drops, in less than five minutes, it became a drenching downpour. By the time Boyd clattered up to the Colcords' gate, every rut and depression in the road was filled to over-

flowing; Lady was splashing hock-deep through puddles, and the hard-packed clay under her hoofs was fast turning into a mass of oozy, sticky mud.

The hills around Moon Basin were smothered in an opaque curtain of gray, steamy fog that rose thickly, impenetrably above the vast blanket of snow and ice, where the breath of the chinook and the warm fingers of the rain touched it. The snow and ice that were melting and running swiftly down the rocky slopes toward Wild River Dam!

CHAPTER VII.

WILL THE DAM HOLD?

IN the doorway of the living room, Boyd paused, held for a moment, despite his apprehension and anxiety, by the charm of the picture that met his eyes. Louise was sitting on the hearth rug, the flickering glow of the log fire turning her hair to a nimbus of ruddy gold. Opposite her, cross-legged, his small, olive-skinned face eager and animated, was a slender, black-haired, black-eyed boy; and the rug between them was strewn with colorful bits of quartz and polished stone.

"I know where it is, Miss Louise," the little boy was exclaiming excitedly. "My father found a whole lot of it over in the cañon, just below the big bend; and he told me. I'll go and get some right away." He scrambled to his feet.

"Why, bless your heart, Phil," laughed the girl, "you mustn't think of such a thing. It's a long, rough way; and you'd be sure to get lost. Then what would your father say to me? Oh, wouldn't he be cross! "This"—she touched a piece of rock crystal that glittered prismaticly in the firelight—"is a very nice specimen indeed, even if it is small; and it will do quite well."

She looked up and saw Boyd in the doorway; a soft flush rose to her cheeks. "Oh, Garry! Come in, won't you? We're having a geology lesson, you see.

This is Phil Volanti. Phil, you remember Mr. Boyd, don't you?"

The boy smiled shyly. "Yes. Is the lesson over, Miss Louise?"

Apparently, it was. A little frown had gathered on the girl's smooth brow. She got quickly to her feet and went to Boyd's side. "Garry! That bullet hole wasn't in your hat last night. What's happened? Did somebody——"

"Missed me completely, dear. Nothing for you to be distressed about." As Phil Volanti slipped past him and out of the room, he stooped to kiss her. "Where's your father? I'd like to see him right away, Louise."

Louise Colcord asked no more questions. She knew that Boyd would tell her in his own good time; and, from his manner, she knew that his business with her father must be imperative.

"I'll call him," she said, and hurried out, returning a moment later with the rancher, a tall, gray-haired man, who greeted Boyd with hearty cordiality.

"May I stay, Garry?" the girl asked. "Or, if you've come to see father alone——"

Boyd hesitated. "I think perhaps you'd better stay," he decided. "You really ought to know, too." He drew up a chair for her, and turned to Colcord. "I'm afraid," he said, "we may be in for serious trouble, all of us. There's something wrong up at the dam."

"Something wrong up at the dam? How's that? Has Perry——"

"Perry," said Boyd, "is dead. He fell through the staging this morning and smashed his skull in on the rocks."

Louise repressed an exclamation of horrified pity.

"That's bad news, Garry," said Colcord. "Mighty bad news; I liked that chap, Perry. Fell through the staging, you say? I thought that he was still confined to his room. How did it happen that he——"

"It didn't 'happen,' Mr. Colcord. He

thought he had to go. He wanted to examine the dam, to find out what had been going on these weeks that he's been laid up. That boy of his, Jimmy Thorne, told me a few things this morning; and I figured out pretty well what it all meant."

Rapidly, he repeated the story that Jimmy had told him. "You see," he said, "how it all fits together? Perry was going over the receipts, and evidently they didn't check up just right. Volanti, the foreman, brought in the pay roll; and Perry, inclined by that time to scrutinize things with close attention, discovered that it had been padded. Parry was no man's fool, and he had a retentive memory. I'll gamble he knew the full name of every laborer employed at the camp; and, while he'd been trusting his subordinates absolutely, once he thought he had reason to believe they'd deceived him about one thing, he'd question their good faith in everything else.

"Of course, you understand I'm only guessing, Mr. Colcord. I've only Jimmy Thorne's information to go on, and it was meager enough."

"Still, it does fit in, as you say," the rancher returned. "Then Perry sent Thorne out to the dam to get samples of the concrete that they'd been using?"

"Yes. That looked to me as if his suspicions had been thoroughly aroused. The pay roll had been padded and the records doctored. He probably got to worrying about just how far the crooked work had gone, and who was involved in it. Volanti could have monkeyed with the pay roll without Newman getting wise, perhaps; but the concrete mixture was something that the engineer on the job would have to know about.

"So, when Perry made his analysis of the samples young Thorne chipped off the second arch, he must have been sure that his assistant and the foreman were both in the game together to fool him and graft all they could get out of

the padded pay roll and the stolen cement."

"But what makes you think they stole cement, Garry?" asked Louise. It was the first time she had spoken since Boyd began his story. Quiet and intent, she had followed closely every word of his recital.

"Because of what Perry said to the boy about his strength," he answered promptly. "He said that if it were only a question of his strength, he wouldn't worry—or something like that. He was thinking about the strength of the dam, you see, Louise. If, in mixing the concrete, the proper mixture of sand and cement hadn't been used, the whole structure would be weakened and might give way under the pressure when the gates were shut? You understand?"

"Sand costs a good deal less than cement. By using large proportions of the one, instead of the other, they could pocket the difference in the price; and, if they carried the substitution far enough, it would amount to a tidy sum. That was what Perry wanted to find out—whether they'd been signing for cement that hadn't been used, and making a weak, inferior quality of concrete that would give them a considerable amount of graft money and jeopardize every life in Triangle Valley."

"But surely there must be a penalty for doing a thing like that, Garry?"

"There is," said Garry grimly. "A heavy penalty! That's why Newman and Volanti decided that Perry had to be made to keep his discovery to himself. They had high words, you remember, when Perry sent for them both after he'd made his analysis. Perhaps he accused them of grafting—threatened them, maybe, with turning them over to the authorities if his suspicions were confirmed.

"At any rate, he told Newman he was going to investigate the dam for himself. Garvin, on whom he should have been able to rely implicitly, was drunk

all the time—had probably been kept drunk—and simply rubber-stamped everything that Newman told him. He'd given his O. K. for the work on the second arch; and Perry knew that there, at least, the concrete was all wrong, weak and unsafe.

"Perhaps Newman and Volanti got panicky when Perry announced his decision; he wasn't going to take any more second-hand information and doubtful reports but see for herself what was what. They must have known what it meant, because Wild River wasn't the first dam Evan Perry had built.

"If they could only have concealed their doings until the sluices were closed and the water up and running over the spillway, they'd have been safe enough, in all probability. I believe they counted on being able to do just that. They couldn't have meant to weaken the dam so that it wouldn't hold; they weren't intending to murder by wholesale. All they wanted was to make a good thing of it for themselves and trust to the high water to conceal all traces of any crooked work.

"But Perry's discovery of the padded pay roll and the receipts that wouldn't check right had determined him to check up on the whole job, and he wouldn't have the sluices closed until he was satisfied. And the job wouldn't—couldn't—satisfy him. Some of the concrete he knew to be all wrong. When he found out about the rest, there'd be trouble, mighty serious trouble, for somebody. He'd make it, they knew that. Well, he mustn't be allowed to.

"And"—Boyd's mouth twisted a little—"he wasn't allowed to. At the second arch—the place where Jimmy Thorne had chipped off the samples Perry'd analyzed—he 'made a misstep' and fell to his death before he could take any action against the men he knew had betrayed their trust."

"When you talked to Newman, did

you let him see that you suspected him?" Colcord asked. "Did you give him a chance to defend himself?"

Boyd shrugged. "I gave him his chance to do the square thing. If he'd been clear of all complicity, I figured that, for his own sake, he'd be only too ready to have a qualified man pass on his work. He wouldn't agree."

"Which probably means that he didn't dare agree," Colcord commented. "He couldn't afford to have any one else find out what Perry had found out. He refused absolutely to telegraph for an inspector, when you told him Perry hadn't thought Garvin competent?"

"Absolutely. So, I told him I'd telegraph on my own hook. And, if I needed anything more to convince me that he was in about as deep as he could be, I got it." Boyd touched the bullet hole in the crown of his sombrero.

"Perry had been disposed of. I was the only other person they had to fear—the only one who knew or suspected what had been going on. If my mouth could be shut, they were pretty safe."

"But you left them in the office at the camp, when you started for Triangle, didn't you?"

"I left Newman, yes. Volanti was there when I went in and during part of the conversation. But, when I went out, he'd vanished."

"Hm-m," mused the old rancher. "Knew which way you'd ride, of course, and beat it down the road ahead of you. Took a shot, missed, and probably slipped along the ridge, to wait a second chance."

"Which I didn't care to give him, Mr. Colcord. I came to the conclusion right then and there that I had no right to do it until I'd talked to you. So long as they knew I was the only person who was onto them, they could concentrate on getting rid of me, as they'd gotten rid of poor Perry. So I turned around and hustled back here and sent a couple of your boys down to Triangle with the

message. We ought to have an answer before long. If an inspector leaves at once, he can get here within twenty-four hours, I should think. But——"

Boyd paused, his grave gray gaze meeting Colcord's significantly. The rancher nodded, compressing his lips. He understood what Boyd hesitated to put into words before Louise, nor did he wish to alarm his daughter unnecessarily.

But Louise had instantly grasped the situation; and, although her lovely face was very serious, she showed not the slightest trace of alarm or excitement. She said, very quietly: "But the chinook is up; and it's raining pretty hard, right here in the valley. That means a heavy storm in the hills. I've seen Wild River before this in the spring. Even if the inspector should come at once, isn't it possible that he'll be too late to do anything? Doesn't it all depend, really, on whether that dam is strong enough to hold?"

She looked from her father to Boyd; neither spoke.

"And if it isn't?" she persisted. "If it isn't, won't we be a lot worse off than if there wasn't any dam at all? If it goes out, all the water that's piled up back of it in Moon Basin will come down through the gap with a rush, won't it?"

It was David Colcord who spoke first. "Yes, Louise," he said. "It will do just that and sweep Triangle Valley off the face of the map like a wet sponge wiping a drawing off a slate."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT A GIRL!

IT was difficult to realize just what such a catastrophe would mean; the idea was too incredibly fantastic to seem real. For years, the valley had faced the possibility of a disastrous flood; the dam was to have banished it forever. Yet now, it seemed that, so far from

building a permanent guarantee of safety, they were worse off than ever.

Colcord's voice broke the long silence. "We've got to do something, Garrett," he said. "We can't mill around in a circle and wring our hands and say 'Isn't it awful!' until something happens. Have you thought of anything that might help?"

Boyd shook his head. "No. Of course, the dam may hold, and it may not. I'm no engineer, and I don't know a thing about it; but I'm sure Perry was worried. Those two"—he meant Newman and Volanti—"have never been here in the spring before. Perry had, and he knew Wild River. The only thing I can suggest is that the sluices be kept open; that'll relieve some of the pressure. But——"

And again they were silent. All three of them had grown up in Triangle Valley and knew the insensate fury of the river in time of flood. They had explored every source and tributary and the deep, rocky bed of the cañon that had been the ancient course of the stream.

"If we could only turn it back into the cañon!" said Colcord. "But to clear out that solid dike up there would take months of work and an amount of power we haven't got and couldn't possibly generate."

"Dynamite?" asked Louise.

Her father laughed. "Child, there isn't enough dynamite within a thousand miles to blast loose that mass of earth and rock," he said. "We might blow a few hundred tons off the top; but that would do us just about as much good as shoveling it off with a teaspoon, or bailing out Moon Basin with a tin cup."

One of the men Boyd had dispatched to the telegraph office came in. "Here's the answer to your message, Garry," he said. "They're sending a man out right away."

Boyd glanced hastily over the yellow

telegraph form. "Well, he'll get here by to-morrow night or Wednesday morning, anyway," he said. "Then we'll know for sure, one way or the other. And until we do know, I don't see that we can pin anything definite on anybody. We've no real evidence, nothing to actually warrant an arrest."

"No," Colcord agreed, "I don't believe we have. But I'll take steps to have those two birds watched; and, meanwhile, there wouldn't seem to be any imminent danger. Even with this rain and a quick thaw, it's going to take some time for any great amount of water to pile up in the basin back of the dam; there's a big area for it to spread over up there.

"We'll sit tight and say nothing until that inspector gets here and settles the question of motive for us. Then, if we find you've doped out the facts correctly Garry, we'll act—and act quick."

Boyd nodded acquiescence. "Right," he said. "Well, I guess I'd better be getting along home. I'll leave the rest of the business in your hands, Mr. Colcord."

Louise went with him to the door. "You'll be careful, won't you, Garry?" she said anxiously. "I wish you wouldn't go alone. Have one of the boys ride with you."

He put his arm about the slim, graceful shoulders. "Don't you worry about me, dear," he said. "I'm in no danger, now; our friends up there know by this time that it won't do any good to put me out of the way unless they perform a similar service for half a dozen other people; and, while I don't doubt their zeal, I do question their ability. If Volanti could miss one lone horseman—"

"You're sure it was Volanti, then?"

He shrugged. "Who else? I can't prove it, of course; but I know it wasn't Newman, and it was to the interest of both of them to prevent me from sending that telegram. Volanti—"

"It hardly seems possible, though, Garry. Why, to see him with Phil—he's the gentlest, tenderest thing. He just worships that boy. I've sat and watched them together a dozen times since Phil's been here with me."

"It wasn't Phil he tried to shoot," Boyd said dryly. "Some of the most reckless criminals in the world have been devoted parents, Louise. And I'd be a little careful what I said before the kid, too; don't let him get a hint to carry to his father." He stooped to kiss her, and she clung to him for a moment.

"Oh, Garry, do take care of yourself!"

"I will," he promised.

She smiled, waved her hand as he rode away through the storm. He kept looking back, straining his eyes in the uncertain light, until he could no longer make out the slender figure on the veranda.

What a girl! No hysteria, no heroics; although she knew, as well as did he himself, the appalling menace that lurked at the head of the valley. A smile, a gay wave of the hand, a cheery word of encouragement where most women would have lost their heads completely! Oh, she was game!

CHAPTER IX.

SEEPAGE.

THERE was a singing buzz along the wires, an intermittent snapping and crackling that sounded in Boyd's ears like the staccato explosions of bunches of small firecrackers. Through the confusion of sounds, he could just manage to distinguish the voice of Tom Lloyd, the telegraph operator at Triangle.

"Garry? Been trying to reach you for half an hour. Just got word from Crooked Bend of a big cloud-burst north of Brown Sugar Loaf."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Boyd.

"Flood warnings are out! Heavy rains reported all over the county," the faint voice went on through the humming and buzzing. "I can't raise the gap, Garry; something gone wrong with the camp wire. I've——"

"You've what, Tom? Can't hear you."

"I've notified Colcord to warn the valley. You get word up to the dam, will you? Crooked Bend's worried. We're in for a time of it, I shouldn't wonder. They say it's the worst——" The voice stopped abruptly; the noises ceased, as the wire went dead altogether.

Boyd's shout brought Wo Ling in a hurry. A few crisp orders, and the young rancher was again in the saddle, galloping north along the miry road, through the slanting sheets of rain. Galloping hard, with the sound of running water in his ears and a sense of impending calamity weighing down his heart!

An oil lamp was burning in the office at the camp; its circle of radiance, narrowed by the foggy gray light that was darkening and thickening as the afternoon wore on, showed Ralph Newman's head bent over the desk. The dam itself was deserted. All the workmen had taken shelter in their shacks from the storm.

Boyd unhooked the lariat from his saddle and hurried out to the second arch, where he looped the rope over the same reinforcement rod that had served him in the morning. He worked swiftly but carefully, for now he had no Jimmy Thorne with him to see that the rope did not chafe and scrape. Hand under hand he went down, scanning every inch of the gray-white concrete, hoping against hope. No sign yet! Wherever he looked, the glistening surface showed without check or flaw, as smooth as the palm of his hand.

It might be, he told himself, that all his fears were groundless. Perry, too, might have been unnecessarily alarmed.

The structure might be strong enough to stand all the pressure that would be brought to bear upon it. Of course, the water that had flowed into Moon Basin was as nothing yet, compared to the tremendous volume that would pour down when the flood from Brown Sugar Loaf reached the lower levels; but, as Colcord had said, the area of the basin was vast, the rise of the waters would be gradual. After all—— And then, as he began his ascent of the rope again, his eyes traveling from side to side, Boyd suddenly made a discovery that seemed to trip his heart in its beat.

A little below him and to the left, a tiny trickle of water was oozing out from the face of the concrete. It was not the rain—no, not the rain, because it bubbled a little, spurted out in a fine, thin stream; and, behind it was a dark, narrow, irregular line. A dark, narrow, irregular line that, slowly, almost imperceptibly, was tracing itself waveringly upward! The dam was leaking!

As long as he lived, Garrett Boyd never forgot the paralyzing chill of horror that gripped him at sight of that tiny, trickling stream. In numbed fascination, he stared at it, while it seemed to him that already the whole structure of the dam was trembling. A steady, rhythmic vibration ran through it; it seemed to shudder and quiver in its entire mass.

Then, swiftly as it had clouded, his brain cleared. He realized that it was not the dam, against which his feet were braced, that was shaking; it was the rope by which he was suspended. His gaze flashed upward. Through the rain and mist, he had a glimpse of Newman's face, twisted, distorted, the lips drawn back in a snarl from the set teeth. He seemed to be on his hands and knees, crouching. His arm rose—descended; and the taut lariat vibrated like a struck harp string in Boyd's hands.

"Get away from that rope! Clear

away!" Boyd's stentorian shout woke the echoes.

Newman straightened, shrank back, but not quickly enough. Thoroughly infuriated, Boyd whipped out his revolver and sent a bullet singing past the engineer's head. Then, with a strength and speed almost miraculous, born of sheer desperation, he climbed up the swaying, slippery rawhide.

Where the rope had rested against the edge of the concrete, it was cut half way through; cut roughly, as though it had been sawed back and forth on a dull edge.

"A rock or a rough piece of concrete!" was the rancher's instant thought. "He was hammering it, so that it would look as if it had chafed through." His eyes were blazing, as he advanced toward the engineer.

"What do you mean by shooting at me?" Newman demanded before he could speak. "And didn't I order you to keep away from this?"

Boyd held up the frayed rawhide. "That's what I mean, Newman; and it's reason enough. But we'll adjust our personal differences later. Just now, there's something more important involved. Look here!" As Newman hesitated and seemed about to argue, Boyd seized him unceremoniously by the shoulder and jerked him forward, forcing him to his knees. "Oh, don't be afraid," he said with fierce irony. "I'm not going to push you over. I'm not in your line of business, Newman. When I get ready to kill you, I'll see to it that there are plenty of witnesses to the job. Look down there!"

"At what? Now, see here, Boyd——"

"At that crack! Don't you see water bubbling out of it? A crack—right through the dam——"

Newman peered down along the concrete. "That? Why—why, that's just a little seepage." But there was consternation written on his face.

"Seepage the devil!" roared Boyd.

"It's a leak, that's what it is. The whole dam's rotten. If it won't hold now, what's going to happen when there's real water behind it? It'll go out and drown the whole valley."

"Nonsense, Boyd! You don't know what——"

"I know it won't stand the pressure; and you've got to do something about it. That's why you're alive now, so that you can do something." His fingers were itching for Newman's throat, but he held himself in leash by a supreme effort. Cowardly thief and murderer though the engineer might be, yet his technical knowledge might enable him to suggest some way to avert or mitigate the hideous disaster that loomed ahead.

"We won't talk now about how the dam came to be rotten, Newman. We've got the fact that it is. It's leaking now; in another hour or two——"

"Nonsense!" Newman reiterated, backing away a step. "You're crazy, I tell you. The dam's as tight as a drum." He knew that it was not; that zigzag crack in the concrete and the bubbling trickle that came from it told their own story. His knees were shaking under him, but he managed to keep a note of blustering confidence in his tones. "Besides, it's almost high water now—practically up to the edge of the spillway. The pressure won't increase much, and——"

"Almost high water now!" Boyd's laugh was harsh and mirthless. "You call this high water? Why, the real freshet hasn't even started yet. When it does, the river'll be up six feet from its present level. There's a big cloudburst reported from Crooked Bend. In a few hours, it'll be here, millions and millions of gallons.

"And"—his voice rang fiercely—"your rotten cheese box of a dam won't hold. It'll go down like a stack of straw. You know what that means? The devil let loose in Triangle Valley! A flood a hundred times worse than if

there'd never been any dam at all! And it'll be your work, Newman, all of it! Do you understand?"

Newman's face was ashen; he had begun to tremble all over. He tried to voice another feeble protest, when the rancher cut him savagely short.

"Lay off the argument, and do something. You hear me?" Garry was furious.

"But what c-c-can I d-do?" chattered the engineer. "The dam's all finished; there's nothing——"

"Open the sluices, first thing! That'll ease up some of the pressure, won't it?"

"Why, I guess perhaps——"

"Then order 'em opened quick!"

"But——"

"Will you do as I tell you?" Boyd's fingers rested on the butt of his revolver, but it was from the cold fire of his gray eyes that Newman shrank away. "I'm letting you live because you know something the rest of us around here don't, and that's the only reason. From now on, you'll obey orders from me; and one funny move out of you'll be your finish. Now, give that order."

In a moment, the clank of machinery heralded the raising of the gates. There was a loud hissing and splashing, and a turgid stream gushed from the sluices.

During the course of the building operations, a huge pile of débris had accumulated in the dry bed of the river below the dam. There were planks, sawed-off beams, chunks of concrete, scrap iron, the whole packed solidly down with earth and stones from the excavations.

The rush of the pent-up waters struck the mass. High in the air arose a spouting fountain of foam as the crashing impact came. An instant only it boiled and frothed and churned in savage fury. Then, creaming into white-capped waves, the stream filled the narrow channel from bank to bank, and, tossing and tumbling angrily, swept irresistibly down toward the valley, leav-

ing not the slightest trace of the obstacle that had lain in its path. Now and then, a timber bobbed to the surface or a plank up-ended and whirled around in a smother of foam, only to disappear again.

Under the murky canopy of cloud, the rain wrapped everything in a strange, pale twilight, through which the figures of the men moved like shadows in some dreadful dream. They were tramping restlessly about, collecting in little groups, talking and gesticulating anxiously among themselves. They had been uneasy all day. Some of them had families living in the valley, and not a few knew what to expect from the ordinary spring rise of Wild River. The way the water was piling up in the basin had made them apprehensive, even before a couple of cowmen, riding up from Triangle, had brought word of the heavy cloud-burst at Brown Sugar Loaf.

One of these, a lean, freckled-faced young fellow, made his way to Boyd's side as the rancher stood on the wing of the dam near the gate house.

"What about it, Garry?" he wanted to know. "I just seen Tom Lloyd a while back, and he said I'd best look you up. He thought I'd find you 'hereabouts. The folks below is gettin' plumb worried. Any chance of trouble?"

Boyd, his eyes on the yellow maelstrom that swirled below him, nodded soberly. "I'm afraid so, Harper. Opening the sluices has helped—some; the water hasn't risen any back of the dam since we got the gates up. But it hasn't gone down any, either; and we haven't begun to get the worst of it. It looks pretty nasty to me, I don't mind telling you."

"Me, too," nodded Harper. "Still, there's a-plenty o' room yet up in the basin; and it'll take a lot o' water to rise old Wildy a foot now, I shouldn't wonder. But she's carryin' all the traffic'll bear below, an' kind o' beginnin'

to rip some, too. Comin' up there, is she?"

Boyd shook his head. "I can't tell. But that cloud-burst——"

"Well, why don't them fellers do somethin' about it?" demanded Harper. "That's what they're paid for, ain't it? If this here thing busts loose——"

Boyd was thinking harder than he had ever thought in his life before. Do something? What could any one do? The water had to flow somewhere; and there was only one place for it to go—down through the gap. That old channel through the cañon was completely blocked by thousands of tons of sand and rock. As David Colcord had stated, it would take perhaps months of work to reopen it, even if it were possible for them to develop power sufficient to tear through the solid mass. Power that was little short of irresistible! And——

Suddenly, Boyd was running through the camp, shouting as he ran. "Newman! Newman!"

"Where is he?" he demanded of Tony Volanti, who came to the door of the office.

The Italian glowered at him. "How should I know?"

"Well, there's no time to hunt him up. You get your men together, Volanti. Rush every one of your gang up to the head of the cañon. We'll want the drills and the compressors and every stick of dynamite you've got. Step, man!"

"I'm takin' no orders from you." Volanti's voice snapped off abruptly, as he found himself looking into the muzzle of Boyd's revolver.

"Volanti," the rancher told him grimly, "you'll do as I tell you and do it right away; or I'll fill you as full of holes as a Swiss cheese. I'm a little better shot than you are, you know. We've got one chance of saving Triangle Valley; and we're going to take it—with or without your help. Make

your choice now. Which is it? And remember—your kid's down there in the valley. If the dam goes, he'll go with it."

He had struck the right note. Little Phil was the dearest thing on earth to Tony Volanti. His mask of sullen defiance fell; his face showed white and terrified. "But Newman—he said there was no danger! A little seepage——"

"The dam's leaking! Leaking worse every minute! If we can blast a tunnel through the top of that dyke in the cañon, the water itself will do the rest of the work for us. The cañon is deeper than the channel through the gap; we've got to lower the top level while the dam's still holding. It's just one chance in a thousand, but it's a chance. And every minute counts."

CHAPTER X.

WAIT!

IT was as if the whole construction camp were being moved all at once. Automobiles loaded with men and tools tore northward along the narrow road. Motor trucks, their exhausts making one continuous roar, swayed and swung perilously as they plunged along through the sticky mud, in which the wheels sank almost to the hubs. In places, the road was almost impassable, little more than a trail and a rough one at that. No motor car had ever been over it before; now, half a hundred went, driven as much by sheer force of determination and dogged persistence as by wheels and cogs and chugging engines.

At the head of the cañon, the rain-swept darkness was lurid with the glare of innumerable lights, strident with the droning whine of drills and the steady beat and throb of air compressors. But, curiously, hardly a voice was to be heard. The men worked in a sort of grim, desperate silence, straining every nerve, their eyes hard, their jaws set.

Newman, moving about among them, directing the work, was a different man from the trembling craven who, but a short time before, had been able to control his voice scarcely enough to give the order to open the sluices. He had grasped Boyd's idea at once and was proceeding to carry it out with directness and efficiency. There was no doubt of his technical knowledge, nor his genuine ability; yet, wherever he went, Garrett Boyd kept close at his heels; and whenever the eyes of the two men met, the glance of hate that passed between them was like the flash of a naked blade.

The landslide that had blocked the cañon had formed a sort of dike, a solid mass of stones and earth that rose in a long, deep slanting slope between the rock walls, a great, wedge-shaped barrier, yellow-hued and barren. It was Boyd's idea to drive a shaft below the crest, at a level lower than that of the top of the dam, and put in a large quantity of dynamite, the explosion of which would open a channel across the obstruction.

The sudden rush of the released water would come with tremendous force, tearing its way through the dike and sweeping on down through the cañon, exactly as the river, when the sluices were opened, had demolished the accumulated rubbish piled up in its bed and rushed on its triumphant way down through the gap.

One chance in a thousand, as Boyd had said; and the only chance of saving Triangle Valley! If it failed—But not one among the crew of tired, straining men who fought through the hours of darkness and suspense dared to contemplate what failure meant.

Morning found the answer to the question one almost of minutes. The rain had ceased, and the sky was slowly clearing; but reports from the dam made it all too apparent that the weakening structure would not hold much

longer. It was cracked and seamed; widening fissures were developing under the constantly increasing pressure, new cracks appearing, while in Moon Basin the swirling, turbid flood crept steadily up and up and up.

His face drawn and haggard, Garrett Boyd stood at the edge of the dike and watched the crawling line of men carrying the dynamite into the tunnel. Another half hour, and the flash of an electric spark would tell the tale.

At his left, were the swirling waters that might at any instant render all the toil and heart-breaking effort useless. At his right, the steep, boulder-strewn slope of the dike, slanted downward to the bed of the cañon, where the rocks were already almost dry in the warm rays of the rising sun.

Above him, the blue morning sky, dotted with little fleecy clouds, toward which the streaming banners of the snow fog seemed to rise, plumelike, from the mist-crowned hills. A silence had fallen; the drone of the drills, the throbbing of the compressors, all the strident noise and clangor were stilled. There was no sound save the subdued shuffle of feet, passing in and out of the tunnel, a voice, oddly muted, the stamp of a horse's hoof, the low splash and ripple of waves against the barrier. And from somewhere afar off, a sound different from all the other sounds; a new note, deep, booming, sullen in the menacing music of the waters!

Boyd knew what it was, the thundering onrush of the great flood from Brown Sugar Loaf. Ten, perhaps fifteen minutes—no more. His jaw was set so that the muscles ached. His fingers tightened over the bridle of the mare, pawing the ground beside him. Resolutely, he had put thought from him, determined that he would not think; but, always, it had come creeping back, the picture of the long, smiling valley, dotted with its peaceful homes; the rolling sweep of the wide,

low lands where cattle grazed and the green tops of waving grain ripened in the sun. His home, the only home he had ever known! The only place that could ever seem like home to him! His friends, his neighbors! They knew; they had been warned. But— And Louise—

Was it only yesterday that he had visioned her, sitting opposite him at the table, smiling at him as only she could smile? Only yesterday? And now— Would Wo Ling ever again set that table, with the low blue bowl in which the lilies bloomed?

A shout from Newman! Men scurrying! Boyd turned to mount his horse, just as a hand fell on his arm. David Colcord, hollow-eyed and mud-bespattered, was staring in consternation at him.

"Garry! What's all this? What are they doing?"

"We're ready to shoot—blow off the crest of the dike and turn the water down the cañon into its old channel. Been working at it all night. We—"

"But—but Louise!" the rancher stammered. "She's down there."

"Down where?"

"In the cañon! Volanti's kid beat it off early this morning—something about rock crystals; she was worried and went after him. Said she'd be all right in the cañon if the dam did go. Garry—"

"Clear away!" came the loud order. "All ready! Clear away, there, will you?"

But Boyd, one foot in the stirrup, stood as rigid as if he had been turned to stone.

From the group of men gathered about the firing box on the rim of the Basin some distance back, Tony Volanti ran out, waving his arms above his head, his swarthy face streaming with sweat.

"Get back! Get back!" he was yelling excitedly. "We got to shoot quick. The dam's going."

"But my daughter—she's in the cañon, Volanti. Down there where the water'll go!" The ruddy color had drained from Colcord's cheeks; they were the color of dead ashes. "Your boy, Phil—she's gone to find him."

"Phil?"

"In the cañon, I tell you. They'll both be drowned if you—"

"Ready!" bawled Newman from his stand by the firing box. He was reaching for the handle.

"No! Wait!" Volanti screamed back at him. "Don't touch it! Wait!"

Boyd had vaulted into the saddle. "Give me five minutes, Colcord. Then shoot," he flung over his shoulder. A swift spatter of sand from flying hoofs, and the mare was racing down the steep slope of the dike into the cañon.

Volanti, with Colcord at his heels, rushed back toward Newman, shouting "Wait! Wait!" at the top of his voice.

"Wait!" panted Colcord. "Five minutes, Newman! My daughter—the boy—"

"We can't wait," snapped Newman. There was an evil, exultant light in his eyes. His hand shot out, seized the lever, and jammed it down, just as Volanti, with a demoniac shriek, launched himself with the spring of a wild beast, straight at his throat.

A vast, billowing cloud of smoke, shot through with red flashes of flame, a dull, hollow roar that sent shattering echoes rolling and crashing among the hills, and the solid earth seemed to rock and tremble. The whole crest of the dike leaped into the air, as if tossed upward by some Gargantuan hand. And, where it had been, gaped a long, blackened hole into which the water rushed in a surging torrent.

The terrific concussion had thrown the men flat on their faces; but the Italian's fingers never loosed their grip on Newman's throat. "You kill my boy, I kill you!" he was mouthing, over and over in a frenzy of maniacal fury.

"I tear your throat out with my hands!"

They were on their feet again, their writhing bodies straining against each other, their boots slipping and sliding on the wet ground. The sudden onslaught had taken Newman by surprise; and, at the best of it, he was no match for the Italian in strength. The grip on his throat was suffocating; he saw death staring at him from those black and blazing eyes.

One final, desperate effort, and he tore himself free. Volanti sprang for him; he dodged, ducked, and ran in blind panic. His foot struck against a fallen branch; he fell to his knees, staggered up again, and plunged on through the sparse fringe of trees out on the edge of the dike.

It was not until he saw the water surging past where, a moment before, the sandy yellow slope had been, that he realized he could not cross the cut. Bewildered, he hesitated which way to turn; and, in the instant of his wavering, Volanti was upon him. No time to dodge again or run! The Italian's powerful arms snapped about his waist like steel clamps. He screamed—once—as he was jerked bodily from the ground, and once again as the muddy waters closed over his head.

For a breath, Volanti stood poised at the brink of the torrent, staring down at the spot where Newman had disappeared. Then, without the slightest warning, the embankment crumbled, gave way. He flung up his arms, clawed wildly at the air, as, with a low rumble, the earth on which he stood slid downward into the churning, foaming flood.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE CANON.

THE high walls of the cañon caught the reverberating roar of the explosion and tossed it back and forth in thunderous echoes that beat deafeningly

against Boyd's ears. The mare flung up her head and snorted in terror, as she plunged down through the stinging barrage of stones and sand.

Five minutes? They had not given him even one. He had counted on Volanti's knowledge that little Phil was with Louise, to give him at least a fighting chance to find the pair before the flood was loosed upon them. Now, it was a race in which the odds were all against him.

The outcrop of rock crystal was, he knew, at a spot where the cañon widened out a little, just below the big bend. The walls were not so precipitous there, and, given a little time, Lady could have carried them all to safety. Now, there would be no time at all; the water pouring out of the basin would travel a dozen feet to his one.

On any other horse, his chances would have been worse than hopeless; but the gallant little mare was as sure footed as a goat; and she seemed to understand, as well as he himself did, the gravity of the situation. He had no need to urge her to greater speed, nor even to guide her. Crouching low over her neck, he spoke gentle, encouraging words, as she dashed along the uneven way, twisting, turning, leaping over obstacles that threatened to bar her path, avoiding seemingly insurmountable barriers by an agility almost miraculous. Sparks flew from the stones; the clang of her iron-shod hoofs rang out sharply, and the rock walls took up the echoes and shouted them back to meet the clatter and thump of her swiftly galloping hoofs.

And then came the sound for which Boyd had been listening; a sound deep and sullen, like the continuous, grumbling roll of distant thunder. Louder, louder, swelling into one vast, terrible organ note—

"Louise!" His whole heart was in his voice as he saw her. She was standing on a small boulder, just a foot or

two above the river bed, the boy beside her, clinging to her hand. Her lips were a little parted, her startled eyes wide and filled with bewilderment and fear.

At sight of Boyd, she cried out. "Garry! What is it? What's happened?"

There was no time to answer or explain. Lady slid to a trembling standstill beside the boulder.

"Quick!" Boyd was on the ground, had caught Louise in his arms. "Up the bank! Ride for your life!" he tossed the child up behind her. "Hold on tight, Phil!" he cried, and hit the mare's flank a resounding slap with his open palm. She wheeled, sprang forward like an arrow from a bow.

There was no path, only a steep, rocky incline. Lady's trim hooves slipped and slid before she found a foothold. Then, straining every nerve and muscle, she struggled gamely up the slope.

"Garry! You're coming?" Louise's face turned toward him, over her shoulder, white and terrified. "Garry!"

"I'm all right! Ride!" he shouted back at her and followed as quickly as he could.

And then, around the big bend, it came, a towering wall of yellow water. Like some huge prehistoric monster, it rushed onward, tearing giant rocks from their beds, wrenching up great trees and whirling them along in the teeth of its foaming fury as if they had been so many scraps of paper. The earth shook under the mighty thunder of its advance; the air was full of flying spray, like rain; the walls of the cañon trembled and seemed to shrink from the crashing force hurled against them.

Deafened, half blinded, not daring to look behind him, Boyd struggled up the slope. The curling crest of a wave, outflung, swept his feet from under him. He threw out his arm and caught

a projecting spur of rock, holding to it with every ounce of his strength, while he sought to regain his foothold. By main force, he dragged himself upward another yard. Then the hungry waters were upon him. His head went under in a smother of foam; a branch lashed viciously across his face, beat one hand lose from the rock spur.

"Garry! Garry!" Louise's voice sounded faint and far off. He was choking, gasping, fighting to draw a breath. A sudden savage tug—and both his hands were wrenched loose from their hold. Instinctively, he thrust them above his head. He felt a quick, strong jerk, a jar, a sharp stab of pain across his chest. Another jerk, and he was whirling dizzily around.

His spread fingers, moving feebly as his strength failed, could touch nothing. He could see nothing but a gray, ghostly twilight, feel nothing but that strange, crushing constriction in his chest. And then utter darkness! A frightful, smothering darkness, clamorous with the surge and rush of roaring waters!

"Garry! Garry!" Her voice! Louise's voice! It came to him clear and sweet, sharpened a little. It seemed to penetrate the blinding, choking smother that enveloped him, pleading with him, begging him to do something.

Dazed, battered, only half conscious, he realized dimly that he was no longer in the water. His laboring lungs fought for air; he struggled again, feebly, groping in a gradually lightening darkness.

"Garry, oh, Garry! Try to catch hold! Try, dear!"

Louise's voice, close, just above him! Louise's face, bending toward him! He made a supreme effort, stretching out his hands. Her fingers closed about his wrists.

"Try now. I'll hold you, Garry. Phil, lead Lady on a little way, just a little. There! Stop! Oh—Garry!"

She was leaning over him as he lay, supine, on a flat ledge of rock, a dozen feet below the rim of the cañon, loosening, with shaking fingers, the noose of the lariat that was pulled tightly about his chest, under his arms.

"Just lie still, dear. You're safe now; we're all safe, Lady, too. It was Lady who saved you, really. When I dropped the loop over your arms, she pulled just as if she knew what to do. You aren't badly hurt, are you, Garry? I thought when I saw that great branch rushing at you——"

Boyd gritted his teeth, forced back the almost overwhelming weakness. "I—I'm quite all right," he managed, gaspingly. "Just a minute—I'll get my breath. The boy——"

"Up on the rim, holding Lady. He was awfully plucky, Garry. We heard a strange noise. I'd just found him, you know, and stood up on the rock; and then we saw you. He was terribly frightened, of course. He didn't know what had happened; but he did just as I told him, exactly.

"When"—the sweet voice faltered a little, then went steadily on—"when I saw you couldn't make it, I climbed down here, just in time to drop the rope over your arms. The other end was

still fast to your saddle, so Lady could pull you up. But what did happen? Garry, is the valley—is everybody—my father——"

"All safe," Boyd told her. "We blasted out the old dike, and let the water down through the cañon. Your father got there just as they were ready to shoot and told me where you and Phil were. I wasn't sure I could make it, ahead of the flood, but——" His arms went up and round her. "Oh, thank God!" he whispered. "I didn't dare think, Louise—I didn't dare think I might be too late! Oh, what a merciful Providence!"

It was only a few minutes before he was strong enough to stand; and the short climb to the cañon rim was soon accomplished. Then, very slowly, the little party started back toward the head of the cañon. The peak of the flood had passed, but an enormous volume of water was flowing down through its old channel. Just above the bend, they met Colcord and a half dozen men who had followed him. The old rancher was completely unstrung, and his voice shook as he tried to thank Boyd for what he had done.

And it was together that Garry and Louise went forward to meet him.



YELLOWSTONE'S NEW GATEWAY

THE summer of 1926 saw the opening of the new "Gallatin Gateway" entrance to the Yellowstone National Park. The newly completed road to this gateway leads from Three Forks, Montana, the source of the Missouri River, to the northwestern corner of Yellowstone National Park and on to Old Faithful. It follows along the Gallatin River, named by Lewis and Clarke, through the fertile Gallatin Valley, past the celebrated Flying D Ranch, and through the Gallatin National Forest and Gallatin Cañon. A stop is made high in the mountains for luncheon, and Old Faithful Inn in the park is reached in time for dinner. An autobus service over this road is maintained on regular schedule during the season. Impressive ceremonies at Three Forks marked the opening of the highway.



The Iron Trail

by Max Brand

Author of "The Border Bandit's Prize," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

SHERIFF CLIFF MATTHEWS, of Burnside County, seldom makes an arrest, but when handsome Eddie Clewes, confidence man extraordinary, comes to town, the sheriff takes action. Eddie, who has been trying to work his game on P. D. Burke, Jr., a lawyer of the community, is thrown into jail. By his winning personality he induces the sheriff to talk with him, and lays a bet of one thousand dollars that he will be able to break jail.

Despite the precautions taken to prevent it, he escapes. By a freight train passing through the town he leaves the vicinity.

Next morning he leaves the train and strikes out through the forest. He comes upon the camp of a notorious thief and murderer, McKenzie. He wins the confidence of McKenzie. A third criminal, Delehanty, joins the group, and Eddie eggs on the other two crooks to fight. They kill each other.

Clewes counts his spoil—the loot of the two crooks—and finds almost two hundred thousand dollars in the saddlebag of one. When he has laid this out on a blanket to count it again he is disturbed by an armed posse, which hails him as a hero, believing him to have killed the two robbers single-handed. He learns that the bank of a neighboring town has been looted. His name he gives as E. C. Larned.

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIVE MINUTES TO SPARE.

THEY wanted to know details. Ah, how they hungered to learn them! And when Eddie Clewes most earnestly besought them to let him go on his way, they simply roared him down.

He was to return with them with all due haste to the town of Culloden, because that was his town, from this moment. It belonged to him, as a matter of fact!

But, first and foremost, there was the story of exactly what had happened—would he please tell them?

The sheriff intervened, at this moment: "Boys," said he with much disgust, "where and how was you raised, to think that a gent like my friend Larned, here, would be spouting about how grand he fought, and how he done the trick! Why, gents, blasted if I ain't almost ashamed that I come from the same town with you. Come along and ride with me, Larned, will you? And forget the rest of them. They don't mean no harm. But there's a

considerable gap between intentions and facts, a lot of the time! Ride up here—and I can't help saying, Larned, that this is about the grandest morning of my life, and that it'll mean more to the colonel than it does to me, even!"

"The colonel?" said Eddie politely.

"I mean Colonel William Exeter. Sometimes we forget that the whole dog-gone world doesn't know about the colonel, the same as we do in Culloden Valley. You never heard about him, eh?"

"I never have, I believe," said Eddie Clewes.

"It's this way," said Sheriff Askew: "The colonel ain't Culloden, but he's about half of it, and the best half, by a long shot. He's our George Washington and he's our Abraham Lincoln. He's our Statue of Liberty, our post office, and our town hall. And every acre in Culloden Valley is worth five dollars more because we've got a Colonel Exeter with us. Y'understand?"

"I understand," said Eddie Clewes, and the soul of the confidence man began to expand.

"Of course," said the sheriff, "he owns the best part of the bank!"

"It's quite a bank, then?" said Eddie Clewes.

"Quite a bank? Now, I'll tell a man that it's quite a bank! Matter of fact, we don't need no orphan asylum nor old-folks home so long as the colonel runs that bank. He turns the profits into doing good, you might say. When you step into that bank and ask for a loan, he don't ask you how many acres you got, but how many children you have. He don't look at your bank account but at your heart, you understand?"

But Eddie Clewes was seized with an unpleasant fit of coughing, at this moment, and could not answer.

"Now the colonel," went on the sheriff, "will, of course, be glad to see the gent that brought back to the bank the

money that would have busted him and it——"

"He's not rich, then?" said Clewes, some of the light departing from his eyes.

"Rich? Oh, rich enough. But money ain't what the colonel puts a value on. On his house, and on his family, first of all. He had a pair—a boy named Tom, and a girl named Dolly. Now, Tom was a fine fellow, though he needed a little bridling down, I suppose, and five or six years ago, he got into a mix-up with that same McKenzie, back there—and McKenzie left him dead, of course. We thought that it would of killed the poor colonel. And it *did* turn him white, but he kept on living for the sake of Dolly. So you can see, Larned, that it will be a great day for Exeter when he meets the gent that brings back the stolen coin and that put McKenzie under the sod in one grand fight!"

"I think that it might be a good idea if I were first——" began Eddie Clewes.

"Not to meet him, eh? I know that you're modest, Larned. But don't you be a fool and turn your back on a twelve-thousand-dollar reward."

"Twelve thousand!" cried Eddie Clewes.

"Seven for Delehanty, and five for McKenzie, though McKenzie was the real snake, and done ten times as much damage as Delehanty would ever have had the wits to do. But I would like to know about the way you came across the pair of them——"

But of the manner in which Eddie Clewes told of the things which he did and which he did *not* do, it is perhaps better to discuss in the words of the sheriff, as "Boots" Askew related these events a little later in the day to the colonel.

For, leaving the bodies of the dead men and the loot, and most of all, "Mr. Larned" himself, the sheriff galloped

eagerly ahead because he could fairly well guess that, by this time, a savage run must have been started against the colonel's bank. Mile after mile, Askew pushed his sweating, tired horse down the valley. Frightened depositors might run the bank dry, as he well knew, and five minutes might make the difference between safety and ruin, to William Exeter.

For all of those reasons, Sheriff Askew rushed his horse at a perilous speed down that winding valley road, and brought it staggering into Culloden.

He could see that he was a true prophet while he was still blocks away. For a little line of people stood in front of the doors of the bank, and across the street had gathered a crowd which waited and waited, and reminded the sheriff of a group of wolves, waiting until starvation has weakened the bull moose.

They were watching to see if that steady file of depositors, drawing out and closing their accounts, might not cause the sudden announcement that the bank had failed to meet payments and had closed its doors!

That the bank had failed!

Yes, that would be tidings worth hearing at first hand. And the sheriff swore with excitement as his failing horse reeled over the last two hundred yards.

He was greeted with a wail of expectation the moment he was recognized. And they came thronging toward him. "What's the news, Askew? Hey, Boots, what's happened? Will you loosen up and say?"

"I got news for the colonel!" he told them roughly. "Lemme get through!"

And he thrust a channel through their midst and came presently to the doors of the bank. He glanced contemptuously up and down the anxious line of faces—not men only, but women, also.

"You got a lot of confidence in the colonel, ain't you?" said the sheriff

coldly, throwing away a hundred votes at the next election by that very speech, but the sheriff hardly cared. On such a day as this, a man could afford to be himself and stop politics.

He strode through the doors.

"I ain't coming to draw my account out," he told the weary janitor, who was trying to keep the line straight. "But I want the colonel!"

He found the colonel himself behind the cashier's window.

And never had William Exeter been more magnificent than in this moment of apparent ruin. For he greeted each new face at the window with his readiest smile, and a cordial shake of the hand, and when they would have apologized, he silenced them with the utmost cheerfulness.

"Every man has a duty to the interests of his family!" the colonel would say. "Don't apologize, but take your money and keep it safe!"

And so he paid them, one after another, as soon as the clerks, working with drawn faces at the last set of accounts which they were sure they would ever arrange in this bank, could check off the correct balance.

The coming of the sheriff, however, was somewhat of a shock for Exeter, steady as his nerves were. For he blanched as he saw the form of Boots Askew.

"Back so soon, Askew?" he said. "Did the trail fade out as soon as all this? However, you're welcome back. If you'll step into my office, Askew, I'll come in, in a moment, and give you your money."

"Money?" said the sheriff harshly. "What money, colonel?"

"Your account, your account, of course," answered Exeter. "And what else would bring you back here?"

"Why, devil take it, colonel," said the sheriff, "am I always a scarecrow to frighten away good times?"

Oh, he had built up enough expecta-

tion by this time! And he roused it to a still higher pitch as he paused a moment and glanced up and down at the gleaming eyes of those excited depositors.

Only the colonel did not speak. But he gripped the edge of the shelf inside the cashier's window and looked suddenly down to the floor.

"Because," said Boots Askew, "we're bringing back Delehanty dead!"

He let them gasp.

"And with Delehanty," he continued, raising his voice a little, "we're bringing back Murdoch McKenzie—dead also!"

A shout began from the little crowd, but in their expectancy of more news, the noise was instantly stifled. And leaning forward with blazing eyes, they waited for Sheriff Askew's next announcement.

"And with the dead men," went on the sheriff, "we're bringing back every penny that was stolen from the colonel's bank!"

Oh, what a cheer went up then! There was no question of drawing out their accounts, now. But they swept out of the bank to communicate the good word to the others who waited anxiously in the street, and to spread it on and on through Culloden Valley—that the peril was over, and that the colonel's bank was saved, and all the money which was deposited in it.

The sheriff watched them go. In an instant, that bank was empty, except for the glad, dazed faces of the clerks in it.

And then Boots Askew advanced through the door into the private office of President Exeter.

He found Exeter already there, sitting in his leather chair, behind the big, brown-faced, shining desk. A very serious man was the colonel, a little pale, but not shaken. He had gone through the battle; the first fruits of the victory had been tasted; and yet it was not

wonderful that there was more than a little bitterness in his heart.

For when the sheriff said: "Hear them cheering, colonel!"

"They're cheering you, Askew," said the colonel soberly. "They're not cheering me. They're cheering you and the wit and the courage that killed Delehanty and McKenzie. But as for me, man, they would have walked over my dead body gladly, if they could have been sure of getting to their money safely, in that way!"

"However," he added suddenly, "this is a shabby way to treat you and to thank you, Askew. But I do thank you, with my whole heart. For my own sake, and for the sake of the poor, panic-stricken beggars who were crushing me in trying to save themselves. In another five minutes, sheriff, the bank would have failed!"

CHAPTER IX.

AS THE SHERIFF TOLD IT.

THE sheriff, hearing this, had sat down in the opposite chair, wiping the sweat and the coagulated dust from forehead and neck, for it had been a wearying ride down the valley.

"You're thanking the wrong man, colonel," said he.

"You'll dodge the praise," smiled Exeter, "because it wasn't your own hand that brought them down, perhaps, but the man who organized the posse and led them to——"

The sheriff raised his hand.

"One minute," said the colonel. "I'll hear you dodge glory after I've let Dolly know how things are. She wanted to come down here. I wouldn't let her. It might have looked as though I were trying to use her pretty face, Askew, to keep the depositors from crowding into the bank. Now she must know!"

He took his telephone off the hook, and in another moment he was saying: "We're safe, Dolly." He made a little

pause, and the joyous cry of the girl came thin and faint to the ears of the sheriff on the farther side of the room.

"We're safe. All that I know now is that your old friend, Uncle Boots Askew, has just brought the news that he's bringing in Delehanty dead—and all the stolen money!"

He paused again, and with a strange mixture of sadness and triumph he added: "And with Delehanty, they're bringing the dead body of Murdoch McKenzie down the valley. That's all I can tell you. Don't come downtown. They're whooping and yelling a good deal. Stay home. I'll be there as soon as I can get all the tale from the sheriff—but he's like a bashful boy. He won't talk, hardly. I need you to loosen his tongue. Good-by, dear."

He turned back to the sheriff.

"Now, Askew, out with it! Put modesty into your pocket, and let's hear just how you worked."

"I'll tell you my part of it in a nutshell," said the sheriff. "We waded out of town, riding hard. And in half an hour we had lost the trail! It was clean gone. A fox like Delehanty doesn't leave his sign scattered about when he's running away from trouble. At any rate, we aimed up the valley, blind. And as we worked along, above the upper town, we came on a wood with a curl of smoke over the top of it, and I told the boys to scatter, and fade into that bunch of trees from all sides.

"Not that I expected to catch anything there. I *knew* that Delehanty would never make a breakfast camp last as long as we had taken to crawl up there, figuring trail all the way. But I simply had to give those boys something to work on. And so they scattered, as I told them to do, and they worked their way very soft through the woods, until they came out in full sight of—"

He paused for a moment.

"Well?" said the banker.

"I'm trying to see it all again, to make sure that it wasn't a dream," said Boots Askew. "But as we came along, first I heard a gent singing in a tenor voice—a darned good voice to hear. And then his song stopped. Seemed to me that I could hear a bird piping up. And I laughed, when I thought of finding Delehanty in a place like that.

"But then I got to the edge of the woods—and there by a camp fire, finishing his breakfast, and listening to a little fool bird standing on a stump, was a young gent, built fine and slin, with a face like a thinker and a hand like a violinist—or a forger! There was he sitting, enjoying the song of that fool bird, as I should say—and a little distance from him there was a pile of junk—with stacks of greenbacks fluttering on the top of it. The money from the bank, which this gent had won back, and which he was so honest that he wouldn't put it into his own pocket, not even for a minute, y'understand?"

"That's a fine picture, Askew," said the colonel, his fine eyes half melted and half on fire with this sketch of human honesty. "A young man like that—why, gad, man, it would make me young again to know him!"

"Well, colonel, that ain't all of it. Because, on the ground there beside this gent, I seen Delehanty laying dead, with his eyes closed for him, and his big hands folded on the top of his chest! And then the wind blowed the hat from the face of another gent, that had been laying there dead all the while that this youngster had been having his breakfast—and there I seen McKenzie!"

Mr. Exeter drew a deep breath.

"I don't want to feel a brutal satisfaction in the death of any man, Askew," he said, "but when I think that it was this McKenzie who murdered my lad—my Tom—but go on, Askew. Go on, man. I don't dare to

draw the inference that this youngster you speak of had actually met and killed both of those maneaters?"

"Lemme tell you, colonel," said Askew, "that when you see the body of Delehanty, you'll find that his back and his hair has been singed. And that youngster had not only killed the pair of them, but he had closed with Delehanty and fought him hand to hand—by gad, it ain't hardly no ways possible to believe it!"

"No," murmured the banker, "it's not!"

And he added: "Were their wounds from in front?"

"Every one! I'll tell you that the name of this youngster is Eddie Larned. And that he was so dog-gone modest that he tried to slip away while we were examining the bodies of the two dead men. And that he wouldn't tell anything of what happened, and that I had to worm it out of him on the trail, as we fair *dragged* him down the valley. Why, colonel, not even knowing that he was to get a twelve-thousand-dollar reward would budge that boy! Simply didn't want no notoriety!"

The colonel closed his eyes and smiled, as one who hears the sweetest music.

"You're painting over again," he said gently, "the picture of what my boy Tom would have been in the same situation!"

The sheriff looked down to the floor and cleared his throat.

"But," he went on, "the facts seem to be something like this: This Larned is a fellow who's alone in the world. Got tired of his work. Decided to leave the East and go West. Had no money. Probably spent it all paying off his landlord, and his doctor bill—because he looks pale enough to of spent a lot of time sick—and then he hooked onto a freight and traveled that way—hard but cheap. Cheerful gent, though;

smiled while he told me that he had come in a box car! And when he got to Culloden Valley, he liked the look of it, dropped off the train—and he started up the valley until he seen smoke coming up over that patch of trees."

"And the two of them were in it!" breathed the colonel, vastly excited.

"They was! I mean, that I had to drag this stuff out of him, because he didn't want to talk about himself. He came through the woods and stepped into the clearing—and found two pairs of guns looking him in the eye. But in five minutes, he was sitting down talking to them—and all went smooth, until he got to guessing what they really was. And then—why, at that point his yarn was just a blur. He wouldn't talk. And I had to let the dead men talk for him! But the facts were there lying on the ground for us to see, and there ain't any reasonable doubt that he just lit into the pair of them. Most likely he dropped McKenzie first. Then he tackled Delehanty in close. You'll wonder at it when you see him. But he's all steel. Stronger than you'd ever guess!"

"And, anyway, he killed Delehanty, after knocking him into the fire. And then he whirled around and put the finishing slug into the head of McKenzie. And after that, colonel—and this is the beautiful part of it—he took all their personals, and piled them up in a heap, and put the stolen money on top of the stack; and then before he started to take the money back to where it belonged, he sat down and cooked himself a good breakfast and ate it, with the two dead men lying there and looking at him!"

The sheriff, having finished, sat back with a heavy thump in his chair and dropped his hands upon his hips.

"Those are the facts as far as I can make them out," said Askew, "and I never done harder thinking or looked over evidence more careful, because, of

course, I knew that this here was a red-letter day for Culloden Valley, and that a good many folks would want to know all of the truth later on! And I say that this here is the strangest yarn that I ever been mixed up in! Colonel, did you ever hear it beat?"

The colonel did not answer for a moment, but he sat with his head thrown far back, and his eyes squinted almost closed, and a look as of pain on his face. It was the intense concentration of one lost in thought.

"I think, Askew," said he, "that you're very right. It's a great day for Culloden Valley—but I have an idea that it's apt to prove an even greater day for me!"

To this, the sheriff listened with the deepest attention. Just what the colonel meant, he could not tell, but he was well aware that no mere money matter could ever stir William Exeter to such depths as this.

A clamor broke out far off, on the edge of the town up the valley.

"They've hit Culloden!" said the sheriff. "Listen to the mob howl!"

"Aye," said Exeter. "They're glad to see him."

"And though they may howl louder," said the sheriff, "they'll never again have a chance to look on a gent that's any finer, any cleaner, any stronger, or any braver, than young Larned, that is up there being brought in by the boys!"

"I believe it! I believe it!" said the colonel, almost trembling with his emotion. "And let's get out onto the street so that we can see them come!"

Standing in the middle of the street, they had sight of the moving procession, presently. And, at the head of it, rode three men. He upon the right held the reins of the horse of the central man. He upon the left seemed to have hold upon the arm of that central rider. And the man in the midst was a comparatively slight young man, who rode with his head bent and his

eyes upon the street just in front of him.

"It's him!" breathed the sheriff. "Now I ask you to look at him! I ask you to take a slant at him and to tell me, would he like to get away from that gang? Yes, pretty near rather get away from this fuss than to have a million dollars! That's him. That's his kind, and all this band-wagon stuff, he just hates it!"

Colonel Exeter leaned a hand upon the shoulder of his friend. And indeed, it seemed almost as though he needed some support in order to keep himself from wavering.

"It's like something that I've seen before!" he said. "It's like a dream that I've had many, many years ago—a daydream, Askew—of my boy Tom, brave and gentle and modest, like that—loved by crowds—and I tell you, Askew, that as he comes closer, every step of that horse is bringing Larned deeper into my heart!"

CHAPTER X.

AN HONEST MAN.

WHAT crimes and virtues could be attributed to Eddie Clewes, surely modesty was the last of them all. And he believed that it was better to have asked and lost than never to have asked at all. On the other hand, he had always shunned deeds of violence. Because, no matter to what end he was heading, he assured himself that he would never step out of this "mortal coil" with a rope around his neck. He had never carried a revolver in all his days for that very reason, because he did not wish to be tempted.

But now he found himself thrust by odd circumstances into the rôle of the modest hero—and the gunfighting hero at that!

It amused Eddie Clewes, and he determined to play the part with all of the might that was in him. Because

he began to see that, if all went well with him, he might have a chance here to make such cash profits as would make all the other deeds of his stirring life seem like child's play.

For it was a rich place, that Valley of Culloden. There was a fortune in tall lumber, alone, clothing the hills. And wherever the trees did not stand was fine pasture, with cattle grazing everywhere. Then, by the edge of the river, the occasional strips of bottom land were sure to be worked to their limits as farms. All that Eddie Clewes saw pleased his eye, and he was one who could judge of such matters, though his viewpoint was not exactly that of a banker!

So he stepped deeper and deeper into his rôle. And when he approached the edges of Culloden, he actually tried to break from the posse and escape with his horse among the trees. He almost succeeded better than his desire. But presently half a dozen cow-punchers on fast ponies swept around him and caught the reins of his horse.

"I hate a crowd, boys," he told them. "I don't want to parade through Culloden like a circus."

"You hate a crowd," they acknowledged, "but there's a crowd in that town that don't hate you. Come along, Larned. Why, man, if we was to let you go, could we ever look the sheriff in the eye again?"

So it was that when they appeared in Culloden streets, they were leading the "hero" along very much more as a captive than as one in triumph.

Instantly the idea was understood through Culloden. And with laughter and cheers and bright eyes they swarmed into the street. For here was a man after their own heart—one who would rather do the deeds of ten men than boast like one.

How it tickled Eddie Clewes to the very heart to be conducted in this fashion! And all the while, his active

eyes saw everything while he seemed to be studying nothing but the pavement. Not a house, not a face, not a garden, not a tree, escaped him.

And it behooved him to study all with care, since he intended to make this town pay back to him the booty which it had snatched from his hands so inopportunely that same day. One hundred and eighty-two thousand dollars!

He felt, moreover, that he had really earned such a reward. For though his hand had had no share in the work, his wits had been the instrument that removed both Delehanty and McKenzie from the earth. He had stood in mighty peril while the destruction was going on. And it seemed to Eddie Clewes a sad trick of fate that he should have had this prize taken from him by the very people who now thronged so thick and so fast to cheer him for his valor. It was a joke, considered by a very distant eye, but Clewes could only smile at it from one side of his face.

They went rioting down the main street of Culloden, then, the "hero" and his guard first, and to the rear, the improvised horse litters in which lay the bodies of the two outlaws. They went straight to the bank, and there a halt was made for the purpose of conveying back into the bank the money which had been stolen from it only the night before.

And there Clewes met the colonel for the first time. They had the sheriff to introduce them, and Clewes was smiling, and the colonel was kindly and a little distant. The keen eye of Clewes was looking through him deep, and deep.

"And the reward, colonel?" said the sheriff. "If you could pay it in ready cash, then the State will fix things with you—"

Straightway they went into the little inner office of Exeter, and there Eddie Clewes had counted into his hand the

largest sum of money that it had ever been his fortune to touch—twelve thousand dollars in good coin of the realm! And that was not all.

"Just what the directors of the bank will wish to do for you, I don't know," said the colonel. "But in the meantime, Larned, I am adding three thousand to round off the reward, which will give you fifteen thousand, for your morning's work."

Fire rose in the heart of Eddie Clewes.

And yet it was not enough! Even with two hundred thousand, there had hardly been enough to make it worth his while to be "honest." He felt that there was something more in this game, which he could play for.

"I can't take that much with me," said Eddie Clewes. "If you will keep it in the bank for me——"

He could feel the keen, kind eyes of the colonel probing him.

"I shall keep it for you gladly. And if you have nothing to do at once, come to my house. Stay with me there, Mr. Larned, until you have made up your mind how you wish to dispose of this little windfall of yours!"

Before they started, the sheriff drew the colonel to one side.

"I ain't gunna advise a man that's older and a lot wiser than me," he said. "Particular because I understand just about how you feel. I've lost a son of my own, colonel! But I want to remind you that taking him into your house might be easier than taking him out again!"

At this, the colonel merely smiled.

He laid a hand upon the shoulder of the sheriff as he answered: "Let me tell you, Askew, that though you have to spend a good deal of your life in the study of criminals and criminal ways, still I don't think that you have to look on the shady side of life as much as I do. Every man who comes through the doors of my bank is my

prospective enemy. I control a thing that he wants—money! And he'll get it away from me on the terms of a robber, if he can. I've learned enough about men to know that most of them are filled with shadows as well as high-lights, but now and then one meets a fellow who is absolutely honest. It shows upon his face like a mirror. And, the moment that I laid my eyes upon young Edward Larned, I knew that he was that sort of a man. Courage and modesty rarely go together in such a degree. And I tell you, man, that I am surer of his integrity than I am of my own, by a great deal. I thank you for your warning. But I have learned to take first impressions as the truest guide to character, in many cases, and this I know to be one of them!"

The sheriff said no more. For that matter, his heart yearned after that slender young man well nigh as much as did the heart of the banker.

He watched them drive up the street in the buckboard of the colonel. He saw them turn out of sight, and with that, a certain darkness fell across the mind of Sheriff Askew, and he went homeward with slow steps. Yet there had been so much glorious achievement on this day, that though it seemed the sheriff had had little to do with the work, yet an overflow of brightness, as it were, descended upon him and clung about his gray head. And as he went to his house he was greeted with more smiles and shouts and wavings of the hand than he could ever remember having received before.

But up the hill went young Eddie Clewes, leaning back and watching the backs of the horses as they swung out in a clipping trot that made nothing of the incline. They wound out from the town. They turned from the main road, and they passed through a tall, strong gate, whose iron leaves were drawn back. Then hard-rolled gravel

took the hoofs of the horses, and they jumped away at a redoubled speed.

It seemed to Eddie Clewes that it was a very jolly, gay adventure, and where it might lead he could not guess. Certainly he did not dream that he was entering upon a new page of his life!

They came before the face of a house built long and low, after the cottage style, with wings rambling in disorder, here and there—a house with many dormer windows, and with promise of a thousand nooks and crannies of comfort and interest inside.

As they swung up before it, a girl ran out from the door to meet them. Eddie Clewes hardly glanced at her, more than to see that she was most simply dressed.

"I've brought home the man who sent down Delehanty and Murdoch McKenzie," said her father. "I've brought Larned home with me to rest for a few days and get acquainted with us. Larned, this is my daughter, Dorothy. Dolly, run and see that a room is ready for him, will you. Ah, one minute—you might put him in Tom's room, my dear!"

Eddie Clewes saw the girl wince a little.

But before he had finished, he felt it would be very odd if he did not make her wince still more. And he was almost glad that she received him with a smiling hostility. Indeed, it was the first time in the life of Clewes that he had had anything to do with the robbing of a friend. And it irked him to the core of his heart to have to reach a hand into the pocket of the colonel. Therefore, the more enemies in this house, the better. He made his glance as cold as ice as he repeated the name of his young hostess.

Besides, what were women to him?

"It's a great place here, Colonel Exeter," said he, "with the mountains at the back of you, I mean, and the

river running under your face. And such a house, too!"

"Tush, my boy, tush!" said Colonel Exeter. "Do you talk about houses and scenery and such things five minutes after you've met my girl? Where's your eyes, my lad?"

"Why, sir," said young Eddie Clewes, "I've never had time to look at girls."

"Too busy with your business, eh?"

"Yes."

"By the way, what is your business?"

It did not ruffle the calm of Eddie Clewes.

"Well, sir," said he, "I've tried a good many things, but I suppose that you might call me a booster, or an exploiter. I mean, sir, that I have always tried to make the best of every situation that I was thrown into—even if I had to move on the next day!"

Which is another proof, in a way, that Eddie Clewes was something of an honest man.

CHAPTER XI.

ENTER SMOKY DICK.

SOME idea of what it meant to be put into the room of the colonel's dead son was gained by Eddie Clewes when he was taken upstairs to his new quarters. They had had barely time to open the windows and let the air blow in; they could not change or take out the things which had been there. And the room seemed to him as completely furnished as though Tom Exeter had stepped out of it five minutes before—furnished, that is to say, with the whole aroma of the dead youngster's personality. In one closet stood his rack of guns in which he had evidently taken much pride—a pump gun, and two of the finest makes of double-barreled shotguns—four rifles, all of various makes and calibers, and a full dozen of revolvers. This was the armament which he discovered in the room; and in the same closet there was a fine

group of fishing rods with which young Tom must have whipped the waters of the river that flowed down Culloden Valley.

And then there were the books of Tom ranged on shelves against the wall—stories and text books from Robinson Crusoe at one end of the rack to Euclid and the Bible at the other, with "The True History of Billy the Kid" more obviously worn and thumbed than any other of the volumes. And when Eddie Clewes took the book down, he found that the True History had been annotated with marginal drawings from the hand of Tom Exeter. Those drawings were, some of them, the scratchy outlines made by a youngster of ten; but some were well-formed and executed with some talent. They generally showed Billy in the performance of some one of the thousand bloody deeds which were attributed to him by the True History. They showed Billy driving home a knife in a burly fellow's throat. They showed Billy charging through a group of fighting Mexicans, a revolver spouting smoke and death from either hand. They showed Billy the Kid killing his guard on the historic occasion of that killer's escape from the hands of justice. And all of the gory details were so faithfully rendered, that Eddie Clewes regarded the book with a grim little smile.

He closed it and turned it back and forth, still with the same mirthless smile. For he felt that he had been given a sudden glimpse into the soul of the dead boy. And he wondered if the fight between McKenzie and Tom Exeter had been all the making of the outlaw.

A knock came at the door, and there was the colonel himself.

"Are you comfortable here, my lad?" he asked.

"Comfortable as can be," said the gentle, cheerful voice of Clewes. "But I hope," he went on, "that my being

in this room won't bring any unhappy memories into your mind, sir?"

The colonel shook his head slowly.

"There was a time," said he, "when I used to close my eyes against the past. It seemed that I had suffered such a useless loss, you see. It was bitter for years. But now that is changed. One must accept the past as well as the present. Closed eyes bring no real end to pain, you know! And as for having you here, it is an honest happiness to me to have another young fellow in this place. I tell you, Larned, that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to know that Tom's books and guns and fishing rods were being used by another youngster! Do you understand? There has been an empty place in this house too long. It would be pleasant to have it filled, for a time!"

And he said this with such a quiet touch of emotion that the other could not help understanding, and his heart leaped. But not, I am afraid, for any reason such as the colonel might have hoped.

"I came up particularly," said the colonel, "to tell you that there is a man at the door saying that he knows you. Do you wish to see him there, or up here? I'll send him up, if you wish?"

Clewes thanked him, and a moment later he heard a quick, strong step on the stairs, and then the door was opened upon a face long familiar to him, and never less welcome than now.

The newcomer closed the door gently behind him and, as though by instinct, listened for an instant with his ear close to the crack, while his keen eyes glanced up and down Eddie Clewes. Then he straightened and faced the younger man, his hands upon his hips, his athletic shoulders squared back, his feet set wide apart, and he broke into a hearty, soundless laughter.

Eddie Clewes did not wince under this assault. He took his seat in a chair beside the window, tilted the chair

back against the wall, and lighted a cigarette, while his glance wandered forth across the tops of the orchard trees, and past the garden lawns, and then down the swinging slopes of the valley to the bright waters of the Culloden River, beyond. They widened into a lake, at that point, and he wondered how many times on hot summer days young Tom Exeter had swam in the waters of that pool.

The vibrating, silent laughter of the newcomer ceased. He posted himself suddenly before Clewes.

"You've forgot me, Eddie?" he asked.

Clewes looked him gravely up and down.

"You're the yegg and sneak thief, and gunfighter, and a good many other things that the police are looking for," announced Eddie Clewes, without emotion. "You're The Gum-shoer; you're the Sand-bag Kid; you're Smoky Dick; and also, you're Dandy Dick Pritchard, I suppose. Is there anything more that you'd like to hear about yourself?"

"You ain't glad to see me, it seems," said Pritchard, settling himself comfortably in a chair opposite to that of Clewes. "What I've done for you ain't no account, maybe?"

"What you did to make me a crook?"

"You've left that line, I suppose," said Pritchard. "You've pulled out and now you're headed for a Bible class, somewheres?"

Eddie Clewes drew his eyes back from the vista beyond the window and looked at the other with a sigh.

"Don't be deep and ironical, Dick," said he. "Because it makes you seem even clumsier than you are! As a matter of fact, you appear best when you appear more like yourself."

"And how is that?" quickly asked the other.

"Like an unvarnished brute."

"You little sneakin' rat!" burst from the lips of Dandy Dick.

And he stood over the other, trembling with rage.

"Sit down, or get out," said Eddie Clewes. "I'd rather that you got out, but I don't suppose that you will."

"Why don't I do it?" gasped Dick Pritchard. "Why don't I wring your neck? What keeps me from it? Ain't I got the strength to do it? And ain't I got the will to do it? And why do I stand here flappin' in the wind instead of smearing you, you——"

He paused, almost choking for lack of breath and the right word.

"You're afraid, Dick," said Eddie.

"Me—afraid?" snarled Pritchard.

"Horribly afraid of me!"

"You're crazy!" gasped Pritchard. "That's all—you're crazy. I tell you, if there was ten of you sitting there in a row, I'd tackle the whole lot of you without even thinking. Why, kid, do you think that you can bamboozle me, because you've made this jay town believe that you're a great gunfighter that could kill Delehanty and McKenzie in a fair scrap?"

"Who *did* kill them?" asked Clewes.

"How do I know?"

"Who killed them and took their stuff and put it in a pile?"

"And who got caught and brought into town before he could get away with the loot, and who got himself made a fool of by the whole valley?" echoed Pritchard.

"Very true," said Eddie Clewes.

"But you were asking about the gun fight."

"Listen, kid, listen, will you?" demanded the other, sweating with exasperation, "*Please* don't talk that way to me, because it makes me peeved, y'understand? It chafes me! Lemme tell you, son, that I know you've never fooled with the guns. You're too *smart* to fool with them!"

Eddie Clewes leaned still farther back in his chair and smiled into the excited face of the other.

"Are you trying to prove that you're not a fool, Pritchard?" he asked.

"By God," said the yegg, "I've stood too much of it! I'm gunna finish you off, kid, and——"

His voice fell away a little uncertainly, for there was not even the ghost of a shadow of doubt in the eyes of Eddie Clewes. He seemed as certain of himself and of his companion as though Pritchard had been a mechanical toy, the strings of which he held in his hand.

"The point is, Dick," said he, "that I know all about you, and you know nothing about me."

"I don't, eh? I couldn't give you your record from——"

"You know what I've done, perhaps, but you've never known how I did it. That's where your brain stops. Whereas, I know all about you, Dick, from head to foot. I have studied your brains until I know every bit of 'em—the whole ounce of gray matter that's in your head. And therefore, don't be a fool and talk savage talk around me. Because I don't care to listen to you. And if you keep on——"

"And if I keep on—what then?"

"Why, I'll have you turned out of the house!"

"No, kid, you won't do that. And I'll tell you the reason why you won't. I happen to know that Cliff Matthews is after you, and I know *why* he's after you. You hear? And besides, you got fifteen thousand that, like a fool, you left in the colonel's bank! You would never have the face to show up for that money after I'd told what I could tell about you."

"Pritchard," said Clewes, "do you believe that would stop me?"

"I believe it. I know it, of course!"

"You have me in your hands, eh?"

"Absolutely, kid. *Absolutely!*"

"I'll show you the difference," said Clewes, "between gun-fighting courage and real nerve."

And slipping from his chair, he headed straight for the door.

As for Pritchard, he watched the other for an instant with gaping mouth. Then he leaped in pursuit and caught him by the shoulder.

"Hey, Eddie!" he whispered. "You don't mean it?"

"Why don't I mean it?"

"I take it back, Eddie. I won't blow on you—but are you gunna chuck this here whole deal——"

Eddie Clewes paused with a sigh.

"Do you plan on some dirty work with me?"

"I plan on making the pair of us rich!" said Pritchard. "Will you listen to me talk, kid?"

"I don't know," said Clewes. "I don't know whether the pleasure of turning you out of the house wouldn't be worth fifteen thousand dollars, and all the chances of easy money to come!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRICE ON HIS HONOR.

BUT it was plain that Eddie Clewes had relented from his first cold fierceness, and Pritchard began to breathe more easily.

"The devil in you, Eddie," he explained, "is so different from the devil in most other folks that I never know which way it is going to make you jump. But now I'm glad that we're through with the foolishness because you and me are gunna make a big thing and a good thing out of this here deal, kid!"

"Take you on the whole, Dick," said the younger man, "I suppose that you have more brass than any other man in the world. Sometimes I have an idea that I myself have a good share of nerve. But I feel like a modest, little shrinking flower, compared with you."

"Go on, kid," said Pritchard. "It's a pleasure to hear you. I never enjoyed anything so much as having you do me

up in words! One of the first things that a stranger would guess would be that you didn't care much for me!"

"A *stranger* might guess that?" echoed Eddie Clewes. "Yes, I suppose that he might. In the meantime, Dick, how do you figure to horn in here? Who staked this job out? Who framed it and trimmed it down fine? Who opened the door and got himself inside?"

"You're talking about yourself, now," agreed Pritchard.

"And therefore, why should I consider you?"

"Partly," said Pritchard, "because I *want* to be considered. No matter how you may rave about it, the fact is that I have the drop on you, just now and here. The gun I have on you is that I know who and what you are, and nobody else in this fool valley does, though you'd think that even in a jay town like this they'd know about a gent that has done as much as you, kid."

He made a pause, but Clewes did not answer.

"Then besides," went on Pritchard, "for running off a job of this size you'll need a bit of help."

"Of what size?" asked Clewes.

"All right," grinned Dandy Dick. "I ain't pressing you for inside information, because I don't need any teacher to tell me what you're after in the house of Exeter. Maybe you're here just to rest and hear the colonel praise you. And maybe, kid, you're here just to enjoy the scenery. It ain't likely that you'd be interested in the Exeter jewels! No, that ain't likely at all!"

He shook his head in mock deprecation.

"Go on," said Clewes, "because I really enjoy hearing your lingo. What about the jewels?"

"You don't know nothing about them, of course?" said Pritchard, deeply ironical. "You don't even know how long

they've been in the family! No, I couldn't expect that you'd be interested in nothing like that!"

He leaned suddenly forward.

"Kid, tell me straight. Did you ever hear what this stuff is worth?"

Eddie Clewes shook his head frankly.

"I never heard," he admitted.

It made Pritchard draw his chair closer, and in a hoarse whisper, delivered from one side of his mouth, he said with the greatest secrecy and excitement:

"I've heard them say that there's more than half a million dollars' worth of stuff in the Exeter safe!"

There was enough in that to sting even Eddie Clewes to interest. He sat up slowly and fixed his keen eyes on the face of the other.

"I ain't stringing you, kid!" breathed Pritchard. "It's gospel. And I come all the way to the Culloden Valley to have a look at things. How was I to guess that my old pal, Eddie Clewes, would be here to welcome me right into the house?"

"Thanks," said Clewes dryly. "But tell me this: How can that much stuff go with a fellow like the colonel. He has money. But half a million in jewels——"

He paused and shook his head.

"Don't you understand?" explained Pritchard, spreading both of his hands palm up in a desperate effort to explain. "It's this way: The old colonel is too high in the air—the stiff-backed old goat—to ever do a simple thing like getting the stuff priced. The reason for why he values the things is only because they're pretty, and they look well on his girl, and they been in the family a long time. Chiefly that! Why, did you see the pin at the neck of the girl to-day?"

"The one with the big red garnet?" asked Clewes.

"Garnet? You simp, you sap, you poor chucklehead, that's a pigeon's-

blood ruby! The finest kind. It made me sort of giddy when I seen it! You could buy three diamonds of the same size for the price of that one ruby!"

Eddie Clewes folded his hands together. It was the surest sign of a most profound interest in him.

"You don't understand, still," said Pritchard. "Well, it is a bit hard to make out. You'd say that the old goat would sell off three or four hundred thousand dollars' worth of the stuff and stick it in a bank, eh? But as a matter of fact, kid, he don't have no idea of the price of what he's got in his safe. It's just something with a sentimental value to him. Maybe he's heard the price of some of the stones, but all that he knows is the *buying* price of them! And d'you know when most of them was bought? I'll tell you! It was something like two hundred years ago, before the Exeters ever come to this country out of England. And a thing that they paid a hundred dollars for in those old days is maybe worth five hundred or a thousand, now! The buying power of coin has sunk a terrible lot, since those days, far as jewels are concerned. Why, if the old boy was to add up all the figures that he knows about his jewels, he would maybe write them down as seventy or eighty thousand dollars. A lot, sure. Enough to make him guard them pretty close; though that's more because he figures that family jewels are sort of like the family honor—something beyond the price of coin to buy! He's just an old sap, y'understand? And as a matter of fact, he keeps them so close that it's gunna be hard even for a couple of wise guys like you and me, kid, to pry the stuff loose from him. He's never let anybody have the key except himself, and his son and——"

"You know the whole history of them?" asked Clewes. "And let me ask you where you learned the price of the stuff in the modern market?"

"I heard it from the Jew. He's to be the fence if we get the stuff. And when he said: Five hundred thousand dollars, he was meaning the price that he would pay *us* for them. After we get the stuff, we can maybe buck him up to six hundred thousand, because you can bet that he laid down a price that would still leave him plenty of leeway!"

"That's reasonable. I know the Jew! But what I'm asking is: How did *he* have a chance to price the stuff?"

"Why, you'll laugh when you hear that! You see, the old colonel had a son that he figured was about the closest to an angel that the world ever flashed an eye on. But this kid was a stepper. He liked guns, and he liked cards, and if he'd lived, he would of raised his share of hell. Even when he was getting started, he landed deep at poker, and he got scared. He thought that as long as he had the key to the jewels, he would be able to sell a part of them, if he got into a pinch. So he arranged things for himself to take the whole bunch of them to be priced, and the Jew come clear to the valley to get the job. He says that he near fainted when he looked over the lot. The kid didn't know the value of the stuff. Fifty thousand would of been big to him for the whole lot. But he wasn't naturally crooked—just sort of wild. And he was afraid to ask his old man for a gambling debt. And that was the way of it. The Jew had everything lined up for one of the best deals in his life, when Tom Exeter got into his fight with Murdoch McKenzie, and that was the end, and ever since that time, the Jew has been sitting back with his mouth watering, hankering after the stuff, and trying to hook up with some gent that would do the job. Now I've talked myself out, kid. I've showed you everything that I know about the deal, and I can tell you that I've held nothing back, facts

or round numbers, or nothing. The coin is ours, kid. We'll have two hundred and fifty thousand apiece—and that's that!"

"I hold up the old boy?" said Eddie Clewes, frowning a little.

"Are you going to balk at that? Hey, Eddie, what *did* you plan on?"

"A little confidence game, perhaps. But to sneakthief jewels out of his house when he trusts me——"

"Now, Eddie, you got sense. Think it over. It's a quarter of a million, not pin money that you're playing for! You've always wanted to make such a stake that you could go straight. Will you ever have a sweeter chance than this?"

Eddie Clewes lay back in the chair and closed his eyes, while Dandy Dick looked down at him with a strange mingling of awe and contempt and disgust and fear.

"Most men have their price," said Eddie Clewes. "And this is mine. Except, Dick," he added, sitting erect, "that you need not think I'll be fool enough to split the thing even with you."

"Would you welch on me?" moaned Dandy Dick.

"You'd call it that, I suppose. But I call it business, plain and simple. If there's half a million in this, you get a hundred thousand and nothing more!"

Dandy Dick leaped up with a sort of silent scream.

"Hey, kid—are you crazy? Are you handing me a double cross like this? Hey—Eddie—don't you know me? Don't you know what I been to you?"

"Stand away from me, Dick," said Eddie Clewes. "A hundred thousand is enough for you. All you've done is to supply a little information. But all of the real work will be done by me. Besides—I wouldn't sell out the old colonel for a penny less than four hundred thousand. I have too much honor in me!"

And he laughed in an ugly, sneering way, as though even his own soul was a matter for scorn and mirth to Eddie Clewes.

"I'm beat," said Dandy Dick, white with rage and helpless self-pity. "I've put all the cards in your hands. If I'd knowed that you'd even think of a one-sided split like this——"

"Steady!" said Clewes. "You've never so much as played at a hundred thousand in your life. And now you're getting it handed to you on a tray. You work with the Jew. All I want is the four hundred thousand. If you can squeeze some extra margin out of the Jew, go ahead and do it! You say there may be an extra hundred thousand. Well, it's yours for the bargaining. I wouldn't pay that price for baving to talk five minutes with that greasy devil! And now, get out, Dick. I've talked to you too long, already!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIVE IN THE CRIB.

ONLY one instant did Dandy Dick Pritchard pause in the doorway when his host accompanied him to the front of the house.

"I don't need to give a smooth worker like you advice, kid," said he. "Only—be fast, be fast! You dunno when that Cliff Matthews will pick up your trail. He's slow, but nobody's fool. And if you can, think of some little grandstand play to get the old boy completely blindfolded—you want the key to that safe, old-timer!"

And Dandy Dick was gone.

They had dinner that night on the veranda, because the evening was very warm and still, and at dinner for the first time Clewes met a man he was to see much of, thereafter. It was big Oliver Portman, who had a cattle ranch somewhere in the hills, a quiet young man whose presence in the house was easily explained, for wherever Dolly

Exeter went, the eyes of Portman drifted uneasily after her. And as Clewes gathered, hardly two days passed that Portman was not calling on Dolly. He had a special reason for calling this evening, because, of course, he shared in the universal admiration and curiosity which burned up and down Culloden Valley concerning the new hero. But Eddie Clewes would not talk about the historic battle. He was as bland and calm as could be, but he parried every question with perfect adroitness. And then, after dinner, he was soon settled down to a game of cribbage with the colonel.

"I play cribbage partly out of spite," the smiling colonel had said as they took their places at a little card table. "Years ago I held three fives and a Jack, and the five turned. I've made a sort of resolve that I should play until I held that hand again. But luck never came my way!"

And presently they were playing without a sound except a murmur, now and then, for the colonel played cribbage according to a strict system that governed his pegging and his discards. And young Mr. Larned seemed equally absorbed in the game.

Yet, now and again, he let a swift glance fly beneath his lashes to the corner of the veranda where Dolly Exeter and big Oliver Portman sat, ostensibly watching the sunset color turn from rose to purple on the surface of the lake beneath them. What Eddie Clewes noted was that no matter how often he glanced in that direction, he usually found that the gaze of Dolly Exeter was fixed upon him—or else that her head was only then turning away. He had guessed at first that she did not like him. He could guess now that she was suspicious. But of what?

If he could have listened to her conversation with young Oliver he would soon have learned!

"I've watched him and tried to size

him up," said Oliver Portman, "but he's one of those extraordinary fellows who can't be put into a category very easily. It would be easy to believe almost anything about him. If he were pointed out as a good, honest, faithful, steady clerk—you could believe that. If you had him noted to you as the son of an idle-rich family—why, he would fit that idea as neatly as a glove fits a hand! And on the other hand, it isn't a bit surprising that he should be what we know him—a hero and a fighting devil under that quiet exterior. No, as a matter of fact, he's unlike any other man I've ever seen. You can believe almost anything about him!"

"And how," said Dolly Exeter, "would he fit into the rôle of a professional gambler?"

Oliver turned his fine, strong head with a start.

"Come, come, Dolly," he said, "you were always a doubter of everything."

"Well," she asked him quietly, "you believe that Mr. Larned could be almost anything. Do you mean—almost anything good, and not bad?"

Mr. Portman revised his ideas a little. And then he colored a bit.

"I don't want to say ugly things about a fellow I've never seen before," said he. "And everything that's known about Larned is ace-high!"

"Hush!" said Dolly. "You are thinking my own thoughts, and you know it. Even when a wolf looks like a dog—there's a difference!"

"Dolly, I mustn't listen to this sort of talk!"

"Oh, Oliver, you're so honest that it hurts. You won't have a bad thought about any one, until you're willing to stand up and tell them about it, face to face! But I say—watch his hands as he shuffles the cards! Don't you think that he does it almost too well?"

In fact, it was a pleasant thing to see how Eddie Clewes gathered the pack neatly together with the tips of his

fingers, and then mixed them with no rattling and crushing, but with a fluid, little whispering sound—after which, they flowed rapidly out. It was all done so easily, so naturally, that one had to look twice to realize the art and the training behind it.

"That's the sort of a hand that may very well have killed men like McKenzie and Delehanty!" commented Oliver Portman.

"Aren't you dodging me, Oliver?"

"I don't know what to say! You do put ugly thoughts into my head, but——"

"Hello, hello!" burst out the colonel, at this point. "And now for the draw!"

He sat upon the edge of his chair, his fine face flushed, his eyes bright.

"What is up?" whispered Portman.

"He has three fives and a Jack and wants the other five," said Dolly, her voice low, but with a hard ring in it. "And I'll wager that he gets it. I tell you, Oliver, I *knew* that Mr. Larned would be able to give dad what he wanted out of that pack, sooner or later!"

"It can't be!" muttered Oliver Portman.

"Watch!"

The colonel had twice extended his hand to cut the pack, and twice he withdrew it again.

"Silly old dear!" breathed Dolly. "It doesn't matter where he cuts—he'll have the right card turned for him."

And then another shout from the colonel.

"By gad, Ned, I've got it again. After these years—I've got it again!"

He jumped up from his chair and laid down his cards.

"It's a twenty-niner. Come look at it, Dolly! Come here, Portman, and feast your eyes on it! May go the rest of your life without seeing that, again! Not another turn of the cards. It's not a money game, Ned, and you'll let me stop now, won't you? You don't

mind a beating from an old man, eh? But cribbage is a science, my boy! Let's stretch our legs a little. I want to take you on a walk down to the lake where Tom and I used to go of an evening in the old days. Excuse us for a moment, Oliver. Come along, Ned. Have you something to smoke?"

And taking Eddie Clewes by the arm, he marched him off down the winding path toward the river, while the last words that Dolly and her suitor overheard were:

"You see, Ned, there are two things to watch—the pegging and the discard. Must watch those two things! They're the whole game. But I'll explain what you must do. Now, when you make your discard——"

They wound from view. Their voices became a blur. And Dolly Exeter started up from her chair and looked anxiously after them.

"Now, Dolly, don't let your imagination run away with you!" said Oliver Portman, most uneasy as he stood beside her.

"Ah, Oliver, Oliver, you great, big trusting baby!" said Dolly. "I can't help worrying. I feel just as though I had seen a clever young fox walk off with the oldest and best gander in the farmyard!"

"It isn't fair to the colonel," said Portman. "But men who do business with him know that he has a grand head on his shoulders. I never could understand how you talk down to him, so!"

"Because I know him and love him, Oliver, and because he loves me, and because all his life he's been totally blind to the faults of those he's fond of. If I did a murder before his eyes, he wouldn't believe it. He *couldn't* believe it! Because loving me, I have to be perfect. Don't you see? And he's grown terribly worked up over this man. This——"

"Dolly, you actually hate this fellow!"

"I'm afraid of him. I'm mortally afraid of him. He's too cool and calm. They said that he was so modest that he tried to break away from the crowd before he was brought to Culloden. Look at him and think of him, Oliver! Is there *any* modesty in him? No, but everything that calm young man does is done for a proper effect. And it makes me half cry and half laugh when I think of my dear old father trying to teach that rascal how to play *any* game of cards!"

Oliver Portman was in a state of perplexity.

"I shouldn't listen to this sort of thing any longer," he declared. "It's wrong of me. It's as though I were slandering him behind his back. You mustn't talk to me, Dolly."

"Come, come, Oliver! As a man—you know that it's *extremely* odd that the five should turn up, just as I said that it would!"

"It *is* odd," admitted Oliver heavily.

"And then, what am I to do to find out about this man?"

"I'll do what I can——"

"You'll take a month turning about to find the honorable way. But I'll tell you what *I'll* do: I'm going to make love to our hero!"

"Dolly—God bless me!—you don't mean that!"

"Oh, but I do! I'm going to make tremendous love to him. And if there's anything in hard work, I'm going to make him talk about himself. Also, I'm going to get a snapshot of him, if I can. And when I have that, I'll send it to you to take it about and see what people may recognize Mr. Ned Larned."

"It's like a conspiracy, Dolly. I feel uncomfortable."

"So do McKenzie and Delehanty," said the girl. "It's better to feel uncomfortable while finding out, than to feel uncomfortable after the truth about him has been shown to you!"

There was something so apt and so

brisk in this last remark that Oliver Portman became silent.

"There's no stopping you," he said at last. "I came over here with my courage worked up high enough to ask you to marry me, for the tenth time. But you've scared me out of it."

"Help me to trail him down," said the girl, "because I promise you that there's something worth knowing behind him. A woman's instinct is never all wrong!"

Oliver Portman did not answer. He had never known enough about women to be able to generalize about the sex. In fact, since his boyhood his attention had been solely devoted to the study of a single girl, and with every week, she became a greater and a greater mystery, quite insolvable to Oliver! But he decided now that she was so infinitely wiser than he that it would be best to put aside his scruples, and to obey her blindly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SCISSORS IN HIS HAIR.

WHEN Eddie Clewes went to bed that night he was reasonably sure that he had the colonel in a position where he could twist that kind and generous gentleman around his finger, and he was equally assured that Dolly was a suspicious foeman.

But when the morning came she was subtly changed.

He thought at first that the governor's telegram might have something to do with it. For the telegram came in due course, brought up by a breathless man on a breathless, sweating horse. The governor had heard a full report of the daring feat of Mr. Edward Larned and he congratulated Mr. Larned upon his amazing courage and fighting skill which had brushed away in a single encounter two criminals so dreaded by the entire State. He was writing Mr. Larned that same day to express his sentiments more fully.

So said the governor's telegram.

It began the day most happily. The colonel drove off to the bank. And Eddie Clewes was left with his thoughts—and Dolly. But before long there was too much Dolly for a great deal of thought about anything else.

He found himself walking with Dolly.

He found himself paddling Dolly in a canoe, along the lake, with the bright face of Dolly before him, and the bright shadow of Dolly floating beside the boat with only a rare ripple to dim her smile.

He found for the first time in his life that even the silences of a woman need not be dull; and when she spoke, sometimes her voice was brisk and cheerful, but more often it was soft and brooding as if something other than her spoken words possessed her mind. And gradually, very gradually, Eddie Clewes began to feel that that something was himself!

In his orderly mind, at the first meeting, certain items had been jotted down as:

Item: A pretty face.

Item: A great deal of self-control.

Item: A sharp set of wits, continually at work on things and people around her.

Item: A great deal of reliance placed in Dolly's own brains.

Out of these mental remarks, he had completed his picture of the girl and put it away in one of those crowded pigeon-holes of his mind where he stored the intellectual pictures of all the people who had ever crossed the margin of his life.

But now he began to note down other things, very small details such as had rarely troubled him in the past—as, for instance, a dimpling softness across her knuckles, when her hand was held flat; or the roundness of her wrist, which the sun had shadowed to a pale bronze; bronze was her throat, also,

fading to a delicately pure white about the base. And though it was pleasant to hear her speak, he was more glad when she was silent, because then he could watch from time to time how her face was modeled about the chin and the lips, and all suffused and blended with bright color and a sort of inward light of happiness.

There was a very great deal to see! And Mr. Clewes, who had been in the habit of noting half a dozen faces at one sweep of the eyes, now discovered that even during the time required for two strokes of the paddle he could not be quite sure of the singular daintiness with which a blue vein ran a tracery upon one of her temples, or of the quality of that dreaming look with which she stared at the shores that drifted past them, or why it was that she picked the water lily, and then let it trail from her hand in the water, while she thought of other things!

What other things?

Why, once or twice his glance met hers, fairly, and then a pleasant little shock went tingling through all the nerves of Mr. Clewes' body and ended with a crowd of startled messages, focused on his heart, and making it leap with a queer happiness and with a queer pain.

It was like homesickness, only it was not. For when had Eddie Clewes had a home?

But when those glances clashed, in this manner, he could not help observing that she always hastily looked away, and there was just an instant of confusion in her manner—she who had been so very sure of herself, the evening before, she who had watched him with such hostility from the corner of the veranda!

He was partly baffled; he was partly enchanted; and he was partly alarmed; for he could feel that he was slipping away from himself into an uncertain, uneasy region of dreams. Once and

twice and again he began to paddle more briskly to break the spell, and once, twice, and again the waters of the quiet lake clung to the sliding keel and dissolved its speed, and the very shadows of the overhanging branches laid ghostly hands upon the canoe and stole away its momentum.

Oh, wicked Dolly Exeter! For who can be so wicked as a good woman, strong and secure in the knowledge that she is above temptation?

"You are thinking of something unhappy," said Eddie Clewes.

"I am thinking of you," said she.

And this time, when she raised her eyes to his, her glance did not leap away again, but remained upon him, and dwelt on him, and in a mysterious way, drew him inside the dim horizon of her thoughts. The heart of Mr. Clewes, which had leaped before, now kept right on pounding, and refused to settle down. Exactly as if he had been afraid of something which was not to be feared!

"And what I am thinking is this," said she. "Suppose that a great eagle, Ned, were to drop out of the air——"

He almost lost the sense of what she was saying, it was such a delight to hear his name come so familiarly upon her lips, with a falling note of confident appeal!

"Suppose a great eagle that was used to sailing over a thousand miles, here and there, lord of everything, were to drop down out of the air, and out of the wind, and down into a quiet little valley—like this, you know—what would he think of the quietness—and the silly cows lifting their heads in the fields to watch him coming down with his great spread wings—and the silly people, all gaping and wondering at him—wouldn't the eagle think it a very dull life, and a very stupid lot of creatures?"

She meant that for him, of course.

A great eagle—that was Eddie Clewes! He felt that he could understand a good deal of her attitude of the night before. Because he *had* come like an eagle into her life. Dropping down out of the central sky with blood and battle about his name! And so she had shrunk from him at the first and suspected him, afterward.

Well, it was all very easy to understand, now that he had the clew of it! It made him feel rather magnificent. And charitable, too. Like a great king, who pities the little village maiden who wonders at him as he rides forth to war!

Such thoughts of strength and of grandeur swelled in the bosom of Eddie Clewes, and yet there was a melting softness in the very core of his being, also.

"I've never been chummy with eagles," said Eddie Clewes. "I can't guess what one of the old boys would think. But I suppose he'd think that the quiet was a wonderful thing, and the smell of the good green grass would mean a lot to him, and I suppose that he would want to flirt his wings in one of these quiet little lakes."

"And then fly away at once, of course!"

"Yes, she seemed quite anxious, saying that, with her head canted a trifle to one side.

"Or perhaps he would forget all about the upper air," said Mr. Clewes. And he felt again as though this was a charity from the magnificent strength of his heart. Charity, you see, to the simple little village girl!

Oh, Samson, beware, beware!

She sat back in the canoe with her eyes closed, her lips smiling a little. How unconscious she seemed, with her head thrown back just a trifle, and the delicate roundness of her throat in view against the lake water, blue as the pure blue heavens! How unconscious and how unsophisticated—poor child!

Samson, Samson, the scissors are in thy hair!

And his heart was quickening, and quickening, and that singular sense of something melting in his heart of hearts—deliciously melting—

She opened her eyes suddenly with a slight start.

"Have you *ever* been just a boy like other boys?" she asked him. "Weren't you always as self-possessed, and as calm, and as sure of your strength? Were you ever running into the house for bread and jam—"

"Ah, a thousand times!" said Eddie Clewes gently. "Of course! Of course! A thousand times. Except that there was often no bread, and never any jam!"

"They didn't believe in letting you have things between meals," she nodded. "And that's right. When I have babies"—and she blushed just a bit—"I'm going to raise them strictly, like that!"

"Well, it wasn't exactly strictness. The bread and the jam were often not there, you know!"

"Really? Then you were poor? I'm so sorry! Not for grown people. Because they have things in their minds which keep them busy and happy. But for little children poverty must be a dreadful thing—not to have hobby horses, or soldiers!"

"You can make them, you know. Soldiers out of pieces of tin can, if you get a tin shears in the junkyard.

And horses out of a potato, with matches stuck in it. Oh, I was happy enough, you know."

"And yet," she said, "I really thought that every home West of the Mississippi had more comfort than that."

"West of the Mississippi! Well, perhaps. But this was East of it, a good ways."

"In that cold, barren Yankee land—I know!"

"No, in that fine Maryland with the most beautiful hills and trees that God ever made. Ah, but I can see it clearly! When you've lived fifteen years of your life in one little village, making a living in spite of bad chances, you know, and putting in for a bit of education, too—why, under conditions like that, everything around a boy is burned into his mind! Except that the off thing is that the unhappy part begins to disappear, after a time. I never think of the winter ice on the river, but of the yellow summer sun. And I never think of the naked autumn days, but all the gold and amber and russet and crimson and purples in October. And a thousand times I dream of the station platform as it was the day that I left forever that town of Comp—"

His teeth closed with a little click. The softness fled from his eyes. Like chilled steel his glance went through her.

But she only murmured: "What a queer name for a town—Comp!"

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

MEXICO SEIZES LARGE RANCH HOLDINGS

A MILLION acres of land in the municipality of Villa Ahumada, eighty-five miles south of El Paso, Texas, are reported to have been embargoed by the State government for nonpayment of taxes. These lands are believed to belong to the heirs of the Martinez del Rio brothers—who were prominently identified with the Porfirio Diaz régime—and are said to comprise half the area known as the Magdalena and Rancho Nuevo holdings. The government is believed to be considering the subdivision and sale of these vast ranch holdings.



Wooden Money

By Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "No Courage," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHINOOK WIND.

IT was with interest that Pete Grandy stepped back and surveyed his work, and with no little disapproval. Twenty minutes before his daughter's brown hair had reached to her waist. Now it was gone. He had cut it because she insisted on it. "That ought to be enough, 'Buddy,'" he protested; "it's a nice bob!"

"It's got to be more than a nice bob, dad; it's got to be a boyish bob. If I were in town——"

"I can give you just as good a hair cut as you can get in town," he interrupted. "Let's see that picture again—the one of the girl in the magazine. Ah—yeah! So you want to look like her. Well, I'll make you look like that. I never went to no barber college, but

I've trimmed hair of evenings in logging camps for thirty years."

The clipping and trimming were resumed. He hummed a merry tune as he worked on his pretty daughter's head. "Danged if you don't look like a boy—a slender kid that hasn't filled out just yet! But what you want to cut your hair for is more'n I can see. Still, you always was boyish. Hunting, fishing, and logging with me, I suppose, caused it. Well——"

The words seemed to choke in his throat. From an indulgent father he became a very angry man. Before the girl realized what was taking place, Pete Grandy had caught up his .30-30. It was a carbine commonly found in the big timber; and it was loaded with .30-30 metal-patched ammunition, which tears a large hole, kills instantly, and is merciful.

The weapon came to the logger's shoulder with an ease of movement that

told of long experience. Over the sights he saw the aggressive figure of Newt Burke. Pete Grandy was fingering the trigger. If Burke would only look up or start toward him! He couldn't shoot a man without warning; even a rattlesnake warned its victim.

The girl sensed rather than saw the situation. She jerked the towel from her neck and knocked the rifle upward. "You can't do that, dad; it's murder. It would be murder now; it would be murder at any time!"

"Sooner or later one of us will die," Pete Grandy said thickly; "there isn't enough room on Cedar Bottom for the two of us!"

"Oh, I know." The girl spoke wearily. "I know. If—what's the use? Besides, dad, Burke has a right to use that trail; it is a government trail built by the forest service. It is open to the public, except when the forest rangers close it because of fire hazard. It crosses our land; but it is not our land, that trail. Come on, put down the rifle, and finish cutting my hair." There were times she considered drawing the powder from the cartridges and rendering the carbine, with its load, harmless. But then, suppose Newt Burke came to "get" Grandy, as he had often threatened to do? Such an act would render her father helpless. As it was, there was always the chance that her father's rage would so blind him as to bring the feud to an abrupt end, and Grandy would face a murder charge.

For several moments the man was so tense he could not continue cutting hair. Gradually he relaxed; fifteen minutes later the job was completed.

Buddy Grandy hastily surveyed the result with a mixture of approval and regret. Her hair had been beautiful, if hopelessly out of fashion, but more than a desire to be fashionable had nerved her to cut it. She disappeared, and five minutes later reappeared

dressed in the rough clothing of the logging country. Her clothing showed signs of wear. The boots were well greased, nearly waterproof, and well calked. The tops reached just below the great muscle of the leg. "Tin" pants, with the extreme bottoms cut off so as to miss the snags—yet of sufficient length to drain rain below and not into her boots—a flannel shirt and battered hat completed the outfit. She powdered her nose, tucked the compact into a convenient pocket usually reserved for tobacco by the male of the species, and hurried away.

"Now, what in thunder is she up to?" Pete Grandy mused. "If I wasn't afraid that cursed Newt Burke would come snooping around, I'd go to town with her. Seems as if there is going to be some kind of doings. Must be a holiday; I haven't heard the donkey whistles tooting over where Hogson is logging. Hogson! Another offspring of the Old Nick! They make a great pair, Hogson and Burke!"

But in this Pete Grandy was not exactly correct. Hogson and Burke were far from teammates. Burke hated Hogson with the same enthusiasm he displayed in his hate for Pete Grandy. And back of the men and their hatred was greed!

The instinct that warns hunted creatures when danger is near also exists in man, and most men have experienced it. They look in time to step back from a rushing automobile, dodge the falling brick, or waken suddenly when something is amiss. Newt Burke experienced a queer sensation every time he passed the Grandy cabin. But his pride kept him to the trail when he could have passed under cover of the timber had he wished. The hair about his temples was quite gray, but his stride matched a youth's in ease and grace. His pace was tireless, but today, as he swung along the Cedar Bot-

tom trail, there was eagerness in his manner he made no effort to conceal. In another hour he would greet Dean Burke, his son, who had been away a year attending the college of forestry at the university.

In his younger days the thought of a college logger would have brought gales of laughter. It was unheard of. A man got all the knowledge he needed in the woods. But now men looked to the future; some were logging only the annual growth; others were planting, preparing not for their children but grandchildren. Such was the purpose of the college logger.

And so, as Newt hurried toward town, even the beauty of Cedar Bottom was lost on him. Part of it is well named; part a misnomer. On one side the Indian reservation bounds it; on the opposite side Hogson, with his railroads and snorting donkey engines, has logged to the very property line, leaving shattered trunks, stumps, and great piles of branches. Here and there a lone tree stands to remind one of what the land once was. But the timber in Cedar Bottom was untouched. The first stand was owned by Newt Burke; the next block was owned by Pete Grandy; and in the center was a lake—Skana Lake, the Indians called it, because a demon, Skana, had left it there in a burst of anger, during which, in his fury, parts of mountains were hurled about. A wedge of land had been dropped between two mountains, and the lake already formed. It stood three hundred feet above Cedar Bottom proper. And this final block of timber, and it was fir, was owned by Newt Burke, also.

Thus it will be seen that the interest of each man was interwoven with the other's. Newt Burke could build a railroad and log his lower property, but this would not be profitable unless the road was extended through Grandy's property to the upper stand of fir.

Grandy refused to permit this. In turn, Burke refused to allow Grandy to cross his lower property. Each had the other bottled up; each was land poor; yet, if they could have forgotten their differences and combined, each would have been wealthy. And in the offing, like a spider watching two flies slowly entangle themselves in its web, Hogson waited. He wanted the three blocks of timber—at his own price.

Through a bit of strategy Hogson had secured notes held by others on the tree properties. When the time came he proposed to close them out, and the entire bottom would be sold to the highest bidder. There would be but one bidder, Hogson, because his logging roads extended to the property line. No other logging company had a chance.

Of winter evenings old Pete Grandy would nod his head and say: "I've always got an ace up my sleeve. My property is mostly lake, but it's worth more than some people think." Several times he was on the verge of telling his daughter the secret, but each time held back. She was romantic, inclined to listen to Indian traditions. This would be too good for her to keep, and Hogson must never know.

Buddy Grandy was not thinking of legends this morning. Her face was serious, and on the soft parts of the trail she could see the footprints of her father's enemy. Newt Burke believed in the comfort of old things, and on long trips wore his old boots. One winter night, long ago, in a fanciful mood, he had replaced the calks in the soles of his boots; and they left a star, half inclosed by a circle, on log, board, leaf, and mud. There was no mistaking Newt's trail. She overtook him at the falls, where the overflow spilled down the face of a rock and formed a stream below. Buddy stopped, not caring for company; and, as the man

paused a moment and looked upward, as if enjoying the blue sky overhead, she slipped behind a cedar. Presently she heard him call cheerfully, "Klahowya, Mary!" Then he passed on.

The girl emerged and hurried down to a log extending from the shore well into the lake. An old squaw, Texas Mary—Little Mary—was squatting at the end. She was scattering salmon eggs into the water to attract passing schools of trout, after which she proposed to catch a few with hook and line. "Klahowya, Mary!" Buddy said in Chinook dialect.

"Hello," Mary answered in good English. She grinned, displaying a number of broken snags.

"Mary, I'll need a lot of luck to-day," the girl said half seriously. "I am planning something. See, I am dressed like a boy. Give me a tamanous—a token of good luck, Mary."

The squaw nodded. "I'll give you the tamanous of the south wind. It will bring you plenty and a man who is strong, handsome, and who will love you. He will come with the south wind!"

And no better token of good luck than the south wind could be asked for. Since time immemorial it had been a happy sign in native life; and, because it was different from the ordinary prevailing southerly wind, the whites had called it "The Chinook Wind."

To native and white it was the harbinger of better days. It was warm, steady, banishing the cold and ice. It always came at night, by stealth, but giving, never stealing. The crone nodded, as if to confirm all the girl's unspoken hopes. Buddy continued on toward town, her mood thoughtful, her pace slow. On the brink of the falls she had lingered a moment as Newt Burke had lingered. Then something soft, warm, a caress touched her cheek. She smiled. It was the south wind. Winter was behind for good. Spring

had been late in coming, but it was here at last. What lay ahead, she wondered.

CHAPTER II.

LOG ROLLING.

THE train came to a stop. Loggers on a holiday piled off, then a well-built young man, perhaps six feet two inches tall and weighing around one hundred and eighty, leaped to the ground. "Hello, dad! Had a hunch you'd be here. Well, I'm through and ready to hit the ball."

"And there's plenty to hit, son," Newt Burke answered; "Hogson has got me about where he wants me. If you can dig our way out, you're a wonder. We'll talk about it later. I brought your outfit along, greased your boots; you'd better get into working duds."

"What's the hurry?"

"Big blow-out for the different camps that are opening up! Baseball game, some boxing bouts, and log rolling! Five hundred dollars, gold, son, for the winner! Billed as the world's championship! Lost your old cunning?"

"I hope not. I'm a bit rusty, but the gang made me do my stuff at the Junior Day affair. The old boots will feel good. Is there any imported talent?"

"Not that I've heard of. They had a few of the contests yesterday afternoon to eliminate the scrubs. I entered you, so it's O. K. The committee knows you, and we need the five hundred. Yes, it's a fact, Dean; we're broke."

"That's news, but don't worry about it. I'll dig in good and hard from now on."

"I'm not worrying. I can always dig a mess of clams down on the beach, knock down a buck for meat, plant a few spuds, and get through the winter. What I'm worrying about is Hogson. Don't mind being licked in a fair,

stand-up fight, but this slowly choking a man to death ain't like the old days."

Dean Burke believed in striking while the iron was hot, and he knew the entire history of the feud. "Will you turn it over to me to settle with a free hand?" he demanded.

"Yes, with the understanding you don't sell out to Hogson except at a fair figure, or you don't meet Grandy more'n halfway." Newt Burke spoke grudgingly, as if he had yielded more than he intended. "I'd sooner see you fight it out and beat 'em both. I ain't forgot Grandy took a shot at me once."

"And I haven't forgotten he took one at me." Dean grinned at the thought, then pulled on a well-greased boot. The business suit he had worn on the train was carefully folded and placed in the pack. It seemed good to dress once more in the free-and-easy garb of the woods, to feel the bite of calks in timber as he walked down the planked streets of the logging community.

Old friends of logging days crowded about, and some of them kidded him a bit about being a college logger. Each time old Newt Burke came to his son's defense, as if defense were needed. "Dean had the practical experience before he got the book stuff," he would growl; "watch him now."

That afternoon, late, they watched him. Two groups of log rollers had reached the semifinals, and of one Dean Burke emerged victor. Then he looked across and saw the figure of his rival for the finals and the five hundred dollars. "He's lighter than I am," Dean mused, "a trim youngster and quick. I'll have to watch my step." The Chinook was at his back, seemingly carrying him along on the log he was riding; but it was really the current of the lazy eddy at that point in the river. "South wind is supposed to bring luck," he added; "I'm hoping it doesn't bring my opponent luck."

A moment later Dan leaped from his

own log to that of his opponent. The contest was on!

A wave of tension spread through the crowd along the banks. The two best log rollers in the Northwest had met. It could not last long; one of them was certain to go in. For a moment each felt the other out, attempting ordinary tricks to throw each other off balance. Twice within the first ten seconds Dean almost slipped; but each time his old skill came to the rescue, and his calks bit deep, his balance remained. Thirty seconds later he realized he was master of the other.

"Burke will get him!" a logger shouted. "Ten dollars that Burke gets him! Come on, you sports!"

"Sure, Burke will get him," another answered. "Look, how's that? He could have dumped him then if he'd wanted to!" Even as the man spoke Dean Burke stopped the log with such abruptness that his opponent wildly clawed the air a moment, then vanished.

Old Newt Burke let forth a yell and pounded the nearest man on the back. "My boy did that—my boy—" He choked back the words as he realized Hogson was standing beside him. The shifting of the crowd had brought enemies together.

"Your boy, eh? And you gloat over such a victory! The yellow cur, knowing he could win, played with her, humiliated her before thousands, then dumped her into the eddy. And you call that sport? And you call him a man!"

Astonishment spread over Newt Burke's face. He started to blaze with fury, yet something told him Hogson was right. Why hadn't he guessed it, as the logger had? "Who is she?" he queried in a low tone.

"As if you didn't know! As if your brat didn't know!" Hogson's tone and manner were nicely calculated to arouse the other, to put him at a disadvantage in any situation that might develop in

the next few moments, and the situation held possibilities.

"Who is it?" Newt repeated and feared the reply.

"Buddy Grandy, with her hair clipped! They're hard up——"

"Thanks to you!" Newt cut in.

"They're hard up; and she entered a man's game and mighty near won a man's game because they needed the money. Wait until this gang hears. When the boys find out who——"

Dean Burke grinned cheerfully as he saw his opponent go under. Just then he was thinking more of the sport of the thing than of the money. "Tough luck, old-timer," he shouted; "give me your hand, and I'll haul you out." He was entirely unprepared for the reply.

"It had to be you! Of all men, it had to be you!" The tone was high pitched and angry.

"If that's the way you feel about it, I'll not hang on a moment longer." Thereupon he released his grip on the other's wrist. "Now, swim ashore!" But there was something about his opponent's swimming that was wrong. Deeply concerned Dean plunged in, caught the struggling logger from behind, and struggled to the surface. A gasp of astonishment came from his lips as he recognized Buddy Grandy for the first time. Bobbing had changed her features a lot. "Oh, Buddy!" he cried, swimming toward a log jam at the other edge of the eddy. "I didn't know. Believe me, I didn't know!" He cursed himself for his stupidity. He should have known instantly so trim a figure; such quickness in action belonged to no man. He had won by superior skill and strength. "Buddy, I'm utterly miserable."

Again and again she had tried to dislike this man; but it simply was not in the cards, and a few minutes before he had come to her, blown, it seemed, by the south wind. Texas Mary's words

rang in her ears, and not even the river water could still them. Dean Burke did look miserable. Whatever might be laid against the Burkes, no man said they fought against women, or were dishonest. For a moment she struggled against herself. He seemed so strong, like a rock; and she needed something to cling to—until she got firm ground beneath her feet, at least. "Can you hang onto that root?" he asked as they reached the jam—mostly stumps that had floated downstream during the high-water period.

Her hand left his shoulder and caught the root. With a quick stroke, and despite the weight of his boots, Dean pulled himself to another root, crawled out, and lifted the girl clear. "Have you a change of clothing?" he asked.

"Yes, but how are we going to get off this jam?"

"A boat is putting off!"

"Ask them to land me on the other side. Every one will know I am a girl now. I feel foolish, being dragged out of the drink in this manner." She had shaken the feeling of uncertainty now, and was once more her cool self, complete mistress of her heart.

"They'll land you wherever you wish, Buddy. Now, listen, I'm not going to take that prize. Hang it all, you know I——"

"Yes, I know several things, among them that you are to take the prize you won fairly. I went into this with my eyes open—even brought an extra change of clothing along. No arguments, please!" This seemed final.

She observed that the two years at college had changed him. He was less the youth, more the man; in fact, all the man, she decided. A different order of fighting could be expected from the Burkes in the future.

"May I see you and your father some evening this week?" he asked suddenly.

"No, of course not! You know the situation. It hasn't changed. Your father and mine are still enemies. Time has strengthened, and not lessened, the hatred!" she explained.

"But we've had no quarrel, Buddy. And once——" He decided not to mention their kid romance, so changed his tactics. "Let's bring a new deal into Cedar Bottom, Buddy, and see if we can't bring about peace. You know, at present the Grandys and Burkes are playing Hogson's game. He wants our timber; and Heaven speed the day when the term, 'our timber,' may be spoken by either Burke or Grandy and include every stick in the Bottom. He wants our timber for a song, Buddy; and Hogson can't sing a note. Will you shake on an agreement between you and me to work toward a better understanding?"

He stood on a snag, dripping wet, one hand extended. His smile was serious, his expression a plea, but in no sense an admission of defeat; the smile could vanish in an instant, she knew, the firm lines about the jaw harden. "Let's shake, Buddy," he repeated; "then together battle Hogson to a standstill. If he has the hold on you he has on us, something must be done quick. Will you shake on it, Buddy?"

The girl's hand came out impulsively. "I'll shake on that, Dean," she agreed. Then the boat bumped the jam. Dean helped Buddy into the stern. "Take me over to the opposite side, please," she requested; "then pick up Mr. Burke on the way back."

The boom man at the oars gasped. "Holy smoke! Pete Grandy's girl with her hair bobbed!" Then, as he looked at Dean, his eyes narrowed to hard slits. "Did you know?" he demanded.

"No, I didn't know!" Dean answered in a tone indicating he was willing to settle the matter with fists, in case his word was doubted.

"Guess maybe you didn't know," the boom man admitted. Then he set off for shore.

CHAPTER III.

NOT TO HOGSON'S LIKING.

BUT the scene on the log jam had not been to Hogson's liking. He was prepared for a clash of logical enemies; and, for a moment, the tenseness of each gave him hope; then came relaxation apparent even at a distance, and finally a sudden handclasp, man-to-man fashion, that could only mean the sealing of an agreement. He glanced toward Newt Burke, but could gain no hint of that worthy's inward emotions. "I've got to get the jump on that," Hogson muttered, "and get it quick. Once the youngsters get the old men together I'm done. Instead of me closing them out for a song, I'll be selling my logging equipment to them for what they offer."

Dozens of his men were scattered through the crowd. Some of them were rough-and-ready characters and had helped the boss in many a shady deal. He selected a man who had proven himself several times. "Duane, come here!" The logger nodded and joined Hogson; together they walked along the bank until out of earshot. "You saw what happened, and you know that was Grandy's girl—not a man!"

"You don't say!" Duane was amazed. "The girl, eh?"

"Yes. Do you know Grandy?"

"No."

"Fine! Now, you light out. Make his cabin by dark and ask to eat. Tell him you are cruising timber for the government on the Indian reservation. Offhand mention his daughter put up a great fight; pretend rage at Burke. Tell Grandy that Burke was merciless, made the girl look foolish, drove her to desperation, then spilled her into the river. That ought to start old Pete Grandy on the warpath with his

.30-30. If there's a killing, you keep away until I send for you. Pay will go on, full time, as usual."

It was a job that suited Duane's peculiar tastes. He filled a pack with grub and set forth. When he had disappeared Hogson stood for some time eyeing footprints in the sand and clay along the river bank. One imprint of the thousands stood out. It was a half circle, with a star in the center—calk marks. "H'mmm!" he mused. "I've got an idea, a good one, if things break the wrong way." He walked over to his office and returned with two pieces of paper. He spread the sheets over the footprints and carefully traced the calk marks left by the right and left boots. He noticed that some of the calks were missing, worn off by rocks no doubt.

While Hogson was working on his plans to acquire the timber on Cedar Bottom, the power site the falls offered, and the summer-resort site offered by the lake, Dean Burke was shifting into dry clothing. His logging duds were hung up in a mill boiler room to dry. The committee in charge of sports later ran him to earth and presented a leather bag containing five hundred dollars in gold. There was no pleasure in the prize, however; but there was pleasure in remembering Buddy Grandy's firm handclasp. With this start, they would go far. Later he encountered his father. "I'm going home," he announced. "You can stay here, father, and see the fun if you want to. I can't get over the fact I dumped Buddy off that log. I could just as easily have lost the contest, and no one the wiser. I would have, too."

"I know how you feel. But you and I know that you didn't realize your opponent was a girl. We don't care what the others think. Long ago I quit worrying about what people might think, just so long as I shot square myself. I've a mind to go back with you."

Newt Burke scratched his head thoughtfully.

"No, you stay and have your fling. We've got a lot of hard work ahead of us this summer," Dean insisted. "I'll hit the trail. I'm anxious to see the old trail, Skana Lake, and the cabin. It's been quite a while."

"I may stay, and again I may not," Newt answered, then lighted his pipe and sauntered off, stopping occasionally to talk of the old days with friends who had labored with him when the days, the fare, the quarters, and the men were rougher than at present.

The arrival of Duane at the Grandy cabin was nicely timed. Pete Grandy had the evening meal about ready and accordingly invited the visitor to sit down. "Ain't much, but what there is of it is well cooked. Traveled far?"

"No, just from town; took in the doings. You're Pete Grandy, ain't you?"

"Yeah, that's my maiden name."

"Great girl you've got! Sure did feel sorry for her to-day, and she such a game little sport, too!"

"So that's where she went, eh?" Pete exclaimed.

"Didn't you know? Well, she went in for the log-rolling events. Came through fine, and no one guessed that she was a girl; looked like a young kid. She made the finals, and her opponent was Dean Burke. There's a dog for you! Of course, he knew it was a girl, standing on the same log that way. What does he do—fall off like a gent? Not him!" Duane's indignation seemed to grow. "He kept that log rolling until she was worn down, reeling, panting, but game. Then he made her a laughingstock by spilling her into the big eddy. She must have been about all in, for she nearly drowned. Here's one guy what's going to clean up on Dean Burke the first time our trails cross."

"He done that to my girl?" Grandy spoke thickly. "We needed money, but

I never guessed her little plan. And Burke wore her down, then made game of her!" His breathing was heavy, even difficult, such was his rage. "Finish your meal; I can't eat now. A man can't eat when he's ablaze inside. Well, Buddy, the time has come." He seemed to have forgotten Duane's presence. He lifted the rifle from the nails on the wall, examined the magazine, and left the cabin.

Duane continued to eat. "Got action there," he mused; "I'll finish and get out. I don't want to be dragged into court as a witness; somebody might remember my face."

And an hour later Duane vanished, as Hogson's men had the habit of doing under such conditions. His work was done. In time he would privately inform Hogson that Pete Grandy had gone forth muttering to himself, while his hands gripped a rifle so tightly the knuckles almost tore through the skin.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOT IN THE BACK.

SOON Dean Burke was swinging along the trail at an easy pace. The music of the falls came faintly; and presently he saw it, with its veil of mist drifting like a bride's veil before an open window. He rested a few minutes, then resumed the pace to the creak! creak! creak! of his pack straps. The climb to the lake level was a stiff one and tiresome, but he made it without difficulty.

A hundred yards downtrail a familiar figure stepped into view. Dean's first impulse was to step forward and say, "Hello, Mr. Grandy." The setting was ready; the peace of the evening suggested it. The smooth waters of the lake were only disturbed by trout leaping for unwary flies; the hum of insect life was in the air. Grandy's ear caught the snap of a breaking twig. He turned, recognized the other, and fired

without a word. Dean Burke fell backward into the brush.

Swearing in his black rage, Grandy rushed forward. "Got him!" he cried. "Got him! Shot from the hip, too! Had to shoot quick or——"

Burke had outguessed him; he had leaped backward a split second before Grandy fired. The brush was broken, a skunk cabbage crumpled from the weight of a falling object; but neither Dean Burke nor his body was in sight. "Shot too quick," Grandy growled; "but I'll get him." His ear caught the crack of a branch some distance to the right. He doubled back, running lightly over the mold on the forest floor; then he waited and listened. Again and again he repeated the performance. "Guess Dean's playing the same game, too. He may get me first."

But Dean was not playing a game that evening. He was avoiding trouble, so long as trouble came directly from Grandy. He wanted peace from that quarter. Some time after Grandy's hurried shot, Dean arrived somewhat breathless, the pack slipped from his shoulders. "Home again!" he exclaimed. "But that was one close shave down by the lake. Heard the old bullet whine by my left ear." Dean laughed. He could laugh about it, now that he had escaped. "The man is undoubtedly crazy to open up without cause. It is going to make the future difficult." He hardly expected Grandy to pursue him to the cabin; nevertheless, he saw the man, at dusk, slipping from tree to tree, keeping the place under close observation. As a matter of precaution Dean reloaded a rifle and pulled down the curtains.

The following morning he peered cautiously at the timber before stepping outside. It was a glorious day, the sun just tipping the higher peaks, changing white snow to pink; a belated night bird flashed across the clearing and vanished into the dark timber.

As Dean Burke stretched his long arms a figure stepped into the open and hurried toward him. He knew instantly something had happened. It was Buddy Grandy. "Have you seen father?" she cried frantically.

"Not since yesterday evening when——" He stopped. No need to tell her.

"When what?" she demanded. He noticed she carried a man-sized automatic pistol, and her attitude was far from friendly. "You met and fought!" she charged. "Where is he? Dean, if you don't tell me where he is I'll do something—terrible!"

"I prefer not to tell, Buddy; but now I see you must know. Your father took a shot at me as I came down the trail. For once in my life I ran. And I put plenty of speed into it. I came directly to the cabin. Later I saw him in the timber, watching the cabin."

"Is that all? Did you quarrel?"

"No! Not a word was exchanged. He just blazed away."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" she coldly demanded. "It is not like him."

"I don't expect you to believe it, Buddy, because I know it is not like him. Come on; something has undoubtedly happened. My father is not home, but he remained in town."

"No," she interrupted, "he did not remain in town. He took the trail ahead of me."

"This is serious, Buddy. Come on!" Dean ran to the dog house and released his dog, Hash! He had named the dog three years before, explaining that it was impossible to tell just what composed the dog, or hash, from a mere glance. Hash was a mongrel, but from his varied forbears he had inherited a wonderful nose. Man, girl, and dog, breakfastless, took the trail for town.

For two miles Hash ranged either side of the trail, seeking cougar and

bobcat scents, or startling an occasional grouse. Suddenly he turned off, his manner indicating something of importance. Neither was able to follow, but presently they heard him barking. Dean smashed through a thicket of devil's clubs; Buddy followed. Lying on the damp ground was Pete Grandy, stretched forth as if dead. His eyes were wide open, his clothing torn, his face bruised from fighting.

"Dad!"

With a frightened cry on her lips the girl brushed Dean aside and dropped to her knees. Dean stood just from view, lest his presence enrage the injured man.

"Dad!" the girl repeated.

Grandy continued to stare at her; except for his eyes, which seemed eloquent, as if attempting to convey something, there was no sign. But there was life enough in those eyes. The man was very much alive. Curiously Dean regarded him for a moment, then with a sickening sensation realized the trouble. Pete Grandy was paralyzed! Nor was that all. The ground in the vicinity was covered with the imprints of his father's boots; the curious calk design seemed everywhere, even in the skunk-cabbage leaves, tramped down and now slowly reviving.

And Dean stepped swiftly about in an effort to cover them up, an instinctive urge to save his father. Then he examined the injured man. In addition to bruises from fighting, there was a bullet wound in the back. Dean was unable to tell whether the bullet had embedded itself in the spinal column or merely hit and glanced off.

"What do you think, Dean; why does he act so?" said Buddy.

Dean managed to convey the trouble without hurting her too deeply, and with the information expressed the belief of quick recovery, a belief he inwardly doubted. Such wounds are bad. "You remain here, Buddy, and I'll get

help. There's usually some one fishing along the lake or below the falls."

Dean ran most of the way to the nearest ranger station, where he telephoned for a doctor and men to carry a stretcher; then he found his fishermen, two young high-school students enjoying a day's sport. They responded quickly; and, by the time the doctor reached the district, three hours after Dean telephoned, Pete Grandy had been carried to the trail.

The doctor examined Grandy briefly. "Paralysis," he announced; "the bullet has either shattered or broken a portion of the spine. I can't do anything here; dare not, in fact. Grandy, do you hear what I am saying?"

The eyes flashed but conveyed nothing. Nor were they sure he even heard them.

Most of the day was required to reach town, men carrying the stretcher in relays, the girl hovering about nervously, and Dean Burke tortured by his own thoughts. There could be but one answer to the question ever in his mind—Burke and Grandy had met and fought. But who shot Grandy in the back? Not his father! He fought fairly; such an act was foreign to his nature.

When he got the girl aside he asked: "Don't judge any one until we find out more than we now know. It is logical for us to believe your father and mine met and fought."

"It is going to be difficult to prove anything else. Yes, I'll be fair; I'll withhold my judgment until your father tells his side of the story, in court or out. And, if he did this terrible thing, I hope I am stripped of every particle of mercy in my being, so that I can hate you and yours to my dying day." She did not speak in anger; just a cold, deadly statement from colorless lips and ashen face. "Better to have killed him outright than to leave his live soul in a dead body!"

Dean bowed his head. There was nothing he could say, but there was much he could do. He ate lightly—the first food tasted that day—then set forth on the trail home. Halfway out he met the sheriff and posse. The sheriff nodded. "If you get in touch with your father, Dean," he said briefly, "bring him in. We've investigated. Found his tracks everywhere. We found where he crouched behind a log, saw the place where he'd rested the rifle on a mossy log to make sure of his aim, and we got the bullet that did the business. It glanced off Grandy and buried itself in a tree." He handed Dean a slug for inspection. "Bring your father in; he can doubtless prove self-defense, because it is known Grandy was gunning for you boys."

"He's not at the cabin?"

"No; we've watched it all day."

"Then I'm going home, get the dog, and trail him. He may be dead, you know. Grandy can't tell what happened. If I find him I'll bring him in, sheriff; that's a promise!" Dean hurried down the trail.

"It's a promise," the sheriff mused; "but just to be sure it's kept I'm going to follow him. Browning, you come along with me. The rest of you boys go back to the office; I'll send for you if you are needed."

CHAPTER V.

BLIND.

THE dog, Hash, was on the verge of exhaustion. On his own account he had spent most of the day seeking his lost master. Now Dean had again put him on the trail. The dog wandered aimlessly for a time, then, catching a hot scent, vanished in the moonlight. As had happened many hours earlier, he set up a barking. Dean ran in the direction of the sound, and a strange sight confronted him. His father was moving blindly through the forest, feel-

ing his way with a pole. When the pole struck on object the man probed about until an opening presented itself, then made his way to the next object—sometimes a rock, but usually a tree or fallen timber.

"Here I am, father!" he shouted. "Coming! Don't go ahead, or you'll go over a bank!"

The pole slipped from Newt Burke's hands, his knees sagged, and he dropped to the earth.

"It's all right now, father," Dean cried; "we'll have you home quick!"

Several minutes passed before Newt could speak. His swollen lips made talking difficult. "Fifty-fifty, son," he managed to say. "Pete one, me one! I licked him the first time; he licked me the second. An hour we fought in the forest, breast to breast, knee to knee. He blinded me with blows around the eyes, then cut me down. He left me; and I've been wandering, trying to reach the stream and make my way along it, home. Must have circled. Is it day or night? Yes, I know now it's night. I heard a cougar howl an hour ago—got the blood scent. Give me your hand, son; let's go home!"

He wearily got to his feet with Dean's aid and swayed. "Two fights and nothing settled! But we'll meet again, and it'll be settled."

When they reached the cabin the sheriff stepped out. "Figured waiting here was the easiest way of finding you, Newt. We've been running in circles all day." The sheriff stepped closer. "Both eyes closed, eh? What a fight! Pete started it, of course?"

"No; we both saw each other about the same time. He fired first, then threw his rifle down. I didn't fire. I wanted to feel his flesh, you see. I felt it! I got licked, but I left my mark."

"I'll have to take you in, Newt. Grandy was found this morning, badly

wounded in the back. He's paralyzed. You are charged with the shooting."

"I never fired a shot. Take me to Grandy now. He's my worst enemy; but he'll tell you the truth—I didn't fire!" Newt Burke's pleading was pathetic. He freely admitted he had been whipped in a fist fight. That did not concern him half as much as the suggestion he had shot a man in the back. "Take me to him now."

"Later, Newt. To-night we'll rest here. Your condition is bad. You'd have to be led. To-morrow we'll go to town."

Newt Burke thought he could not sleep until his enemy had cleared him of the charge, but so great was his exhaustion he dropped to sleep the moment he was lifted to his bunk. Even when they worked on his eyes to reduce the swelling his heavy breathing continued. "Doesn't that prove a clear conscience?" Dean demanded.

"Maybe," the sheriff admitted; "maybe not. I never have believed in convicting a man for the sake of convicting him. If I find evidence in his favor I turn it over to him. Here's my opinion: They met and fought, fists at first. Later they broke apart and went for their guns. One of them ran, perhaps because his gun jammed. Your father got in his shot first, before his eyes were closed. He wandered about the spot; the tracks prove that. We found his rifle, one shot fired, and we found the bullet. Chemical analysis will prove whether it struck Grandy or not. He claims he didn't fire a shot; but the rifle proves it—empty cartridge in the chamber, magazine full."

Even Dean admitted it looked bad. He was hopeful that, after a sound sleep, his father would come clean. But dawn brought no change, except that the old logger could see once more.

Again and again, on the trail to town, Newt Burke told the story of the fight.

Not once did it differ in a material detail. At the hospital Grandy's condition was reported unchanged. "And it is likely to remain that way for months, perhaps until he dies," the surgeon admitted. "If this is an official visit, sheriff, you may see the patient. Better have a reporter take down everything that is said. We don't want these visits repeated too often."

A half hour later the group gathered about the bedside. Just a flash of triumph came to Grandy's eyes as he saw Burke's battered features; that was all.

The sheriff shouted into Grandy's ear: "Did Burke shoot you?"

There was no response. Then the question was written down and held for the other to read. Apparently he read and understood, but could give no reply.

Newt Burke twisted his battered hands in anguish. "Give me that pencil and paper!" he cried. Then he wrote:

PETE: We've been enemies, but we've fought fair. Don't let them charge me with shooting you in the back. I never fired a shot. If this is true blink your eyes.

The room grew tense as the injured man read; but again the eyes gave no sign, except a pathetic sense of utter helplessness.

The sheriff shook his head. "It's no use. We'll hold you until Grandy's condition changes, Newt; then you'll have to stand trial on whatever evidence we have. Thank you, doctor; we won't disturb the patient again."

Dean Burke accompanied his father to jail. "Two battles, instead of one, father," he said; "but we'll take 'em on and win. First we've got to have money. I'll get it somewhere; then I'm going to start logging. We can't sit idly by and allow Hogson to beat us. I'll keep you posted. And I'll try my best to get them to let you out on bond."

"Bonds cost money; and we haven't got it, son. Who'll take a chance on

me now? They'll say, as I would say, a man who shoots another in the back ain't worth trusting. But, son, I didn't do it. I don't care what the evidence shows, I didn't do it."

"I know you didn't!"

From the jail Dean Burke made his way to the hotel where Buddy Grandy was stopping.

"Come up," she answered in response to his telephone call; "I want to see you alone!" Her door opened almost before he knocked. And it closed as quickly. She stepped back, her eyes flaming, her face that same deadly pallor he had noticed the previous day. "I have made my decision," she answered. "Your father's tracks about my father's body, which you tried to cover without seeming to do so; the rifle and bullet evidence the sheriff found; and, above all, the momentary glint of triumph that came into dad's eyes when he saw your father in, the sheriff's custody, convinces me of his guilt. I shall never cease hating you and yours. Never! That is all!"

"It's not all, Buddy," he said quietly; "now listen to me." His hands dropped to her shoulders so he could look into her eyes and convince her of his sincerity. "Give me a chance——"

"Take your hands off of me," she cried furiously. "Give you a chance? You've had more of a chance than your father gave mine!"

When he had gone she threw herself onto the bed and cried: "Why is fate so cruel that such things can happen?" It was an old, old cry, as old as humanity—and never answered.

CHAPTER VI.

GRANDY VERSUS BURKE.

IT was a month later that Pete Grandy was again carried over the trail on a stretcher. "I've done all I can," the surgeon informed Buddy, "all any man can do. You may as well take him

home. It will be cheaper, and he'll be happier."

The south wind was blowing. It had come during the night, as it always came; and the surface of the lake built by the demon, Skana, in a moment of rage was rippling. But the tamanous of the south wind had brought Buddy nothing but ill. Even Tenas Mary was inclined to believe the district was under the spell of Skana, who, it was well known, could change his form at will.

Newt Burke remained in jail awaiting trial. Dean Burke was logging on a shoe string and doing his best to raise money for his father's trial. The lack of available funds was one of the reasons of the delay. Their attorney had obtained a continuance twice.

Most banks lending money on timber lands knew the situation and shook their heads. "No chance as long as the Grandy and Burke interests are divided," one of them frankly informed Dean; "you get together, and one of two things will happen. Hogson will come forward and give you a real price, or we'll advance you enough money to log on your own account. In the meantime, Mr. Burke, understand Hogson is sitting rather pretty. He intends to foreclose."

This information had caused Dean to quit logging for a few days and make a final, desperate attempt to obtain funds. In the end he found himself again blocked at every turn. "Down but not out," he muttered; "I've one card left, and I'll play it to-night!"

Shortly before dusk he came into the Grandy clearing. Buddy was fishing off the dock; Pete was in bed on the porch, attended by an old logger known as Sam Sampson, who did odd jobs about the different camps for food and tobacco money. Dean approached unobserved, but when within a few yards of the dock Buddy glanced up. She dropped her pole, heedless of the dart-

ing trout on the line, and walked off the dock.

"Just a minute, Buddy!" he pleaded; and, when she continued to ignore him, his attitude became grim. "Buddy, I'm desperate, and so are you. You are going to listen." He caught her arm gently but firmly, backed her against a tree and held her there. "Now, listen!"

Her face was flushed with anger; her fists clenched and only his strength kept her from forgetting her sex and mixing, man fashion.

"We've got to pull together, even though you hate me. We've got to. Hogson is winning hands down, and we are losing. I'm logging in a small way, but it is costly. I build roads in and truck the stuff out. Cedar is sky high, and that's the only reason I am making any money. If I could get to the stuff easier, if you had more cedar and less fir, the way would be clear."

He seemed to be speaking to a stone monument. With an impatient gesture he continued: "Your father can be operated on and become the man of old. I've found that out. And my father can be proven innocent. I've found that out." This last statement was a bit strong, founded more on hope than fact. "You can obtain a court order giving you power of attorney. Once this is done, once we present a solid front, you can have the money you need, and so can I. Let's get together."

Dean waited for her to reply. Presently she spoke. "Have you finished? Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all!"

"Then release me!"

He did so; and, utterly ignoring both himself and his plea, she hurried up the path to her cabin. "So much for that. If I could make Pete understand and get a response, I'd go to him." Then, beaten, yet not quitting, Dean continued on home.

From the distance came the sharp

blasts from Hogson's donkeys as logs were snaked from hill and valley to the loading platforms and freighted away. "Whistles of defiance!" Dean growled. "And now what?"

When he reached the cabin that night a youth awaited him. "I'm from Wright's office, your attorney. He wants you to come to town at once; your father's case has been set for trial. Here is something you should also know: Hogson thinks you are too active in the woods, and he got the trial started to keep you busy elsewhere."

"That's like Hogson," Dean answered; "and it's good news. It shows I'm on the right track and, if I keep it up, will make a go of logging. I hope the price of cedar stays up."

Almost at the same moment Buddy was holding a letter before her father's eyes. It was the usual notice of foreclosure. Then she followed with a letter of her own, which read:

DAD: You said if ever Hogson really got us cornered you held an ace. What is the ace? Cedar is high, and he wants what little we have. Isn't there some way you can tell me?

Watching him closely, she saw his face brighten; then into the eyes came a struggle that tortured her soul. With tremendous resolution he was trying to force the paralyzed muscles in his throat to utter words. His face flushed, his eyes flashed, and from his throat came a strange sound: "Ain ana! Ain ana! Eder!" His eyes told her he realized he had failed in his efforts.

She turned away, her lips trembling, the tears slipping slowly down each cheek. And right then she could have killed Newt Burke with her own hands.

Reaction came later. "And Dean Burke said he knew of a surgeon. Oh, anything is better than this! Anything! I'll do anything, give anything, just so dad doesn't have to go through that again."

She donned hat and coat, avoided the questioning eyes of her father, picked up a flash light, and took the trail for Burke's cabin. It was well after dark when Hash barked, and Dean opened the door to peer out. "Come in, whoever it is," he said in a tired voice. She supposed he was suffering, too, loving his father, no doubt; but the Burkes deserved to suffer. And Fate, with an iron hand, was forcing them together. "I am here on business, Mr. Burke!"

His tone matched her own. "Very well, be seated, Miss Grandy!" Briefly he outlined a plan of joint logging of the entire stand of timber, expenses to be prorated, profits prorated according to the cut on each property. "I can have Evans here to-morrow with the necessary papers; the money should be in the bank by the next day. If agreeable, you are to have a thousand dollars for the aid of your father; I to have the same amount for the defense of mine. The remainder to be put into building a wagon road, logging operations, and so forth. Is that agreeable?"

"Quite!" she answered. "Good evening!"

"Good evening. I'll gladly walk down the trail with you as far as the ranger station, where I can telephone Evans."

"It will not be necessary."

And so Dean waited for her to get well on the way before starting for the telephone.

That night each slept for the first time. A great burden seemed to have been lifted. And each, believing better days were to come, rose with the dawn.

Noon brought Evans, who spent a day or two, then returned to town. Two days later brought a letter. It was gently written, but the verdict was plain.

We are particularly in need of a stand of cedar to break the market, and there is not sufficient in sight to justify so large an out-

lay; though the timber as a whole merits such an expense when spread over a period of years.

In it was a personal note from Evans, who had gone to college with Dean:

Just between you and me Hogson is back of this. The deal was about to go through in spite of a lack of cedar, then it stopped. If you had the cedar, nothing could stop you. You'd have all the money you needed.

The setback to himself was bad enough, but to admit to Buddy that he had failed would be humiliating. Nevertheless, he headed for Grandy's without delay.

Buddy read the notes at a glance, then read them again carefully. "Beaten, eh? Oh, well, it's a tough game. I don't mind for myself, but it is tough on dad."

"There's another card to play, Bud—ah, Miss Grandy. Will you consider selling the lake and the timber around it as a summer resort? In that way I'll get my road, and you'll get your money. The timber away from the lake on your land could be sold. Shall I go ahead along those lines?"

"Wait until I explain what has happened to dad." She wrote at length on a sheet of paper, completely outlining the situation, then held it up for him to read. She also explained that she had entered into an agreement with Dean Burke.

Silently she waited, watching his eyes to gain a hint as to approval or disapproval. Again came the tremendous struggle to speak and the words deep in his throat: "Ain ana! Ain ana! Eder. Eder. Ot Eder!"

This time he had added another word. A look of helplessness came into his eyes. He knew that she had failed to understand—that the ace he had held so long to be used against Hogson had failed.

She returned to Dean Burke. "Go ahead, Mr. Burke," she said. "Any-

thing you do will have my approval—anything that will bring in money enough to give dad his chance."

That night Dean did not telephone; but, armed with a power of attorney, he headed for Seattle and a group of men who were seeking a summer-resort site. "You get the lake and the timber surrounding it," he informed them; "the power site is reserved to the Grandys. I am to have use of the road you will build. I agree to keep it in repair as long as my trucks operate over it. Your attorney can add whatever safeguards he wishes. We must have an advance of five thousand dollars immediately." With that Dean was gone.

The chairman scowled. "His terms are fair," he informed the others at the table; "but I don't think much of his haste."

"His father is on trial to-day, Mr. Chairman," a director announced, "and that explains his haste."

CHAPTER VII.

TWENTY-EIGHT INCHES.

THE exhibits were on the table, the stage was set for the trial, the jury selected and sworn in. Newt Burke, pale from confinement, was seated beside his attorney. He eyed the exhibits—the boots with the peculiar calk patterns, the .30-30 rifle, the battered bullet that, experts were prepared to testify, came from the rifle, touched human flesh, then stopped in a tree. Each one was a connecting link in the case against him. His own story came to his mind, the fight in which he went down, unconscious, then remembered nothing until he found himself wandering, blinded. And where was Dean? Working for him, no doubt.

The case proceeded rapidly and was nearly over when Dean Burke appeared. The prosecuting attorney summed up his case in the address to

the jury. His words filled the room as Dean seated himself. "And in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we proved that Newt Burke's short, nervous strides were everywhere in evidence. Twenty-eight-inch steps, and he is a large man. That proves his nervousness."

But Dean heard no more. His father had not taken a twenty-eight-inch step since he was a young man. His legs seemed to swing from the hips; his ordinary stride was thirty-six inches. "Who," he mused, "steps twenty-eight inches? Who? If I can find out, perhaps I've something to work on."

He was studying the problem as the jury filed out. The case was watertight, according to attorneys; a quick verdict was expected. A half hour passed, then a knock. The usual formalities were followed; then the clerk read, "Guilty as charged!" The jury was thanked and discharged. Newt Burke took the verdict coolly. "I'd have voted guilty on such evidence, Dean," he whispered; "but I'm innocent. Grandy beat me in a fair fight. Well, son, this is good-by for a while. You got the money too late to help me, but you'll go ahead. At that, I'm better off than Pete Grandy, poor devil!"

Several days later Dean saw his father off on the train, then he returned to carry out his plans. First came a packet of papers for them to sign. With a notary Dean journeyed to Buddy's cabin.

"This means good-by to our home," the girl said; "but it means happiness for dad." Then, with a bold stroke, she signed. "And he had dreamed of the day when he could take the money from his timber and build a summer resort here and a power house below the falls!"

And, on his own account, Dean saw that he was racing against time. He found a mill that would advance him

money when the logs were beside the road, ready for trucks. And, as the surveyors drove stakes, following the meanderings of the stream for the scenic value of the road, in turn Dean's men dropped the cedars nearest the stakes. Every cent went to the hard-working crew.

He saw but little of Buddy; there was nothing to consult her about. Besides, he was felling trees on his own account when not in the field marking the finest timber for ax and saw.

Off the main trail, one day, he followed a game trail some distance before fully realizing he was studying tracks made by some other logger. He estimated the tracks to be several days old. But it was not age that caused him to stop suddenly and measure them. "Twenty-eight inches!" he cried. "Twenty-eight on the long, normal stride, and shorter than that where the going is rough!" The tracks led to a large cedar. There were many of them about the tree, some fresh, some old. Then they followed another game trail to the government trail and were lost. "That's worth thinking about," he mused. "Wonder who made them? Guess I'll take another look at that cedar."

Fifteen feet up the tree a hole indicated the cedar was partly hollow, at least, though it contained a lot of fine lumber. He marked it for falling. "That short stepper spent a lot of time around this stick; maybe the answer is inside."

Hogson had just emerged from a hot session with his associates. "Grab that timber before they get out from under," a stockholder had demanded; "pay 'em a good price, if need be, but get it while you have 'em cornered. Otherwise we'll be selling out or moving our mills. We've tried to get hold of that Indian-reservation timber; but the Indians are too wise, the govern-

ment too watchful. Have you noticed the logs Burke has ready to move when that road is open for traffic? Have you forgotten Skana Lake is being turned into a summer resort, and some of the finest timber will be kept for scenery, instead of saws. Now get busy or get out!"

That particular stockholder had sufficient votes to make the going rough for Hogson, and Hogson got out. A few weeks before he held a great stand of timber within his hand. Now it was slipping from his grasp, thanks to Dean Burke. Hogson swung along the government trail and presently left the advance guard of Burke's men behind. About him the forest was cool and quiet. He stopped and mopped his brow, and the silence was broken by the ring of an ax. It was guilt of conscience, perhaps, that caused him to pale, then strike for the nearest game trail. Two men were at work on a cedar. "When that comes down I'm done," he whispered hoarsely; "I'm whipped!" For a moment he struggled to regain his nerve, then hurried away. His stride measured about twenty-eight inches; then for some reason he increased it by several inches. The roar of the falls caught his ear, and he remembered he was thirsty. He drank from the pool below, and vagrant clouds of mist cooled his hot face. "Beaten," he muttered, then added, "almost!"

It needed no geologist to determine that originally there had been no falls, but that a slide had blocked the narrow entrance of the valley, formed the lake and falls. The pressure behind that dam was tremendous. "My trump card," he said aloud. "A few sticks of powder, and their summer resort is gone; Burke is wiped out, but the best of the timber remains for us. And the flood should carry out that cedar, too—before they find what's inside of it. I'll telephone Duane."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CEDAR.

CAVES, formed by the action of the water, exist behind most falls. Dawn of the following day saw two men carrying boxes of powder from a pack horse. They waded, waist-deep, along the pool's edge, crawled along the spray-drenched face of the dam, and vanished behind the outer fringe of the falls.

The mists and the falling water effectively concealed the cave, which was some six feet high at the entrance, twenty feet in width, and fifteen feet in depth. Two other men were at work, drilling with a hand drill.

"That'll be all, Duane," the leader said; "take the drillers, clear out of the country, and—forget."

"All right, Mr. Hogson," Duane answered; "send my pay check to the usual place. I'll take care of the drillers."

The three men vanished, exchanged their drenched clothing for dry garments, and took an infrequently used trail to town. Hogson worked rapidly, loading the previously prepared powder into the holes and arranging the fuses to his satisfaction. "Well, here goes," he announced, then lighted the fuses. Briefly he watched them sputter, then worked his way from the cave to the pool and finally dry ground. He, too, exchanged the rough clothing he had worn for dry garments reflecting his position in life. Of the mucker of the early dawn no trace remained. He smiled in a satisfied manner. "Got a half hour to get over the ridge before she goes," he mused; "it'll be worth watching." Then, as he glanced up toward the ridge, his satisfaction vanished. Blue sky appeared where the previous day the top of a great cedar had swayed. "That cedar's down!" he gasped. "They must have worked late!"

Hogson raced madly through the brush, found the game trail, and presently stopped beside the fallen tree. The hole was on the upper side; but the butt was solid, proving the hole did not extend to the roots. His face was almost ashen as he thrust his arm into the hole and withdrew an empty hand.

"Gone!" he screamed. "They're gone! Somebody knew!" He glanced wildly about. "Who?"

And the query was answered. Dean Burke stepped into the open, automatic pistol in hand. "Put 'em up, Hogson; the jig's up!"

Hogson dived headlong into the brush, and Burke flung himself in furious pursuit. He had gone hardly a dozen rods before the ground shook with abrupt violence. The shock knocked him to the ground and surprised Dean into a moment's inactivity; then he was on his feet again in hot pursuit. Like a frightened animal Hogson kept timber between himself and pursuer for a time; but Dean Burke was not to be denied his day, and this was his day. With a final leap he brought Hogson to earth. "There—your dog!"

"Listen!" Hogson was sobbing from terror and his efforts.

The walls on either side were echoing and reëchoing with a roar. Only one sound is just like it—the roar of onrushing water.

In a flash Dean understood the explosion. "You blew out the dam!" he charged. "And by the——"

"We'll die," Hogson sobbed; "we'll both die—like rats!"

"Die?" Dean laughed. "Not you, nor me, yet. And I'm making sure of your right now. I need you in my business." With a single blow he knocked Hogson unconscious, picked him up bodily, and ran to the nearest log—a cedar that had rolled down the bank to the water's edge. A series of explosions stirred the echoes through the

cañon; then came the flood—black and thick with earth. It eddied about the log, rising higher and higher until a wave two feet high lifted the cedar clear and carried it downstream. Another explosion, as if the whole mountain was being torn asunder, then the roar increased. The demon, Skana, was at work once more. The lake he had created was being destroyed. With it would go the summer resort, the road over which Dean planned to log; and, when it was all over, his logs would be splintered things, unfit for the mill.

The damp walls of the gorge were whizzing by at tremendous speed. Dean stood nicely balanced, riding on the crest, with Hogson thrown across his shoulder, and behind them followed a wall of water, twenty feet high. Far ahead he could see his men running frantically for the higher points of safety.

CHAPTER XI.

TAMANOUS.

THE shock awakened Buddy Grandy.

Even her father's senseless body knew something was wrong. She looked out. The lake was no longer emptying its excess water over the falls, but was swirling madly in a great whirlpool into which débris was sucked from view.

She dressed hurriedly; then, forgetting her father's condition, rushed to the porch on which he was sleeping. "Dad! The whole lake is going. We are done for. The tourist resort, our pretty home, everything!" She could picture the great, yawning valley, filled with muck and odors, that would be left. The tourist company would pocket its loss, make no further payments, abandon the project. "The lake," she cried, "is going! The rock below has given way!"

Her words, high pitched with excitement, stirred him. "My ace hand!" he suddenly cried. "Watch!"

"Dad, you can speak! And you can hear!" She hugged him with joy; but his body was as dead as ever, only his voice and eyes lived.

The voice had come unexpectedly. "Watch," he repeated. "Look!"

But she was looking into the cañon beyond the falls. A bobbing log, bearing two men, one on the shoulder of the other, was on the flood's crest. She saw the log strike another and both men go under. Then one emerged, dragging the other, and the mad race continued. She saw the two logs go into a number of others and the man with the burden leap lightly from log to log, kick a larger log free, and continue on. The wall of water smothered the logs, and she saw them spume from the depths, splintered and on end. The two men disappeared around a turn. Small trees that grew on either side of the falls lurched unsteadily, dropped a few feet, then vanished in the flood. The roar was deafening. And yet, in the midst of it all, the girl suddenly turned to her father. "Who shot you, dad? Oh, I am so glad you can hear!"

"I've always been able to hear, but could not make you realize it. I don't know who shot me. I beat Burke, left him, and was walking away. That is all I remember. Burke shot me, I guess. But I'll get well. I can speak; that is everything. Burke and I will meet again; and I'll win, two out of three. Now it is even."

"Yes, but we are ruined. The summer resort is gone, Burke's timber, the road—everything. And Hogson will swoop down like a buzzard and pick the bones!"

"Watch!" her father cried hoarsely. "Just watch! My ace!"

Dark objects, débris, she thought, covered the lake. As time passed and the water lowered she grew cold with excitement. The tops of a great cedar forest were appearing. They stood like gaunt snags above the water, leafless;

but she knew cedar was sound after many years under water. Slowly comprehension dawned; the tradition of Skana Lake was explained. A great slide had come down the mountain and blocked the cañon, damming the river until the entire forest was covered. She remembered her father's words: "Ain Ana! Ain Ana! Eder!"

"I tried hard to tell you," he went on: "Drain Skana! Drain Skana! Lots of cedar!"

And there it was, ready to be logged, and cedar was high. Wooden money—or wood that was as good as money. Hogson, in attempting to destroy them, had made them. The dam had not entirely gone; some great boulders were too heavy for even the water to move. But it poured between them in a furious stream.

Far down the river a man crawled over a jam, dragging another behind him. Loggers helped them ashore, the sheriff regarding the proceeding with interest. He was wondering what caused the flood, what action must be taken by him.

Dean Burke struggled to his feet, lifted Hogson with an effort, and threw him on the ground before the sheriff. "There's your man—the one who shot Grandy. The short, nervous steps mentioned in court started me to thinking.

"I hunted until I found a man who walked like that. Hogson did. Hogson could profit by conflict, injury, and imprisonment. Then, when I started logging, his guilty conscience betrayed him—footprints around a certain cedar. There was something in the hollow he wanted. I was there when my men knocked it down. I found a pair of boots, and the calk pattern was an exact duplicate of my father's; but the boots were two sizes smaller. They'll fit Hogson's feet. He saw them fight, saw father beaten, saw Grandy walk away.

"He knew, in spite of all, Miss Grandy and I would come to an agreement, and he would lose; so he picked up father's rifle and shot Grandy. Isn't that true, Hogson?"

And Hogson, his nerves shattered by the mad ride downstream, admitted the truth.

Great trout in Skana Lake shallows were darting about. Game wardens were constructing small dams to raise the water that the trout might be saved. Fingerlings were being poured into cans that other lakes might be stocked.

Two men made their way across the shattered dam and up the trail to Grandy's cabin. A girl stood on the porch; she was smiling. Pete Grandy was on his cot. In a day or two they were to take him to a big hospital and operate. Success was assured, surgeons said; nature had worked wonders during his period of rest. Compassion came into Grandy's eyes as he noticed how the tan had faded from Newt Burke's face. "Hello, Newt!" he said.

"Hello, Pete!" Newt squeezed the

senseless hand and thought Grandy had suffered a lot.

There was silence. Buddy and Dean walked down the path. The south wind was blowing. "The tamanous Tenas Mary asked for me was long in coming, and when it did come I did not recognize it," Buddy observed.

"Yes, long in coming, and what a wreck it left in its wake! But when the logging is done we'll dam the stream with concrete, build the power house, and erect a summer resort, eh, Buddy?"

The silence on the porch was broken by Pete Grandy. "In our prisons, yours and mine, we've had time for reflection, Newt. Our fight, a futile, senseless thing, so far is a draw; honors are even. Let's let the kids finish it. They seem to be in some sort of a clinch right now."

"Yes, we'll let them finish it—right!"

And Tenas Mary looked down from the distance and grinned. Again she had made good medicine for one she loved. The Chinook fanned her leathery cheek. "Skookum!" she said and grunted.



HERMIT HANGED IN CANYON

FOR many years, Fred N. Selak, reputed to be a wealthy recluse, lived in a cabin near Grand Lake, Colorado. Some weeks ago, the old man's corpse was found hanging to a tree in a cañon near his home. For a time the death of the hermit was a mystery, but it was found that two young men had tried to pass several old coins at Grand Lake, and the pair were arrested on suspicion, as Selak was known to have had a fancy for collecting coins. On being grilled by the police, it is said that the two prisoners finally admitted to the murder. The crime followed a quarrel between the two prisoners and the hermit, and culminated in one of them throwing the halter rope over his head and leading him out to the tree in the cañon, where, despite his urgent pleas that his life be spared, he was hanged. The slayers then went back to the cabin and searched for the treasure which they believed was concealed there. They ripped up the flooring and found about seventy-five dollars and a number of old coins and some clothing, which they took as their loot.



Pioneer Towns of the West

Hot Springs, Ark. *by A.V. Strobe*

Author of "Laramie, Wyoming," etc.

ONE of America's oldest and most famous health resorts is Hot Springs, Arkansas. It is situated near the center of the State, fifty miles southwest of Little Rock, the capital. With a resident population of over sixteen thousand, Hot Springs has attractions that draw to it each year over two hundred and sixty thousand persons. Its many hotels, some of which are truly palatial, and its other dwelling places can accommodate at least twenty-five thousand guests at one time; the larger hotels have rooms for one thousand.

The city lies partly in a narrow valley, six hundred feet above sea level; its greater area, however, is on the open plain to the south and east of the famous hot springs which have given the metropolis its name. About the "Valley of Contentment" are hills that rise six hundred feet above the surrounding country.

During the entire year the climate is

good. The average mean temperature is 62.7° Fahrenheit. While the air is soft, it is neither excessively dry nor humid. The Ozark Mountains shut out the enervating heat of the Gulf Coast during the summer; in winter the city has the warmth and sunshine common to the South. Thousands of Northerners choose Hot Springs as their winter residence; many other spend several weeks there during other seasons.

Being a popular health resort, Hot Springs has, in addition to its superior hotels, excellent sanatoriums, good public and private schools, banks, theaters, and other places of amusement. Golf courses, bridle paths, tennis courts and swimming pools afford an opportunity to indulge in many outdoor sports. You may hike or hunt among the hills, fish or swim in the lakes and streams that are near Hot Springs. You may motor along excellent roads and, from the summits of the hills about the city, see the distant Ozarks bounding the horizon in every direction. Nearer are shaded

glens, whose sides are covered with fragrant groves of virgin pine. Indeed, the region is rich in natural beauty. You may gaze into crystal-clear mountain streams or wander in the picturesque valley of the Ouachita River.

On this river, not far from Hot Springs, is situated the Rempel Dam. With two others, now being built, this dam will make possible one of the largest electric projects in the country; enough electricity will be generated in the plants drawing power from the Ouachita River to supply hundreds of Southern cities with light and power.

As, from the heights, you look down upon Hot Springs, you see, with startling clearness, its buildings and many trees. You are aware of brilliant sunshine, and then you notice that the atmosphere is almost entirely void of smoke. Hot Springs is not a manufacturing or an industrial center; it has been built, its foundations are laid, on the efficacy of the hot springs flowing before the city's doors.

When you pass along the streets you cannot but exclaim in admiration of the wide avenues, the cleanliness of the thoroughfares, the lanes of trees, the artistic clusters of street lamps, the imposing buildings, and the broad lawns before them. Beauty, health, and comfort seem to have been the guiding stars of those who planned and developed this lovely metropolis.

The world-famous Bath House Row is on the government reservation and at the base of Hot Springs Mountain. Finer bath houses are not to be found anywhere in the world. They face a beautiful promenade that is shaded by magnolia trees.

The promenade, called Central Avenue, marks the chief line of division between the city and the property owned by the Federal government. Central Avenue is also the principal retail business street of Hot Springs.

No municipality in the United States, it is claimed, has a better water supply than this resort in central Arkansas. The city is lighted by electricity and has a street-car system. Two miles from the center of town, in a beautiful valley at the foot of the eastern slope of Hot Springs Mountain, the United States government maintains a modern tourist camp for automobilists.

Hard-paved roads delight the traveler who passes through the country about Hot Springs. The city is on the direct line of the Bankhead Highway that extends from Washington, D. C., to San Diego, California. Two railroads also—the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, and the Missouri Pacific—pass through Hot Springs.

As I said in a previous paragraph, the prosperity of the region is dependent upon the hot springs situated there. Their origin is, to some extent, a matter of scientific conjecture. It is believed that, far below the surface of the earth, a large stream of cold water comes into contact with igneous rock of volcanic origin. By the intense heat of the volcanic mass, the water is converted into vapor and rises through fissures in the rock until it meets other bodies of cold water. These are heated to a temperature of 102° Fahrenheit in the coolest of the hot springs and a temperature of 147° in the hottest. Whatever the source of the springs, there is no question of their long-standing and well-deserved reputation.

Hundreds of years ago the redmen knew the remarkable curative powers of the steaming waters and believed that the Great Spirit permeated them. Various tribes strove to gain or to retain possession of the health-giving pools, and several wars were fought before the contestants agreed to regard the territory about the waters as neutral ground to which ill members of the tribes might be brought for treatment.

Ponce de Leon, the Spanish explorer

who discovered Florida and who sought the Fountain of Youth, may have visited the springs. It is probable that, in 1541, De Soto did gaze upon them; he was only one hundred miles distant, on the banks of the Mississippi, when he died in the spring of the following year.

About the year 1800 some white men in search of health built a log cabin and a few shacks of split boards in the Valley of Contentment. They were the first to pass any appreciable length of time in the vicinity. In 1807, however, Manuel Prudhomme, John Perciful and Isaac Cates became the first permanent settlers at Hot Springs.

All who sought alleviation of certain diseases in the waters of the springs were benefited so much that in 1832 the Federal government reserved them and nine hundred and eighty-three acres surrounding them as a national park—the first national park, by the way, in the United States. It will, no doubt, be a surprise to many to learn that Hot Springs National Park is more popular than any of our others; at least several thousand more people visited it last year than any other national park.

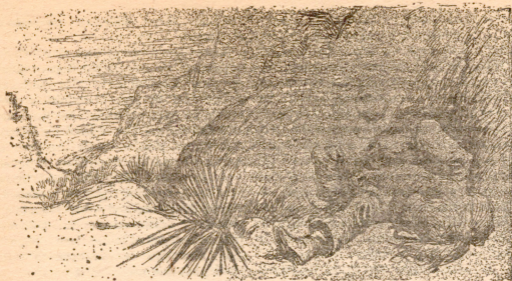
Many of these, of course, went for the purpose of regaining health in the wonder-working pools. There are forty-six springs, all of them grouped around the base of Hot Springs Mountain and pouring forth an unceasing volume of about nine hundred thousand gallons each day. Analysis of the waters has shown them to have a large mineral content, while other tests indicate that they are radio-active. Silica, iron, calcium, manganese, bicarbonate radicle, potassium, magnesium, and sulphate radicle are found in appreciable quantities. Rheumatism, gout, neuralgia, neuritis, many chronic skin disorders, some kinds of anæmia, and some forms of cardio-vascular disease with high blood pressure are relieved by the waters. Early stages of Bright's disease, and chronic malaria can be combatted suc-

cessfully there under a physician's guidance.

In addition to the springs, all of which are owned by the United States, there are four mountains in this national park. Hot Springs Mountain is naturally the most important, but the Federal government has utilized the others also in its plan to make the park a source of health and pleasure to those who visit it. Delightful roads have been built on Hot Springs Mountain, North Mountain, and West Mountain; both horse-drawn vehicles and automobiles are permitted to use them. Sugarloaf Mountain is not open to such traffic, but one may visit it on foot.

Lovely vistas and cool, pine-bordered roads and bridle paths await the visitor to the Hot Springs National Park. Hot Springs is luxuriously appointed for the comfort and health of its guests.

I have space to mention only a few of those men who are leading in the development of present-day Hot Springs. Colonel John R. Fordyce is one of them; he is an engineer and builder of note. D. Fellows Gaines is president of the New Arlington and Eastman hotels there; his father, Albert Gaines, was a pioneer settler at Hot Springs. Associated with Mr. Gaines as vice president and general manager of the hotels is W. E. Chester. Harry A. Jones, a former mayor of the city, is owner of the Majestic Hotel interests, president of the Hot Springs Country Club, and a great philanthropic and civic worker. Robert A. Jones, the present mayor, is probably the State's greatest builder of roads, as a voluntary worker. S. E. Dillon is general manager of Public Utilities, a leading factor in the upbuilding of the resort. F. Leslie Body, manager of the Chamber of Commerce, and Doctor Joseph Bolton, superintendent of the United States reservation, have done much to make Hot Springs National Park the most popular one in the country.



The Wisdom of Rex

By Austin Hall

Author of "Too Much Bear," etc.



ATE was waiting again for Jean la Jeannette and his old dog, Rex; but Jean did not know it. He and his boss, Bob Arnold, had just driven one of the flocks from Palomas to Bloomfield Valley when things began to happen. Bob had planned to bring his flocks to the one central point and was aiming to send Jean and his dog after the big home flock when one of the horses went lame, and the other followed suit. He himself was intending to stay with the flock they had moved. The laming of the horses was a serious accident; but, of course, it could not stop a herder like Jean la Jeannette. It merely meant that he and his dog were to start out on foot. The thing in Jean's mind was the big home flock. It had to be brought across a terrible stretch of desert. It was late in July, and the sun was hot enough to make one's hair curl. That meant expert sheep driv-

ing, and at that game there were none quite as crafty as the old dog and Jean la Jeannette.

"Voilà," spoke the old man to Bob Arnold. "Nevair you worry. Jean she's go. So! An' zat dog Rex, she's go also. Nevair min' ze horse. Jean, she's go a foot. Zat ole desert she's hot lak devil, but she's no fool ze good Jean la Jeannette."

Wherewith he had started out with the old dog trailing at his heels. The desert that he was to cross was a good two-days' journey. Jean knew every foot, and he also knew its history. He hung with the foothills that fringed the level desert. He had to go to the home ranch, and there was more than one reason for his wanting to see that the flock had the advantage of expert driving. One of the reasons was "Quick-shot" Slunt, the old cattleman who lived in the hills that lay to the left of the desert. Twice already Quick-shot had made trouble for Bob Arnold;

and each time, what with luck and the quick thinking of the old herder, he had come off second best.

And now Quick-shot had his gun out and had sworn vengeance. Jean la Jeannette knew Quick-shot only too well. He knew him for a bully and a hog. Slunt had come in a number of years before and had purchased a well and a section of land in the hills that bordered the plain. That was fair enough—only he had begun running cattle. The cattle and the section of land had given him a headquarters. The land around it had no running water, and so Quick-shot had become master of the entire range.

The land belonged to Uncle Sam, but Quick-shot did not concede it. He was claiming the range of thirty miles of mountains. And he had served notice on all, cattlemen and sheepmen alike, that whoever entered his preserves would come out a poor loser.

Time had brought homesteaders and cattlemen, and so the war was on. Wells went in, but things had a way of happening. Quick-shot was rich and powerful, and he had hired a gang of cutthroats. His riders were every one of them of the kind that could not ride with any other outfit, which was just what Quick-shot wanted. He ruled with a rod of iron; and his orders, whether legal or not, were carried out.

Jean knew that Quick-shot's pet aversion was sheep. Wherefore he realized that when he walked along the hills he was courting trouble on more scores than one. He anticipated work in getting the flock across the desert; but in this instance his anticipations were to be met from another quarter—that quarter was a string of small landholders who had settled in the range of the notorious Quick-shot. Most of them had already been driven out, though there were a few remaining.

With Slunt, sheep were taboo. In fact there was only one flock that could

get through without having some kind of trouble. Jean had always suspected that one flock, belonging as it did to Luiz Perez, and driven by a shrewd rogue by the name of Sacramento. Perez had grown rich out of sheep. He had always had a way of selling more mutton than anybody else. Jean had his own notions, and he could not understand why Sacramento could drive straight through the door yard of the irascible Quick-shot without getting into trouble.

Once he had put the question straight to Sacramento when they had met on the range. And Sacramento had shrugged his shoulders and grinned in his rogue's way.

"Oh," he had said, "you no savvy Mister Queeck-shot Slunt. Dat ees all. Nice gentlemen! He like Sacramento ver' well. *Si, si, signor!* Yes, sir; Mister Slunt he's fine gentlemen."

All of which meant nothing, but told Jean la Jeannette that there was more than mere politeness at the bottom of the friendship of Quick-shot and Sacramento.

That was the setting that fate had made on the day when it lamed the horses and sent Jean and his dog on foot across the desert. Jean knew that Sacramento had gone north with a big flock two days before. Sacramento would doubtless meet up with Quick-shot and have a little friendly conversation. What that conversation would be about Jean could not know, but he would have given a good deal to have found out.

However, Jean la Jeannette was soon to find that there were other problems on the desert besides that of Quick-shot's cutthroats. A gray scum had appeared on the horizon. He had turned his course a few miles back and had headed out into the level of the plain. The sun was burning with a blistering intensity and there was not a breath of air stirring.

"Voilà." Jean spoke to the dog and pointed to the patch. "You see heem, Rex? She's over in ze basin. She's raise the devil down zare in few minutes. Mebbeso she's cover all ze valley. Zat sun she's be boss for long time now, but now she's getting ready for ze blow."

He patted the old dog on the head, and Rex wagged his tail in a way to say that he understood the petting and that his master's words must be all right. Jean knew that out there in the basin of the desert, the wind had a way of rising into a hurricane; and, when it did, it picked up the sand and sent it into the air for miles. That gray scum was simply the wind-swept sand rising off the floor. The gray patch widened and spread like a blanket. Then a gust of wind hit into the faces of the man and the dog.

At first the efforts of the wind were merely gusts, but in a few minutes they began coming in whipping blasts that bounded across the plain and shot the cutting sand cruelly into the travelers' faces. Jean had seen more than one sand storm in its inception, so he knew he was in for it. He put his hand across his face, with the other he touched the old dog; then he bent his shoulders to the blast. In two minutes the blasts had become continuous, and in ten the whole desert was in a roar. Not a thing in sight and not a landmark visible; just sand—whipping, roaring, blurring sand! The air was gray and heavy and coming like a catapult.

When the storm hit, Jean was half way up the desert, but he knew that he could not stop until he had reached some kind of shelter. His speed slackened and he made no more than a mile an hour. He was hoping to find a coulee or some kind of a draw where he could get down out of the force that held him back. If he could not find some shelter he would be buried in the

sand. On and on he went, hour after hour. He began to fear that he might be walking in a circle, and then he became sure of it. The dog whimpered and pressed against his side.

"*Mon Dieu!* She's ze devil!" said Jean to himself. "Jean she's see lots o' places but nevair one lak dis. Whoop—"

The last word was broken and came out in mid-air. Jean went tumbling down. He knew at once that he had won out and that he had found a draw. The thing had come suddenly, he had landed on his face. When he looked up the storm was roaring above his head. In another minute he had whipped out his water sack and was giving Rex a drink. It was lucky he had water. He drank himself; after that he wet his face. The storm could be felt in the ditch, but it was nothing to what it was above his head. It would keep up for hours. Jean patted his dog and thanked Heaven for his deliverance.

The night settled in, and Jean cuddled next to the dog. Sleep was impossible; all the devils of the universe seemed to be out riding on the wind. Then, through one of the perverse whims that a storm will take, the sand began raining into the gully. It came down in showers as though some one had found the hiding place and was dumping it down by the bucketful. Jean began to dig out of the sand. He moved down the ditch, but there was no place where he could really better his position.

Worn out with his long vigil, when daylight came he lay down and slept. On awakening he found himself half covered with sand and the old dog digging at his side. Jean leaped up. The dog jumped and seemed suddenly to come to attention, and Jean knew the dog had scented something.

"What you see, Rex?" he asked wonderingly. "What you see? You smell,

eh? Jean t'inks so mebbe you fool heem. You no smell notting."

Now that his master was awake, the dog began lapping his face. He always did that when he was close enough, and he had a reason. Jean understood; the dog was trying to say something. There might be anything out there in the storm. Mebbe the dog smelled sheep. Jean knew that that would bring old Rex up quicker than anything else. But if it wasn't sheep, what could it be? Then, as he looked up Jean saw that the wind had shifted and was coming in with a side sweep from the hills. The dog was standing like a pointer, with his nose headed toward the wind. There was something—Jean could not know. The dog turned and whined.

"So," said the man. "Once more, lak always w'en de devil ees loose you smell somezing. Mebbe better you go. Oui, oui! Lak good dog. Go on."

The old dog stopped for a moment, looked back; and then he headed out into the storm. Because he was a man's dog and a shepherd he could do nothing else. He had scented a mystery out there—a thing that drew him on. His nostrils quivered as he fought his way against the wind, and out of the roar he got the faint rumble of Jean's weakening voice. "Go on! Go on!"

Over the desert the dog hurried. The scent grew stronger, and finally it was right upon him. He had come upon a building—a building with flapping doors and creaking windows; the kind of house that a settler builds in the wilds. Only this place seemed forsaken, haunted, and yet possessed of life. It was the life of the mystery that had brought the dog out of the coulee. The wind whistled and roared through the roof; flip-flap, flip-flap went the ripping tar paper. The old dog stepped through the open door and sniffed.

Sure enough a sound, low and mournful, came from a bed in the corner. The covers were tumbled and

mussed; underneath them lay a form. A small hand protruded and a lock of hair floated over a pillow. A woman! A woman, sick and stricken! The old dog stood tense and rigid, all his faculties a-quiver; then he walked over. He thrust his cold nose against the hand. The hand drew back; and, as it went, he followed it up; and all of a sudden it was jerked away. And still Rex nosed up closer, knowing that sooner or later the sleeper would awaken to greet him in the proper way. After all, it was merely his manner of asking her what was the matter.

Finally the woman turned and opened her eyes. Had Rex been a man he would have known that she was possessed of a certain wild beauty, but a beauty that had been wasted and worn by hardship and sickness. Her eyes were weary, and just now they were full of wonder; her lips moved. Whereupon Rex endeavored in his best way to let her know that he was a friend. Evidently she was too weak to sit up, so she extended her hand.

"Come," she said.

Rex put his paws upon the bed; his great eyes were kind; and his tongue lolled out. Something was telling him that this woman was a person of infinite tenderness and that she was in some sort of misfortune. He felt her hand upon his head; she was stroking it with a soft touch. Her musical voice spoke again.

"Hello, old boy! Where did you come from?"

And still the fingers played in the soft fur. Rex licked the hand and looked up. The fingers had come to the collar, hesitated, and laid bare the silver plate.

\$5,000

REX

\$5,000

Owner Bob Arnold
Mendota, California

In case of trouble, tie a note to his collar and tell him to get the Monsieur. That's his trick.

Slowly and carefully and with great difficulty, she read the inscription. Her hand moved again and began to stroke the hair about the ruff of the old dog's neck.

"So," she spoke kindly. "You are that old Rex, that wonderful dog of Bob Arnold's. I have heard my husband say that if he had a dog like you he could do anything. Isn't it strange that when he is gone you should come? It says here that I should tie a note; but you see, Rex, I can't get up. But I can tie a handkerchief, can't I, old boy? There! Now you can go back to your master and tell him that there is something wrong; something very much wrong."

Her voice and that rag on his collar, together with the wave of her hand, was equal to a command. Rex knew that he was being sent and that he must go back to Jean la Jeannette. He walked to the door, stopped for a moment to look back; and then he passed through. In fifteen minutes he was beside his master to show him the trophy that he had picked up in the desert, and Jean la Jeannette was holding a lady's handkerchief between his stubby fingers.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed. "Where you get zat, eh? W'at you do next? Nevair I see such a dog. Way out here in desert. Oui, oui! An' ze pretty lady's handkerchief, jus' lak ze Mrs. Bob Arnold. Jean she's no understan' at all."

But a half hour later when he was standing beside the bed, he got the answer. The lady was Mrs. Haskell, the wife of a small sheep owner who had come out into the desert, drilled a well, and settled down to make it his home. Mrs. Haskell told the story as best she could. She had been sick, sick, very sick when her husband had left three days before. He had gone out with the sheep; and he had left her in bed, with a pitcher of water within reach. He

had promised to be back in a few hours, and he was a man who always did what he said. But he had not come back, and neither had she heard the sheep. Then had come the storm. The tar paper on the roof had been ripped away, and the door blown open. One of the windows had fallen out. She had been terribly afraid. She was sure that her husband had been lost and that something had happened; otherwise he would have been back. Then, just as she had given up all hope, the dog had come to her bedside. She had read the inscription and had sent the token.

And poor Jean la Jeannette wagged his head with all the courtesy and tenderness that was his. "Ou la la, lady!" he spoke. "She ees pretty mess. In ze countree lak zis, no lady should live. She's good land for shepherders and fools lak Jean la Jeannette, but not for ze pretty ladies. But jus' ze same, Jean she's tink zat she's fin' your man. You say he go wiz ze sheep, eh? So! Well, if he's go wiz sheep, zat dog she's find heem sure."

He stopped to think. For a moment he listened to the roar of the wind, the flapping of the tar paper on the roof, and the creaking of the boards; then he stepped to the door. In the lea of its shelter he could watch the scudding sand. He knew that first of all he would have to get the invalid something more to eat; but just now he was looking for some sign of a lull. Well did he know that the chances of her husband were very small indeed, it was so easy to get lost. A thousand things might happen. Jean suddenly remembered Quick-shot Slunt. The storm would be the renegade's chance; like a bird of prey he would swoop down, strike, and leave the storm to cover up his tracks. Yes! That was it! Either that, or the man had been driven out into the desert by the storm. After all, he might be in some kind of a draw waiting for the wind to go down; but

Jean could not accept that, because he knew that the man would surely try to reach his wife.

As he watched, Jean got the first gleam of encouragement that he had received for hours. There came a sudden quietness and cessation of turmoil; and, before he knew it, he was looking out for half a mile. The dust had settled; the storm was dropping. And Jean knew that it would stop as suddenly as it had come—that in a few minutes the air would be still, with the hurricane only a memory. It was like the waking after a nightmare; Jean had seen it many times. Also he knew that now that the storm was breaking, there was a chance of saving the sheepman. He turned to the stove. In a few moments he had hot water and something for the poor woman to eat. He spoke in his brusque, tender way.

"*Voilà!* Now you lay down and go sleep. Jean an' zat dog she's fin' your husband". Sure! *Le bon Dieu* she's always help zat dog. Jean she's tell zat dog w'at to do; and, you bet, zat dog she's follow trail."

And Jean was true to his words; but first he thought of bringing out some of her husband's things and throwing them in front of the old dog.

"*Voilà,*" he explained. "Zat dog she's ver' smart, but she's only dog. If she's know zat smell, she's follow it a long way; but mebbeso can no do it in ze sand. Rex she's foxy, though, lak coyote. Jean she's fool, but zat dog she's know everyzing."

When he was sure that the lady would be comfortable and that everything would be well in his absence, he stepped into the open. For the first time he got the lay of the land. The house had been built up next to the foothills, backed by barns and corrals with the irrigated field of alfalfa stretching out in a little valley. There were grasses on the side hills—dry foxtail and sun-burned clovers; the grasses stretched

down the slopes and extended in three laterals into the mountains. Just the place for a sheep ranch, Jean thought. The man had driven the sheep to feed, and that would take him into the hills. He spoke to the dog.

"So, Rex. We go up zat way. So! And you follow zat nose, w'en you find heem track you tell ze good Jean la Jeannette."

However, it was not as easy as he had thought. The storm and the sand and débris had killed the scent. Around and around in circles, here and there, went the old shepherd; but there was no whine to tell Jean la Jeannette that he had found anything. Finally they worked back into the hills, where, just as Jean was ready to quit, Rex picked up what he was after. He stopped suddenly to smell a second and a third time; then he looked up and whined at his master.

"So," said Jean. "You find heem, eh? Zat ees goot. But I guess zat man she was no lost in zat storm. Too much hills here."

The place was a washed draw between two ridges, and there were tracks on the side where the sheep had gone down. Also, it was in a sheltered cañon where the wind could not carry. The dog had descended to the floor and was trotting ahead; he ran around a bend, around two more; then he stopped. He was waiting for his master to come up. He had found Haskell.

Sure enough it was the sheepman; he was sitting propped up against the side of the draw with both his legs in a pool of red. The man's head was on his breast, but at the sound of the newcomers he looked up. He pulled out his .45 and was leveling it at the old sheep herder. But he stopped when he heard Jean talking.

"*Non, non!*" spoke the old man. "You no shoot. Jean la Jeannette come for to help. Jean she's see your wife, an' your wife ver' much 'fraid. She's

ask Jean la Jeannette for take zat dog and come for fin' Misteer Haskell. An' zat dog she's do zus lak she's told. *Oui, oui!* She's always lak zat. So! Are you hurt much? Mebbeso Quick-shot shoot, eh?"

The man put up the gun. "Hello, Jean," he said. "Jean la Jeannette! I know you. You're Bob Arnold's head herder, ain't you? And that is old Rex, Bob Arnold's crack sheep dog. I know him, too. But where did you come from? And what is this that you say about my wife? I guess they got me, Jean. I guess they got me! Right through the legs. If I could only get down to my wife! I'm in a nasty predicament."

It was just about what Jean was looking for. He knew so much about Quick-shot and his gang of cutthroats and their manner of working that he could build up the details of what had happened; and yet no one had ever got Quick-shot red-handed enough to bring him to justice. There was nothing to do but help the sheepman and get his story.

"It was like this," the man explained. "I came up here three days ago. That was before the wind had started the sand a-going. I was up on the point over yonder, and there was not a soul in sight. I didn't have a chance. They just plugged me from under cover. I don't know why they didn't kill me unless it was my fool luck. Yes, it must have been Quick-shot's gang. They're the only one who shoot like that. Dirty curs! After they got me they killed my dogs. That's the kind of men they are. The sheep wandered down toward the house, and I haven't seen them since."

Jean was thinking. He looked over the hills at the blue sky and wondered how men could be so low. Quick-shot was a coward, and he would have to pay. Old Jean had a scheme up his sleeve.

"So," he spoke. "Well, now first we

get you down to ze house. Jean la Jeannette will carry. You put your arms about my neck, an' don' you worry about nozzing at all. Jean she's feex zat sheep. Jean she's know lot. An' Jean she's got fine dog for help."

Owing to the steepness of the descent and the rocky hills, that was a difficult undertaking; but, after many rests and much hard labor, Jean finally made it. Then, as soon as he had applied some rough bandages and made the man comfortable, he picked up his hat. He spoke to the man and his wife.

"So now," he explained, "Jean she mus' be going. Jean an' zat dog! Don' you worry. Jean she's got somezing zat she know. Zat dog ees ver' good dog also. Bimeby, mebbeso day or two, you seen Jean la Jeannette again. Mebbeso get doctor. Mebbeso, too, zat Bob Arnold she come after Jean la Jeannette. He be 'fraid of zat storm and come 'cross desert to fin' out. Sure! An' if so, Bob Arnold she come, you tell heem zat ze good Jean la Jeannette she's gone straight north on ze long trail. So! You tell heem, too, zat he mus' ride fast to catch up wiz Jean la Jeannette. Jean and zat dog she's have lots of trouble in few hours. Au revoir!"

With that, Jean closed the door and was gone. Several hours later he was coming out of a draw in the mountains, to head off a flock of sheep that was going across the plain. The pack was a large one, but even at that it contained a great many more sheep than it had when Jean had seen it a few days before. Behind the flock, was walking the rogue Sacramento; Jean knew him by his wide manner of walking and his monotone whistle. Then he noticed something else—a rider coming across the plain. The rider would be one of Quick-shot's men, and he might make trouble! But Jean did not hesitate. He waited for the flock to come up. Sacramento met him with his customary smile. Jean pointed to the sheep.

"Ho! Sacramento!" said Jean. "You do well, eh? Maka much money on ze drive, eh? Zis time you sell mucha mutton. Misteer Perez he getta reech fast, eh? Lots o' sheep! Lots o' money!"

But Sacramento was too wise to be caught. True to his kind, he shrugged his shoulders; he pointed to the rider.

"Mebbeso Mister Jean la Jeannette, you better talk to Mister Quick-shot Slunt? He come over there. He's very nice man, Jean. He talk to you like a gentleman. And if you want to know how these sheep belong to Mister Slunt, you ask him. Here he is."

Jean's quick eye had gone over the flock. He was counting hundreds of sheep with Haskell's mark. And he knew that the trick had been played many times before. He realized also that the cutthroat on the horse would not be apt to let him get away alive to report on what he had seen. He heard his old dog growling by his side, but he held him back. Sacramento was grinning now. Jean whispered to the dog.

"Non, non, Rex! You keep still. Zat man will try for to kill ze good Jean la Jeannette, but you won't let him. Better now, you wait until Jean la Jeannette she uses ze head. If zat man he shoot, you will have no more good Jean la Jeannette!"

Old Quick-shot was looking down at Jean la Jeannette, then he looked at Sacramento. The Spaniard pointed at Jean la Jeannette, and started to explain.

"So," he said. "Misteer Quick-shot, this is Mister Jean la Jeannette. Nice man. Fine sheep herder. He work for the Bob Arnold that you don't like. He say that you are a thief—that these sheep belong to that man Haskell, and that you steal them. You ask him now what he has to say."

But it was not in old Quick-shot's head to ask anything. He started riding

toward Jean la Jeannette, his heavy lips working, and his .45 in his hand; then he thought better of it. He jumped off his horse with a snarl, and put his gun in the holster.

"You dirty cur," he roared. "You're not worth killing with a gun. I'm just a-going to beat you to death with my fists. You sheep herder! Bob Arnold, eh! And you call me a thief! Here's where I take you to pieces and feed you to the coyotes. Your good boss, Bob Arnold, can come out here and pick up your bones."

He came with a rush, but Jean stood his ground. He was afraid of Quick-shot on a horse, but not on foot. The big dog was at the sheep herder's side. Jean could feel his muscles tense. Quick-shot was raging like a bull. Fine! He swung, and Jean jumped to one side. At the same time he let go of old Rex's neck. There was a flash of black and tan; Rex sprang like a wolf, slashed, and came back again. At the same moment Jean turned. Quick-shot pulled his gun, but he was too late. Jean's foot went out, and the man tumbled over. At the next move, Jean kicked the gun out of his hand. The dog leaped again. Quick-shot yelled, and Sacramento started to come to his assistance; but at that instant Jean picked up the weapon. That made him the master; he was still covering his foes when he heard some one talking above him. Jean did not know that there had been another rider coming out of the draw not two hundred feet away, and that the rider was Bob Arnold.

"Well, well, Jean," Bob was saying. "I got here almost on time, didn't I? If I hadn't a-been in that coulee over there you'd 'a' seen me. Don't kill him, Jean, don't kill him. Here you, Rex! That's it! How about it, Quick-shot? We've got you dead to rights this time, ain't we? Better get up. Oh, don't worry about that gash in your throat. It ain't

a-going to kill you. Besides, I want to reserve you for another fate. I'm a-going to take you back to Haskells and find out what it is all about. Then I'm a-going to turn you over to the United States marshal. I'm a-going to find out whether this is Patagonia or the good old United States of America. Savvy? And say, Jean, you better take Rex and head that flock back to Haskells. Take the whole pack. We'll hold them for future developments."



AN EARLY MONTANA EPISODE

IN the days before law and order were established in Montana, it was not uncommon for white desperadoes to make attacks on Indian camps without provocation. One of these unwarranted attacks was that which took place in 1863, near the town of Bannack, and is said to have been the first Indian trouble in that region. It is described by the historian of the Montana vigilantes, Professor Dimsdale, as follows:

"In March, 1863, Charley Reeves, a prominent 'clerk of St. Nicholas,' bought a Sheep-eater squaw, but she refused to live with him, alleging that she was ill-treated, and went back to her tribe, who were encamped on the rise of the hill south of Yankee Flat, about fifty yards to the rear of the street. Reeves went after her and sought to force her to come back with him, but on his attempting to use violence, an old chief interfered. The two grappled. Reeves, with a sudden effort, broke from him, striking him a blow with his pistol, and, in the scuffle, one barrel was harmlessly discharged.

"The next evening, Moore and Reeves, in a state of intoxication, entered Goodrich's saloon, laying down two double-barreled shotguns and four revolvers on the counter, considerably to the discomfiture of the barkeeper, who, we believe, would have sold his position very cheap, for cash, at that precise moment. They declared, while drinking, that if the cowardly white folks on Yankee Flat were afraid of the Indians, they were not and that they would soon 'set the ball a-rolling.' Taking their weapons, they went off to the back of the houses opposite the camp, and, leveling their pieces, they fired into the tepee, wounding one Indian.

"They returned to the saloon and got three more drinks, boasting of what they had done, and, accompanied by William Mitchell, of Minnesota, and two others, they went back, determined to complete their murderous work. The three above named then deliberately poured a volley into the tepee with fatal effect. Mitchell, whose gun was loaded with an ounce ball and a charge of buckshot, killed a Frenchman named Brisette, who had run up to ascertain the cause of the first firing, the ball striking him in the forehead, and the buckshot wounding him in ten different places. The Indian chief, a lame Indian boy, and a papoose were also killed; but the number of the parties who were wounded has never been ascertained. John Burnes escaped with a broken thumb, and a man named Woods was shot in the groin. The murderers being told that they had killed white men, Moore made the remark, calling the victims a vile name, that they had no business there."

When these desperadoes were later brought to trial, the jury was afraid to impose the death penalty, and handed in a sealed verdict of banishment and confiscation of property to the judge. The verdict was an unfortunate one, as it showed the rough element of the community that the people were afraid of them, and really led to greater outrages later on.



Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Saluki and the Afghan Hound," etc.

THE DINGO AND THE AUSTRALIAN TERRIER



WO dogs, the dingo, and the Australian terrier, whose habitat is the island continent of the South Seas, have attained recognition in many other lands. While the dingo is not eligible for prizes bestowed by kennel clubs, it is an important member of the canine world. Many authorities believe that this wild dog of present-day Australia and some of our domesticated breeds have a common ancestor in the pariah dog of Asia.

Centuries ago the tribes that crossed the sea from the Malay Peninsula to Australia and settled there, took pariah dogs with them. Unaccustomed to the restraints of life with man, the dogs frequently ran away. Some of them stayed in the "bush." They hunted in packs, and their number increased so greatly that the early white settlers found them a serious menace to their flocks. Poisoned meat was used in the settlers' war on the dingo, a war that soon decimated the packs and drove many of the survivors to the interior of the country.

England has seen many dingos, though of late years an impost duty has retarded the importation of these dogs. Dingos have been presented to several

zoölogical gardens in the United States, but very few have found their way into private homes here.

In Australia the natives often have dingos as pets and as aids in hunting. Usually these have been raised from puppyhood by their owners. They are said to be "one-man" dogs; sometimes, however, their devotion to their master does not prove strong enough to keep them during the mating season from joining a pack of wild dogs. If that happens, they never voluntarily become domesticated again.

One author, at least, has found the dingo interesting enough to be accorded a place in fiction. Rudyard Kipling has twice honored the animal with chief rôle in his well-known tales—once in the thrilling chapter entitled "Red Dog," in the second of the "Jungle Books;" again, in the poem of "Old Man Kangaroo" in the "Just So Stories."

The dingo has a red or yellowish-brown coat, a broad, rather flat head, erect pointed ears, deep chest, strong legs, and a bushy tail. Specimens of this breed weigh from sixty to eighty pounds.

About fifty years ago fanciers of Australia produced the dog that bears the name of the island continent. Al-

though the Australian terrier is small, it has the characteristics common to the terrier family. It is a satisfactory pet for either city or country folks.

It weighs about eleven pounds, has a wiry coat of straight hair, and a long body, set low. Color may be blue or gray, with tan markings on the legs and

face; red or reddish yellow Australian terriers are seen occasionally. The ears are not cropped, but the tail is docked.

In my next article I shall return to breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club and tell you about the Russian sheepdog and the German boxer.



TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THE national park service of the United States department of the interior, recently celebrated its tenth anniversary. Prior to 1916, the administration of the national parks and national monuments was delegated by the secretary of the interior to one of the subdivisions of his office. In that year, there were fourteen national parks and sixteen national monuments. With the creation of the national park service, a separate governmental organization came into existence to administer them. Since then, the number of national parks has been increased until now there are nineteen national parks and thirty-two national monuments. In addition, four other parks have been authorized by Congress as soon as certain conditions have been complied with.

The national parks began to grow in popularity as soon as the new bureau was established. The close of the 1916 travel year saw a total of 356,097 visitors to the parks and monuments. Travel in such proportions was then considered large. It is estimated that this year's travel to the parks and monuments exceeded 2,300,000 visitors.

During the past ten years, special emphasis has been placed by the national park service on establishing facilities such as hotels, camps and transportation to meet the demands of the public. Free public camps have been installed from Congressional appropriations, and, with the coöperation of the public health service, sanitation has been provided in accordance with modern standards. Roads and trails have been developed, so as to facilitate travel by motor car and horseback, and these are constantly being extended into the lesser known regions of the parks.

Special attention has been given during the past few years to the development of the educational facilities of the national parks, by the establishment of museums and a nature guide service, which have met with popular approval. The use made of these educational facilities indicates that, with the extension of such facilities, this will be one of the most valuable developments in national park history to make a visit to the parks interesting and profitable.



Walking the Log

by Howard E. Morgan

Author of "Plumb Nervous," etc.



BALANCED precariously on the lip of the steep-walled ravine, United States Marshal Dan Hamill whistled softly through his teeth. There, at his feet, were deep-cut moccasin tracks in the crumbling gray moss, and, near by, the footprints of a big dog. "Black Jean" Le Clere and his devil dog, Loup! For two weeks the marshal had been casting about for trace of the killer, Le Clere; and this was the first tangible evidence. The tracks were fresh, too; they were less than an hour old.

Strange, terrible tales of Black Jean and his devil dog, Loup, had come from over the border, where Le Clere had for long evaded the Canadian police. Dan Hamill had heard most of these stories and believed but few. Le Clere was a bad egg, no doubt; but the dog—whoever heard of a dog hating a man with such persistent, almost human hate, that

it would follow that man through countless miles of unbroken wilderness, seeking to vent that hate? That was what this dog had done, according to reports. No, Dan Hamill had not believed the story of the dog. He didn't believe the hate part of it yet. There was a dog, though. And what a dog! Those tracks——

The marshal's pursed lips suddenly drew tight. Head on one side he listened, eyes and ears intently alert. A rumbling growl sounded from across the little gully, then the staccato bark of a rifle. In response to the shot, the marshal's big body spun half about, as though propelled by some potent, unseen agency, balanced for an instant on the brink of the precipice, toppled over, sprawled grotesquely over, and fell down, down. The contents of the stricken man's pack clattered noisily over the rocks. There came a mocking laugh from the opposite side of the ravine, followed by a snarling yelp; then

silence settled over the dreary Alaskan barracks.

Ten minutes later the huddled form at the bottom of the ravine moved and groaned. Dan Hamill was not done for yet. He had been shot before, had fallen over cliffs before, but, as he lay there cautiously taking inventory of the damage done, he admitted that never, in ten years of adventuring in the Alaskan wilderness, had he found himself in a more serious situation. In the first place, his rifle was broken, broken beyond all repair. This in itself constituted a well-nigh fatal catastrophe. He was short of food; the big snows were due almost any day. He had hoped to get Jean Le Clere before the snows—before his supplies gave out. Now, with the rifle gone, no food, and no means of obtaining more, and close on the trail of a desperate criminal, his situation seemed indeed hopeless.

But Dan Hamill was not one to readily admit defeat. Anyhow, things might be worse. The shot had passed close under his right arm, scarcely breaking the skin. Force of the bullet, piercing the heavy Mackinaw, had thrown him. No bones were broken as a result of the fall. Of course, he was badly bruised, but that was a relatively unimportant detail. Yes, he had come through pretty lucky at that.

He wasn't finished with Black Jean Le Clere. He had no intention of giving up the chase. Might as well go on as to turn back now. It was well over a hundred miles to civilization whichever way he turned. The hazard of tackling Black Jean Le Clere, unarmed, did not appear to Dan Hamill in the light of a hazard at all. It was a thing that had to be done, strictly in line with his duty. His chief worry lay in the lack of food. Of course, he might stumble upon a cabin, but this seemed unlikely.

Swearing through his clenched teeth, the marshal limped painfully along the

bottom of the ravine, collecting odds and ends of duffle that had spilled out of his pack in the fall. Then he started up the wall. This in itself was no easy task. The jagged rocks were ice covered, offering scant foothold. Several times he slipped. Once he fell, slithering, feet first, halfway to the bottom, before a jutting shelf of rock stayed his progress.

When he finally reached the top, two hours later, he was exhausted; he lay panting in the wet moss. Already the gray arctic dusk had come. It would be useless to go on, for, although the northern nights are never black, the featureless grayness casts no shadows. Like a snow-covered plain on a sunless winter day, the ground appears flat, with no sign of rounded hill or gully. But the gullies are always there, steep-walled, treacherous, and the ice-covered, insurmountable hills. Dan Hamill knew. And so, when his pounding heart had quieted somewhat, he set about methodically collecting dry wood for a fire. There should be little danger in building a fire. Black Jean and his devil dog were probably far away.

He stopped suddenly and dropped to his knees in the soggy moss. Fresh tracks! Le Clere! Dan Hamill laughed. A cautious cuss this Black Jean. Following the shot, he had circled about the ravine, to make sure that his shot had found its mark. He had stood, on the cliff edge, peering down; and, by some lucky chance—lucky that is for Dan Hamill—had failed to sight the huddled figure, down there among the rocks. Fifty feet away the big dog had crouched behind a spruce scrub. Dan Hamill shuddered as his understanding eyes read the signs. There might be something to the stories at that, for certain it was that this huge beast was following Jean Le Clere. At no spot did the man and the dog travel together. Always, the beast followed behind the man, just off the trail; and, whenever

the man stopped, those huge tracks circled endlessly around and about the spot where the man stood.

Mid-morning of the next day, Hamill, following Le Clere's trail, came upon a little cabin, couched in a thicket of firs on a wooded ridge top. Here the fugitive had spent the night. The cabin was a makeshift, tumble-down affair, long since left tenantless, probably by some disappointed gold seeker. Black Jean was traveling slowly, convinced apparently of his pursuer's death. He had slept late. The tracks leading away from the cabin were fresh ones. All of which Dan Hamill noted subconsciously. Hence it was not this that caused him to inspect with minute care the loamy ground around the cabin.

There were tracks there in the soft snow. Many, many tracks; so many that a beaten trail had been formed around the cabin. Loup, the devil dog! The beast had circled the cabin, where the man lay sleeping, all through the night. Hate! Dan Hamill had been unwilling to believe it at first. It didn't seem possible. But the signs were plain, and finally he was convinced. One thing he was unable to puzzle out: Why didn't Le Clere shoot the beast? It was not possible that the animal, endowed though it undoubtedly was with abnormal intelligence, could keep out of the man's sight all the time. No, Le Clere was certainly aware of the dog's slinking presence. Why, then, did he not shoot?

Dan Hamill knew dogs, liked them, understood them. That is, he thought he understood them. Here, however, was something new that he did not understand. Desire to make acquaintance of the strange beast, assumed an importance equal to his desire to land Black Jean Le Clere.

Le Clere's tracks, showing clear in the inch-deep fluff of new snow, led leisurely away from the cabin along the wooded valley, skirting the ridge.

Hamill knew this particular strip of country well. To Le Clere it was, evidently, unfamiliar ground. The accepted trail into the north followed the ridge top. The valley was almost impassable at this time of year. The marshal had no fear of losing his man. Le Clere couldn't get out of sight of the serpentine ridge, if he wanted to; an uprearing wall of glistening sandstone a hundred feet high bordered the valley on the opposite side.

And so it was that, shortly after noon, Dan Hamill caught a glimpse of his man, toiling slowly across a rock-strewn wash. Slinking along in the thicket shadows, fifty yards behind Le Clere, was the dog. Although Hamill had been prepared to a certain extent by the tracks, he was, nevertheless, amazed at the size of the beast. As the gaunt black form flitted through a finger of pale sunlight, it might easily have been mistaken for a moose calf.

The marshal hastened his pace. Just beyond, he knew, the valley trail squeezed through a narrow, bush-choked passage between the hills. Here he would wait for Black Jean Le Clere. Unarmed, the task would be a dangerous one, but it had to be attempted. Every moment now was precious. If he landed his man now there was a fair chance of returning with his prisoner before the snows.

An hour later, carefully hidden in the head-high bush, Dan Hamill waited for Jean Le Clere. He had bound his broken rifle with strips of caribou hide so that, under casual inspection, it looked all right. He wouldn't bluff with the rifle, however, unless it was absolutely necessary. He hoped Le Clere would get near enough to permit of a hand-to-hand argument. This latter would allow for far less chance of failure. Dan Hamill had every confidence in the efficacy of his own rugged strength and skill in a hand-to-hand fight, even with the redoubtable Black

Jean Le Clere than whom, according to reports, there was none mightier in all northwestern Canada.

Cracking of the brittle underbrush soon heralded the approach of the killer. Dan Hamill crouched, tense and alert, in the brush tangle. Jean Le Clere burst abruptly into sight not a dozen yards away. Evidently the valley trail had proved hard going. The fugitive's clothes were torn, his hands and face scratched and bleeding; and he was in an ugly temper. Apparently he was considering the advisability of making camp for the night in the little clearing. He stamped about, swearing under his breath, muttering.

Dan Hamill muttered too. Never, in fifteen years spent in the business of man hunting, had he faced such a murderous-looking scoundrel as Black Jean Le Clere. The breed resembled nothing so much as a great ape. He stood scarcely more than five feet in height, and the sloping shoulders were thick and broad, giving the mighty body a curious effect of squareness. His head, shaggy-haired and huge, set hunchingly on the wide shoulders, listed slightly to one side like a leering gargoyle. The flat face, rendered almost featureless by a profusion of black whiskers, sloped sharply back from the narrow-set, bloodshot eyes. A vast array of uneven teeth appeared through the whiskers; the wide mouth seemed always in motion, and the sounds emanating therefrom, together with the constant flashing of the white teeth, gave the man every appearance of a big ape, eternally chattering and gnashing its teeth.

Despite himself, Dan Hamill shuddered. Here was more beast than man.

Crouching there, scarcely breathing, Hamill felt suddenly that he was not alone. Some living thing had entered that brush tangle and was watching him. Not Le Clere. No, the killer was out there, in the open, busily constructing a

lean-to. And then Dan Hamill saw two almond-shaped eyes peering greenly out at him. Those eyes were not a rod away. The dog!

Automatically Hamill's grip tightened on the rifle. The beast saw that involuntary motion and snarled silently, baring its fangs. Hamill gingerly dropped the rifle in the pine needles at his side. His eyes never left the green ones. For several minutes both remained motionless; then the dog came nearer, lay flat, and, head on paws, resumed contemplation of the man. A shaft of sunlight, filtering through the thicket, rested on the animal's shaggy body, and Dan Hamill was scarcely able to repress a gasp of horror. The dog's body was literally covered with scars. Many of them were from old hurts. A fresh wound appeared on a foreleg, and the dog licked it from time to time. Some of those scars certainly had been made by man. Le Clere, no doubt—the black devil!

The dog was a magnificent specimen, a splendid mongrel, weighing close to a hundred pounds. Its pointed snout, almond-shaped eyes, and mighty jaws were reminiscent of the wolf; but its head and upper body were jet black, running to a red brown on the loins. A husky, apparently, with a strong interbreeding of Newfoundland, and possibly a dash of wolf. The eyes were wide spaced and intelligent; the forehead was broad and slightly bulging. And this was Loup, the devil dog, Black Jean Le Clere's Nemesis—the dog that hated a man. But there was no viciousness in that intelligent face, battle-scarred though it was; and Dan Hamill found himself longing to possess the animal. What a sled dog!

"Well, for why you don't come out, you black devil? You watch, I know. Ha, you would fool wit' Jean, eh?"

Le Clere had completed arrangements for the night. Now he squatted over a little fire, smoking. At sound of the

man's voice a terrible change came over the dog. A soundless snarl contorted the scarred face; the little eyes gleamed in tiny pin points of hate; the mighty body tensed as though about to launch forth in direction of that taunting voice. Slowly the beast came to its feet and stalked into the open.

"Ah, there you are, to keep Black Jean company, eh? *Non*, you don' fool Black Jean. I know you would keel Black Jean; but you are 'fraid. Ha, he make de face. All tam, he make de face. For why? Eet mean not'ing. Come close, devil. I show you.'

Black Jean came slowly erect and stood, great hands outstretched, claw fashion, dark features contorted with hate. The dog circled warily.

"Yah, he runs. Always he runs. Coward. 'Fraid of de gun, eh? Parceive, I t'row eet away. Now come. Wit' de two han's I fight. No? Bah, such a seeckness I have to look at you. Go 'way queeck, before I shoot. Go 'way!"

Seizing a club the size of a man's arm, Black Jean hurled it at the dog. The beast sprang away, but not quite quickly enough. The stick struck the dog solidly across the snout. The animal made no sound, although the blow was a terrible one. Apparently dazed, it huddled at the edge of the brush tangle.

And Dan Hamill, witnessing that unprovoked, brutal attack, was seized with a great rage. Swearing softly through clenched teeth, he gripped the useless rifle and crashed out into the open. Black Jean Le Clere turned startled eyes. In a flash he visioned the situation and lunged headlong for his discarded rifle. Gripped it. Whirled, cat-like, just avoiding the down-swinging rifle in Dan Hamill's hands. The gun barrel landed glancingly on the breed's thick upper arm; the flimsy binding parts into the bushes.

Jean Le Clere laughed, but the laugh

vanished abruptly as the marshal's clenched fist struck him in the face. There were two hundred pounds of skillfully propelled bone and muscle behind that blow. Jean Le Clere's black head jolted backward like the knout on the end of a whip. And then strong hands caught upon the rifle; it was jerked downward over Dan Hamill's knee. It broke in two. Then, once, twice, in quick succession, pile-driver, well-placed blows hammered at Le Clere's jaw. The killer staggered backward and went down. He clutched wildly at the dark-skinned man who fronted him and they fell together. Over and over they rolled, fighting silently, savagely, desperately.

At close quarters the marshal was no match for Black Jean Le Clere. Within the first breathless instant Dan Hamill realized this. The strength in those apelike arms and those great hands that gripped at his throat was prodigious. His breath came quick. A red mist flashed before his eyes. With a last effort, he twisted his body about, drawing up his knees; then he kicked out with all his strength. Le Clere's clutching fingers tore away from his throat.

Dizzy and sick, the marshal came to his knees and found a club. Jean Le Clere sprawled ten feet away on hands and knees. The breed's black-whiskered face was stained with red; his little eyes stared dazedly. For a single instant Hamill hesitated, club half raised. He hated to do it, to hit a man with a club like this. But Jean Le Clere was not a man, he was a beast. Yes, certainly was he more beast than man. Already complete consciousness showed in the killer's bloodshot eyes, and, snarling, he came to his feet. Dan Hamill brought the club down with crushing force on the apelike head.

As he busied himself securely tying the unconscious captive, the marshal became aware, for the first time, of the

dog's presence. Squatting on its haunches at the edge of the clearing, tongue lolling, head on one side, Loup, the devil dog, watched every move. And there was that in those green eyes that seemed to indicate complete approval of the existing situation. When Hamill called, the beast came without hesitation, its bushy tail waving slowly in token of friendliness. He lay down near the fire, head in paws, watching Jean Le Clere.

As the killer struggled back to consciousness, tugged at his bonds, and growled unintelligible threats, the dog came to its feet and circled, stiff-legged, around and around the prisoner, matching growl with growl, its hair bristling stiffly. There was that in the animal's every movement which seemed to say: "You're not such a devil of a fellow at that. The marshal licked you. And you're going to hang. Which is exactly what you deserve, you dog beater."

But Jean Le Clere, the killer, did not interpret the dog's actions in this harmless light. Lying there, helpless, all the snarling bravado gone, he was afraid. And finally in a whining voice he said: "M'sieu', I beg dat you tie heem up. He hates me. He weel keel me, dat devil dog. Ah, you do not know heem. A devil, for sure. Tie heem up, m'sieu', I beg."

And Dan Hamill, although he was somehow certain that the dog would not attack the trussed-up prisoner, figured that the safest way was to take no chances. Murderer and dog beater though he was, Le Clere was entitled to protection so that the law might take its course. The dog did not resist when the marshal knotted one end of a thong about its neck, tying the other end of the tough strand to a sturdy cedar sapling, fifty feet from the prisoner. It growled softly and licked his hand when he nuzzled the black ears. Jean Le Clere laughed.

"You are de great fool, m'sieu'. Know you not he ees but laughing at you? He weel keel you. *Oui, certainement*, he weel keel you. He wait, an' one tam w'en you sleep—grrrz, an' dose teet' have you by de throat. He ees devil, dat dog. I warn you. An' I know not why I warn you, except dat I hate dat dog worse dan I hate you. *Oui*, dat ees why I warn you. Bettair dat you beat out hees brains; bettair dat you shoot heem now."

"He has been following you for weeks?"

"*Oui*, we travel togedder, two-t'ree years."

"When? How did you get hold of him?"

"I steal heem," Le Clere admitted. "I t'ink he make de gran' sled dog. But no, he won't work for me. I break many dogs, m'sieu'. I swear I break dees Loup. No can do. He ees not like oder dogs. *Non*, he ees devil; he hate me, dat devil. In hees eyes I see eet, 'I weel keel you.' An' I say, 'All right, devil, some day we have de gran' fight.' I do not shoot heem. *Non*, dat ees too easy. Wit' de two han's I keel heem. So. He knows. Eef you are not de wise man an' push out hees brains, I get heem some day."

Dan Hamill shuddered. Truly, this creature with the body of a man, owned no slightest human attribute. Sight of that brutish face filled him with loathing. He turned his back, and, feeling secure about the safety of his prisoner, rolled in his blanket and went to sleep.

But Dan Hamill had misjudged the cunning of Black Jean Le Clere. Not without good reason was Black Jean called in Canada "the eel;" not without a real if vulpine sort of skill had he been able to outwit the Canadian police for many years. In the night Le Clere slipped his bonds; how, Dan Hamill never learned. The marshal's pleasant dreams were banished to darkness through the medium of a club wielded

with murderous intent by the ape man. Luckily, Black Jean's flailing blows were rendered haphazard by the doubtful light; otherwise Dan Hamill's tough carcass would have remained in the Alaskan wilderness to feed the wolves. As it was, the marshal awoke late in the morning, cold and sick, with a lump the size of a goose egg on the back of his head.

He realized what had happened almost the instant his eyes fluttered open, and, with his first full breath, he began to swear. Not alone had the prisoner escaped, but the dog had accomplished the well-nigh impossible task of gnawing through the braided leash. Both birds had flown. After once thoroughly and conscientiously relieving his feelings, the marshal wasted little time in taking up the trail.

Things weren't so bad at that. Odds were in his favor. Le Clere was unarmed; and, in hastily choosing such of the scant supplies as he could lay hands on in the darkness, he had taken only a part of a slab of rancid bacon.

The fugitive's trail read clear in the skim of snow; and, by noon, Hamill felt that he had gained much ground. Le Clere was not familiar with the country and the marshal, noting the haphazard line of travel, grinned wryly. The killer was working about in a wide circle, following the lip of a ravine. There was a sheer drop to the bottom of this ravine of hundreds of feet. At spots the perpendicular walls came close together at the top but never quite close enough so that even an active man might jump from one side to the other. The ravine swung about in a great circle, and it was this yawning cavern that Jean Le Clere sought vainly to cross.

At frequent intervals the fugitive swerved from the trail to search for logs in likely deadfalls, with which to span the chasm. Hamill laughed. These logs, even if one were found to

suit the purpose, were frozen to the ground. But once again had he misjudged Jean Le Clere. This time he had misjudged the strength in the ape-like body.

Bursting through a thicket of scrub spruce, he came upon a strange sight. Black Jean stooped over a huge log. As Dan Hamill watched, the ape man lifted one end of the log, and, with much grunting and cursing, shrugged his way under the up-ended log to that exact spot where it balanced without a teeter on his thick shoulder. It was a Gargantuan feat of strength. Evidently the breed intended using this log to bridge the ravine. Balancing it skillfully, his legs bowed under the great weight, the ape man staggered to the very edge of the precipice, uplifted the log, and let it fall. It bridged the yawning blackness with several feet to spare.

And, as Le Clere tested the log tentatively, preparatory to crossing, Hamill realized suddenly that he wasted valuable time in standing there, like some gawky youngster at a side show, applauding a feat of strength. If Black Jean crossed that log, he would be free. The marshal shouted and started running. Black Jean turned and hesitated, apparently debating whether to stop and fight or to attempt a hurried crossing of the slippery log. With quick eyes he gauged the distance between the oncoming officer and himself. And, apparently judging that he could cross before the marshal reached him, he started out upon the log.

Dan Hamill, too, had measured the distance; and he, likewise, realized that Le Clere, with luck, could make the crossing before he arrived. Le Clere had been a lumberjack in Canada; that slippery log would not bother him. At top speed the marshal dashed recklessly down the ice-covered ridge wall, muttering hopeless curses. What a fool he had been, standing up there, gaping,

applauding, while his man engineered a get-away.

But even as he roundly condemned himself, Hamill wondered what had become of the dog? The beast had evidently left the trail. Perhaps, in holding to windward and following Le Clere's scent instead of the tracks, it had become marooned on the opposite side of the ravine. The instant these seemingly irrelevant thoughts passed through his mind, Hamill was aware that Le Clere had stopped midway on the log.

He stood in a half crouch, mighty arms bowed, balancing precariously. His eyes were fixed on the opposite side of the ravine. For the moment Dan Hamill was not interested in the cause of Le Clere's hesitancy; his every effort was devoted to maintaining a footing down that rock-covered, icy slope. He reached the bottom at the end of a fifty-foot slide negotiated at express-train speed. He slowed his pace a dozen yards from the log, snatched the double-edged hunting knife from his belt, and turned his attention to the crouching man.

Le Clere stood there, motionless, watching. Hamill followed the ape man's gaze. And there, at the far end of the log, legs wide apart, hair stiffly bristling, stood Loup, the devil dog. The beast had followed the man's scent and had found itself separated from the object of its hate by the ravine. Now its chance had come. There was something in the alert tenseness of that battle-scarred body indicating as clearly as so many spoken words, that the great dog had chosen this particular time and place to end, once and for all, that silted feud of hate.

And Black Jean Le Clere was afraid. The furtive glance he cast back the way he had come, showed the marshal a pair of staring eyes, and a face gray with dread. In that fleeting glance the killer had seen the knife in Dan Hamill's

hand. But he, too, was armed. In his belt was the gun barrel with which he had intended braining Hamill—a formidable weapon at close quarters against either the man or the dog. But he had learned to his vast surprise and humiliation that Dan Hamill was no ordinary antagonist. It would be a fight to the death if he turned back.

With the dog it would be different. A single well-directed blow, and that heavy steel club would crush the beast's head like an eggshell. He knew dogs, too, and understood their method of attack. The dog would spring at him. He, Jean Le Clere, was altogether at home on that slippery log; he would jump backward and, striking out when the beast was in mid-air, hurl the black devil a hundred feet below among the jagged rocks. Then he would cross the log and kick it free; or perhaps the fool marshal would attempt to cross? If so——

Once more Black Jean stole a hasty glance over his shoulder; then he caught the gun barrel from his belt and started purposefully across the log. Fangs gleaming white in the half light, Loup, the devil dog, waited, forefeet braced on the far end of the log.

Not until the man was a scant six feet away, did the dog move; then its body lurched suddenly forward, and a low growl sounded deep in its throat. Jean Le Clere, interpreting that forward lurching motion as the impetus behind a spring, struck out swiftly. Like a flash the dog dropped, hugging the log. The gun barrel fanned the tips of the flattened ears. So great was the force behind that blow that the killer's body was thrown half about. Skilled lumberjack though he was, Le Clere teetered for an instant, swaying on the brink of eternity. And in that instant, Loup, the devil dog, sprang forward. Not into the air but with body close to the log, head low, thick shoulders bunched, the beast thrust its weight

solidly against the man's unsteady legs. The killer's feet shot from under him. He caught frantically at the icy log with his free hand, but the clutching fingers found no hold. He screamed hoarsely. His struggling body hurtled downward.

Dan Hamill shrugged and thrust the knife back in his belt.

"So much fer Mr. Black Jean Le Clere," he muttered. "Done saved the gov'ment the price of a hangin'."

The dog, head erect now, continued on across the log. Straight up to the marshal it came and stood there, looking up into the man's face, its big body trembling from head to foot. The marshal stroked the shaggy head and clucked sympathetically.

"All het up, ain't you, pup? It's a danged shame. But you done a good

job. I ain't blamin' you none whatever. An' I wouldn't of believed it possible fer any dog t' show the brains you did."

Hamill nuzzled the ragged ears with experienced fingers. The dog's big body ceased its nervous trembling. It reached for the brown hand with its tongue.

Dan Hamill was touched. "Y'know, pup, I've allus figured as how good luck an' bad luck kinda averages up in a lifetime. Ef it's like that with folks, it oughta be the same with dogs. 'Pears like you've hed a purty hard time of it so fur; but, d'you know, pup, suthin' seems t' tell me, you're goin' t' hev' things right soft frum now on. Yes sir, pup, you an' me is goin' t' hev' a lot o' good times. I'm downright sartin of it."



NEW BRIDGE FOR SIERRAS

THE Donner Summit bridge, a new highway leading to Donner Pass over the Sierras, was recently opened. This bridge, one of the highest in the West in point of elevation, crosses over a deep chasm. Its construction eliminates two rail crossings and also throws into the discard the old pioneer trail upon which the snow was piled high during more than half the year. The bridge was built under the supervision of the United States forest service, the United States bureau of roads, and the California Highway Commission. Highway officials expect to keep the route to the bridge clear of snow many weeks, if not months, longer than was possible with the old shaded route.

The Donner Bridge overlooks the scene of the catastrophe to the Donner party during the winter of 1846-7, when forty emigrants to California perished of cold and privation when trapped in the mountains by the storms. Three members of that ill-fated caravan are still living, but extreme age prevented any of them from attending the ceremonies of the opening of the bridge. One of the survivors is Mrs. Isabella M. McMahon, of San Francisco; another is Mrs. Naomi Schench, of The Dalles, Oregon, who is now eighty-three; the third is Mrs. John App, who is now thought to be living in Tuolumne County, California. Mrs. App was formerly Miss Leana Donner, daughter of one of the leaders of the party, and from whom it took its name.



Little Pard Meets Apache Bill

By *Cherry Wilson*

Author of "A Mother for Pard," etc.



THE cowboys of Triangle Z, returning to the bunk house for an after-breakfast cigarette, caught the big buckaroo, "Hushaby," in the act of pulling a pair of rompers over the dimpled knees of the ten-month-old baby, "Little Pard," and, identifying that particular garment with shock akin to horror, broke into a vehement remonstrance.

"Holy cats, no!" "Wishful" Dixon protested. "Not them, Hushaby! Not the red ones!"

"Red ones!" shrieked "All-in" Lappin, bringing up the rear. "What's a-happenin' to the red——" Suddenly beholding the rompered infant over Wishful's shoulder, his eyes lifted to Hushaby in awful reproach. "Why, the very idee! A-puttin' on them leetle red britches which we bin savin' up all week! When you knowed our hearts wuz plumb sot on Pard's a-wearin' 'em to the old-timer's picnic reunion to-morrer!"

Looking up from his task, Hushaby said heavily, "Pard can't go."

"Poppycock!" scoffed All-in above the bedlam of protest. "If they's one celebration, Hushaby, to which babies kin go, it's a old-timer's reunion. It be in' old-timers' specific design in reunion, to tell hectic tales of their prehistoric pasts; an', if nobody reuned but the prehistoric, who'd lissen to 'em? My gosh, Hushaby, babies won't be jist welcome but downright needful!"

"I meant," explained Hushaby, resolutely buttoning the favorite garment over Pard's fat little spine, "thet he can't go without I go; an' I ain't goin'."

And, having stunned his audience by this decision, the big fellow went on solemnly, "You all know, boys, how his pappy—my old pal, Tim—give him to me jist afore he cashed in, swearin' me to bring him up like he wuz my own. Pard wuzn't bigger'n a pint of cider then, jist six weeks old. But I done my best fer him, an' he thrived on my hands. Now, as you all know, too, I'm

takin' steps to adopt him legal; an' his rich grandpappy is a-turnin' up every stone fer evidence as will 'disqualify me from doin' it."

"Yeah—we knowed all thet," snapped All-in impatiently; "but what's it got to do with a picnic?"

"See this," and Hushaby held out a long, legal-looking envelope that had until now escaped their eye. "It just come. It's my notification from the court thet my adoption trial is set fer the tenth—just three weeks off. Boys, I can't risk losin' thet trial. I ain't rich like Pard's grandpappy, who wants him, too. All I got is my good name, an' I ain't had thet long. Fer previous to gittin' Pard, I wuz a mighty bad actor. I don't reckon my past'll prejudice a Arizony judge—even if it's drug up—so long as I don't make some fresh break. So thet's why I ain't goin' to the picnic. I gotta sidestep crowds, where I might meet folks as knowed me when I wuz 'Derringer' Reese an' would expect me to act accordin'—old enemies, which if I met 'em, there'd be bloodshed. Savvy?"

Glumly the boys nodded. They couldn't insist on Hushaby's going to the picnic where he might be confronted with his past—that grisly specter which ever threatened to come between him and Little Pard. But, to Wishful at least, the sacrifice seemed wholly uncalled for.

"Shucks, Hushaby!" derided the eager youth. "Picnics is peaceable—'specially old-timers'; an' the ones at this'll shore be old, fer they're invitin' the earliest settlers in Arizony. Don't matter none where they settled neither—behind a bar, crimped deck, twenty-mule freight team, or just on land. An' the sheriff's hinted delicatelike in the invites as how they kin reune to-morrer no matter what unsettled 'em."

Enthusiastically All-in chimed in. "Thet ain't half of it, Hushaby. 'Apache Bill's' a-comin'—him with sev-

enteen notches on his gun, an' a-savin' space on the trigger fer 'Lightnin'' McGinnis, who put two ca'tridges in Apache's diaphragm back in '79, which he's still a-packin'. Yes sirree, thet pair's a-goin' to meet here, atter gunnin' fer each other half a century. Now, Hushaby, if it's safe fer old enemies like them to picnic, why you—"

Doggedly Hushaby shook his head. "I can't risk it—not with Pard at stake."

"I reckon not," admitted All-in with a rueful glance at the bunk-house baby. "But it's a danged shame Pard's gotta miss seein' Apache—the heroicaest character in all Arizony—atter us a-whettin' his intrust all up!"

Hushaby winced. "Don't think I ain't grievin' 'bout thet," he cried bitterly. "It's the oneriest trick I ever done—double-crossin' a baby. But I didn't know the trial wuz so closet when I promised him. I never slept a wink all night, fer thinkin' how he's a-goin' to suffer fer my past!" Impulsively the big puncher pressed the baby's soft, pink cheek to his. "Pore leetle man," he pitied huskily, "you most a yearlin' an' never seed a picnic!"

"Never you mind, Pard," Wishful knelt down to console the chortling infant on Hushaby's knee; "there'll be another picnic next year."

"Yeah," sighed old All-in deeply, "but I strongly misgive if Apache'll be there. He's eighty odd, an' his years an' them ca'tridges is agin' him."

Dejectedly the boys filed out into the early sunshine to do two days' work in one and so earn the momentous morrow off. But half their joyful anticipation was gone, since Pard couldn't go. To the Grande Ronde Country the annual Pioneers' Reunion and Picnic in Carter's Grove near Gunsight was the biggest event of the year. And, so sure had Triangle Z been of Pard's attendance with them, the boys had beguiled him for weeks with hair-raising stories of the old-timers he would meet there,

particularly All-in's hero, Apache Bill. They had even reserved the red rompers for his wear on this day, because they "made Pard look twicet as cute." Not one but fondly believed the ten-month-old was as crazy to go as any of them!

"I counted most," lamented All-in, as they went to the corral, "on showin' him Apache—thet old Injun fighter, what risked his own scalp thet Pard might hang onta his."

"Reckon I counted most," gloomed Wishful, "on showin' Apache Pard." And this was more nearly the truth.

For Triangle Z was inordinately proud of the bunk-house baby. In the four months since Hushaby, with Little Pard in his arms, had drifted to the ranch and had been prevailed on to stay, the pair had won not only the heart of every puncher there but of the countryside as well. Hushaby's colorful past—never a mystery—was not held against him. In fact, folks respected him the more highly for his sincere efforts to live it down. And his fight to adopt the orphaned son of his dead pal was a matter of burning interest locally.

But, knowing the fickleness of the public mind, the boys realized that if Hushaby did go to the picnic and was drawn into trouble, there would be many to apply the old adage of the leopard and its spots to Hushaby; and this sentiment would react against him at the trial, thus losing Little Pard to him and Triangle Z forever. Better spoil a thousand picnics than risk that!

They reached this conclusion and the corral at the same time. Here a surprise awaited Wishful and All-in. Their boss, having sold a bunch of young heifers to the Black Rock outfit over near Badger and expecting their men to come for them this forenoon, ordered these two men to stick around the ranch and help them get started with the herd.

Perched on the corral fence, after the boys had left for the range, the down-

cast pair smoked silently and moodily watched Hushaby come and go between bunk house and barn. To them, it was crowning proof of Hushaby's devotion, that—though an ace-high rider—he clung to the despised job of chore man, in order at all times to be near his tiny charge. They saw him now emerge from the bunk house with Little Pard and place him, with almost womanish tenderness, in the pack saddle swung upside down under the cottonwood, then put in the baby's hands that were so eagerly outstretched, the big, empty six-gun which, since Hushaby's reformation, had been used solely for a teething ring.

"Nor could a gun be put to a nobler use," mused All-in owlishly on his lofty perch. "If guns wuzn't ever used fer nuthin' but to cut teeth on, this here'd be a danged sight happier world. I say, blessed be the day Hushaby give up his to Pard."

"Thet ain't all he gives up fer Pard," loyally amplified Wishful. "Lookut the sleep he gives up—routin' hisself out a hull hour afore us to wash fer him! How many genuine pappy's ud do thet? Why, all the cleanin's a lotta kids git, is dry cleanin's, with mebbe a souse in the hoss trough Saturday nights. But Pard gits his bath by the clock, his grub the same way, an'——"

"Yet Hushaby's got old enemies what won't let him even go to a picnic," All-in interjected warmly. "If they's one speck of justice in this world, I shore ——" Volleying hoofbeats cut him short.

Galloping up the drive were five bronzed and wind-bitten riders, four of whom the boys instantly recognized as members of the Black Rock crew; but the fifth——

"Likely a new hand," opined All-in, rheumatically easing himself to the ground. "Son, if looks count fer as much as some folks say, his is shore agin' him."

In this opinion Wishful heartily co-

incided when he found himself shaking hands with the stranger, introduced by the Black Rock foreman as "Pinto" Slykes. A sobriquet, Wishful readily guessed, earned for Slykes by the black powder burns on his left cheek, giving a curiously spotted effect to an already sinister countenance. Nor did Pinto's looks belie him. All the while the newly purchased herd was being rounded up and driven back by the Triangle Z buildings to hit the highway home, he steadily maintained a surly silence.

But here, as the boys were taking friendly leave of the Black Rock men, Pinto asked curtly: "Any water on this ranch? I'm dry as dust, an' it's ten miles back."

"Water? You betcha. Finest water in the universe," boomed All-in heartily.

As he led the way to the watering trough before the barn, every one became aware of thirst and trooped after.

Filling the old tin dipper with water as it dripped from the pipe, All-in passed it to Pinto Slykes. But before the Black Rock man could take one swallow, his eyes fell on Hushaby emerging from the barn; and he stiffened in his tracks, the water splashing over his boots as his right hand dropped to his hip in the familiar, fatal gesture of the confirmed gunman.

Even in his horror All-in noted that Hushaby instinctively made the same motion. But, evidently in the same flash remembering that his gun was serving its use for Little Pard, swung his right hand up to cross with his left upon his breast, while, head high, eyes fearless and steady, he faced Pinto Slykes. There was an instant of paralyzing horror. Pinto's gun was drawn. His finger trembled on the trigger.

Then, in the very nick of time, the Black Rock foreman leaped upon him. "Stop, you kiyote!" he yelled, striking up Pinto's wrist. "Can't you see this man's unarmed?"

With a baffled curse Pinto jammed

his gun back in its holster. "Derringer," he addressed Hushaby in a tone so freighted with hate that it made Wishful's scalp crawl, "we're even now. Last time I wuzn't packin' a gun, now you ain't. But, by Heaven, next time I ain't waitin, to find out! So you'd better be heeled."

Hushaby paled, but his eyes did not falter. "Pinto," he said bravely, "I'm a changed man. I ain't the Derringer you used to know. I seed the error of my ways an' turned a new leaf. Fer all what I done then I'm sorry. But I ain't got room in my heart now fer old hates. I don't aim ever to pack a gun ag'in. I'm willin' jist to let bygones be bygones."

"Oh, you are, huh?" sneered Pinto with a short laugh that made the boys' blood boil. "Waal, git this—I ain't! If you ain't prepared fer trouble next time we meet, it's your own hard luck. You won't be able to say I didn't warn——"

Here the foreman intervened. "Come along, Pinto!" was his sharp command. "You kin settle your private disputes on your own time. You're bein' paid now to punch cows."

Pinto moved a few steps off, then abruptly swung about. "Derringer," and a surge of angry blood caused the spots on his cheek to loom out even more livid, "I'll be at the picnic to-morrer, an' I'll be ready!"

Not until Black Rock cattle and riders had passed from sight, did Hushaby's composure break; and then his long legs seemed to collapse beneath him. Sinking on the tool chest he buried his face in his hands, while Wishful and All-in vainly sought some fitting word.

"Hushaby," sympathetically queried the old cow hand, "is Pinto a old enemy?"

"Fer Pete's sake, All-in," cried Wishful indignantly, "don't pester him that a way. Didn't you hear Pinto call him Derringer—his old name, afore we give

him 'Hushaby?' Didn't you see how they went fer their guns right off? Gee, Hushaby, I'm shore glad that you ain't a-goin' to that picnic!"

Wearily Hushaby lifted a face, etched, even in this brief time, in lines of agony. "I am a-goin'. I hafta now. Didn't you hear Pinto call me?"

"Let him call," cried All-in, bristling. "Jist becauz a pintoed shorthorn goes on the warpath, you don't gotta hev your life upset."

"You—you don't savvy!" moaned the stricken puncher. "It wuz me what made him pinto long ago, when we wuz young bucks. We had words—I plumb disremember just what over, an' he throwed a gun on me. I raseled him fer it; an' it went off in his face—pintoin' him. He swore to kill me fust time we met, but friends separated us. I left Tombstone soon atter, an' 'twuz years afore we met ag'in. Then, one night in Yuma, in The Gilt Edge, I run smack into him. He wuzn't armed. I promised him we'd meet ag'in. We met jist now, an' I wuzn't armed. He called me. So to-morrer we gotta settle it one way or another."

One way or another! Both fatally hopeless! The brand of the killer and the fugitive trail, or death! Either way putting an unbridgeable gulf between Hushaby and the babe he loved.

"Don't go, Hushaby," Wishful entreated wildly. "If you do there'll be bloodshed. Think of leetle Pard."

"That's all I am thinkin' of," cried Hushaby, driven to the verge of self-control. "It's fer him I hafta go—to keep his respect. I can't bear to think of his growin' up an' hearin' I let Pinto bluff me out. He'd think I wuz yeller. He'd be ashamed fer me—ashamed he ever loved me. I'd ruther die'n thet. Reckon I'd ruther die anyway, fer I'm slated to lose Pard."

There was nothing the boys could do or say. Hushaby was up against the stern code of the range—that unwritten

law which compels a man to accord his adversary satisfaction for real or imagined wrongs, or be forever disgraced. It was greater than love, because it embodied honor.

All-in's very impotence to help moved him to strangled outburst. "It's a gosh a'mighty shame!"

Presently, gathering up the baby, gun and all, he went to the bunk house. In simple delicacy Wishful and All-in refrained from following but left him alone with Little Pard. When, hours later, he reappeared, they saw that the old easy-going, gentle Hushaby was dead, and in his form and clothes was a grim, steely-eyed stranger—Derringer Reese. And the big, black six-gun—no longer a cherished toy for baby hands but glinting with oil and bright new shells—was back in its old place at Hushaby's hip.

The day passed somehow. Wishful met the boys at the corral and broke the terrible tidings. Supper was a nightmare. The evening more ghastly still! Instead of the usual relaxation following long, hard hours in the saddle, there was in the bunk house a tension almost too great to be borne. Furtively the boys watched Hushaby, longing to talk over this crisis with him, but unable to do so because of the chill aloofness with which he kept apart.

Yet more painful even than the change in Hushaby, was that in Little Pard. Not once since that private session with Hushaby had the baby been seen to smile. Neither did he cry but sat stoically upright in his soap-box crib beside Hushaby's bunk, his big, black eyes—usually so merry—following Hushaby's every move with so serious a light that it broke the boys' hearts just to look at him. Vainly they cut capers to woo his old smile back. If Pard deigned even to notice, it was with no lessening of his unnatural baby gravity.

"Mebbe he misses his gun," some one suggested.

And All-in, carefully emptying his own revolver, gave it to Pard, who accepted the gift with no especial enthusiasm.

"He knows it ain't Hushaby's," Wishful said in sorrowful pride. "He's too smart to be fooled on a gun."

"Or anything else," All-in added sadly. "You can't tell me thet baby don't know jist what's goin' on." And this conviction that Pard did know and was grieving, too, completed the boys' despair.

That night, the most awful in the annals of Triangle Z, seemed to Wishful without end. The look on Pard's face melted his heart, that on Hushaby's face froze it again. Even All-in was an altered being. All evening he sat with his feet hoisted up on his bunk, his eyes trained on a knot hole above it, seeing nothing, saying nothing; until, worried by this unwonted taciturnity, Wishful approached him.

"Sick, All-in?"

"Shut up!" was the ungracious response. "Can't you see I'm a-thinkin'?" Whatever his thoughts, they were long, long thoughts, persisting after the red rompers—intended for the picnic that loomed so horribly now—had been replaced by a nightgown.

Hushaby took up the baby, who could not sleep though his bedtime was hours past, and fell to pacing up and down, singing in mournful monotony the song Pard loved—that ever-changing, heart-revealing lullaby to which he owed his name.

At last Pard slept. Gently, then, the man who was to kill or be killed on the morrow laid the troubled little head upon its pillow and, bending over it, with face gaunt and gray, crooned all but inaudibly a brand-new stanza, more a pray than song:

"Husha-by, pard, we bin through a lot,
An' you're all I hev, and I'm all you got—
But some day, leetle pard, you'll know,
I couldn't help it, I had to go!"

Abruptly All-in stumbled outside. Blindly Wishful followed. Side by side they humped down on their heels behind the harness shed. All-in resumed his thinking and presently gave to Wishful the first green fruits of that thought.

"Son," mused the old puncher, squinting hard at the Big Dipper emblazoned on the velvety Arizona night, "life's a funny game anyhow you take it. Here's you an' me, an' here's Hushaby. Now we're what might be called men with good names, but what did we ever do to git 'em? Nuthin! We wuz borned with 'em, an' we hung onta 'em. We didn't earn 'em, like Hushaby earned hissen."

Another half-hour's deep cogitation brought forth this. "Son, it's plumb queer how a man kin lose a good name in the tail end of a split second, when it takes him a hull lifetime to lose a bad one."

After that he was silent so long, Wishful thought him asleep on his heels and was startled when All-in produced this gem. "Hushaby," he mused with naïve eloquence, "has bin refined in the fires of love. All his wickedness—if ever he had any—is plumb cooked to a cinder."

"Pard done thet," said Wishful softly.

"He did," admitted All-in awesomely. "Seems like he jist ain't mortal like us. Son, thet leetle feller plumb humanizes every one he meets."

"Pity he ain't met Pinto," ruminated Wishful.

All-in jumped. Thought leaped to perfect fruition. And Wishful heard the old man fervently exclaim under his breath, "Oh, gosh a'mighty!"

Carter's Grove vibrated to the lively strains of "Hail! Hail! The Gang's All Here!" played by the brass band imported in honor of Arizona's pioneers. All here—the old gang? No! The great majority had gone to their last big reunion. But the few left were

here—tremulous as the green leaves above, as the wind-rippled flags, indomitable with the deathless spirit that won the West. It was a day of warm handclasps; of old friendships pledged anew. An eye-misting, heart-stirring day!

Here—hoary-haired, shriveled as a sun-dried apple, but carrying his years and "ca'tridges" with remarkable ease—was Apache Bill. He was the one person in all that throng unaware of the thrilling report that Lightning McGinnis was en route on the Dry Gulch stage and that Sheriff Jerry Paxton hoped, by bringing Arizona's two famous old gunmen and deadly foes—each in utter ignorance of the other's presence—suddenly together, to effect a reconciliation as the supreme triumph of his official career. Here, too, from the dappled shadows, with hate in his heart and a gun at his finger tips, Pinto Slykes implacably swept the throng for the tall, solemn buckaroo whom he knew only as Derringer, and whom he meant to shoot on sight, in settlement of a feud of years' standing. Yes, the Arizona Pioneer's Reunion gave every promise of being a large time.

Yet Triangle Z loped toward it in dread. All forenoon, on one pretext after another they had delayed departure, until Hushaby, in his fierce impatience to meet Pinto and end this ordeal so cruelly forced upon him, had started off alone; and Triangle Z was forced to follow—the most dismal lot of cowboys who ever faced a holiday.

Only All-in was natural, and he was even more so. He chattered like a magpie to Little Pard, who looked more like a yucca lily than a prairie rose, though wearing the "leetle red britches," rinsed out in the washbasin last night and ironed afresh. It was as if Pard knew he might be for the last time riding the tawny range in the security of Hushaby's arm.

"Apache shore kin tell you, Pard,"

All-in assured the infant, with what struck the boys as a brutal display of spirits, "all about the good old days when men wuz men an' bufflers romped the wide open spaces. Why, you even gotta chancet to eyewitness his right to carve Lightnin's epitaph on the trigger of his gun."

Wishful rode close. "Gosh, All-in, ain't you gotta heart?" he said in an undertone. "Don't you savvy Hushaby's a-ridin' to his doom? Thet the minit he sees Pinto, he'll be dead or an outlaw? Thet Pard's biggest chancet is thet o' bein' made a double orphan?"

Quickly All-in pulled down the corners of his mouth, looking like an April day. None of the boys must suspect the ace up his sleeve. Not until they dismounted at the big corral just outside the grove where the picnickers' horses were quartered, did he speak again. "Hushaby," and here All-in played his first card in the game that was to give him fame, the right to be named in the same breath with his idol, Apache Bill, "they's no call to be selfish. Jist becauz you hafta shoot it out with Pinto, ain't no excuse fer Pard's not seein' old Apache—somethin' he'll be proud to remember all his days."

Anxiety shot through Hushaby's mask of stony gray. "I don't aim to be selfish, jist precautious," he faltered. "Pinto's a-goin' to start poppin' the minit he lays eyes on me. He ain't waitin' to see hev I gotta gun—much less a baby. I can't take Pard where he might be menaced by bullets. I aim to leave him here with you all. Atter it's all over, one of you kin show him——"

"Yeah—a lot Pard'll feel like it then!" All-in objected. "Now lissen; I'll take Pard on ahead an' show him Apache. You boys wait here till I bring him back. 'Twon't take long—say, a half hour. Thet ain't long to wait—considerin' this is somethin' what'll enrich his hull life!"

Though his consent meant prolonging his mental anguish, Hushaby gave it. He couldn't be selfish with Pard. This might be the last thing he could do for him. Without a word he gave the baby to All-in Lappin.

"Recollect, now," warned All-in earnestly, "don't a man jack of you dast budge fer a full half hour. You might start Pinto a-poppin' an' a stray bullet hit Pard."

And, having obtained his half hour and the bunk-house baby, All-in set off for the grove as fast as his bowlegs could carry him. Once he paused to make sure his gun was still unloaded and give it to Pard, who was evincing distress at leaving Hushaby, then hurried on.

Reaching the grounds, he weaved through the throng, dodging tables that were sway-backed from the weight of the picnic spread to be served after the speaking. Friends hailed him in passing, but he made no stops. Twice he plowed through the jam in front of the bunting-bedraped platform, where the fathers of Arizona perspiringly awaited Sheriff Jerry Paxton, who was to introduce the speakers of the day. Nor did even the sight of the patriarchal figure in the front row, modestly carrying a many-notched gun, divert All-in from the purpose in mind. For the man he sought with such feverish assiduity, was not Apache Bill, but really Pinto Slykes!

Always he sought the powder-marked visage of Hushaby's old enemy; and always in an undertone he prompted the wistful babe, in whose redeeming powers the simple-hearted All-in had faith of the sort that moves mountains. "It's up to you now, Pard. You're all what kin save Hushaby. You made a man outta him; you done the same fer us. You ain't ever failed to humanize 'em yet. The hombre don't live, Pard, what kin spend a half hour with you an' harbor murder in his heart. Nobody's so bad

but they gotta leetle good, Pard. Jist find the pay streak in Pinto!"

Intent on coaching Pard, All-in swung out to avoid another table and ran headlong into a sinister individual whose eyes were riveted on the one approach to his retreat, while his fingers nervously toyed with the butt of his gun.

"Pinto!" ejaculated All-in, his old eyes flaming with a fanatical light. "Danged if you ain't the very man I'm lookin' fer to show you the leetle tyke what we raised in a bunk house. See, Pinto!" he said lifting high the appealing infant. "Wouldn't he jist cook your meanness?"

For the merest flicker Pinto's eyes swept the youngster, so pitilessly cold that Pard broke into a wail of terror. So this then was the game! Sending that mouthy old bird to divert his attention while Derringer took a pot shot at him!

"It's the picnic makes him cry, Pinto," tremored All-in defensively. "You see, it's his fust one; an' his leetle feelin's is plumb overwrought. Beats all how tender babies feelin's is. Babies! Bless their leetle hearts! No wonder the kingdom of heaven's made of 'em! See them leetle paws, Pinto, what never done a crooked act! See them leetle eyes, all innocence an' trust! An' his leetle heart, Pinto, is pure as——"

With a muttered curse the Black Rock man broke away. It made him nervous to hear a baby cry, and right now his life depended on his nerves. He'd waited so long already they were jumpy. Then, as he resumed his vigil in the shade of another tree—they jumped in earnest, when——

"'Tain't often he whoops it up so long, Pinto," came All-in's plaintive voice in patient pursuit. "I reckon he misses Hushaby. I—I ain't no great shucks with a baby myself."

Raging inwardly, and futilely, Pinto set out to shake All-in off his trail. His

most important job now was to anticipate Derringer's shot. After that he could handle this old babler with the screeching kid.

"Mebbe he'd hush fer you, Pinto!" plained the Nemesis at his heels. For All-in was burning with the idea that Pard could humanize Pinto quickest by the laying on of hands. "Nope, 'twouldn't 'sprise me a bit if he did. It ain't like you wuz a stranger—seein' you're a old enemy of Hushaby's."

Almost in terror Pinto's steps quickened. Any moment, from any quarter, a shot might come. He must keep cool. Must keep his ears shut and his eyes open!

"Wait, Pinto! See if you kin hush Pard," All-in pleaded in his ear. Then, in his extremity, for his half must be nearly gone, All-in changed his tune. "Jist spell me off, Pinto; my arms is achin'!"

This ruse failing, All-in was in despair. Something told him there was more murder in Pinto's heart now than before he saw Pard. Yet—sinners had been known to get a change of heart with their last gasp. In the forlorn hope that Pinto might, All-in dogged him from tree to tree and table to table, begging him to take Pard, waxing ever more eloquent and original, until Pinto's nerves were raw, until he shied at his own shadow, jumped at every sudden sound, knew to his horror that, if he saw Derringer, he was no more capable of shooting straight than the baby, who clutched an old six-gun as continuously as he bawled.

"Pinto, take him jist a minit! I—I busted my garter!" entreated the persevering All-in.

"A-a-ah! A-a-a-h!" wailed Pard with nerve-shattering monotony.

In one wild effort to shake off his tormentors, Pinto plunged into the crowd where it was densest. The platform on which Apache sat stopped him with painful abruptness. Whirling, he found

the nerve-racking pair right at his belt buckle and going strong. Something in Pinto snapped! Baring his teeth in a snarl horribly like that of an animal at bay, he shrilled the terrible epithet—the unpardonable sacrilege—that sent All-in into the one tantrum of all his hard but harmless life. "Quit! Quit, I say!" he shrieked. "Quit houndin' me with thet howlin' brat!"

Strange that this drama passed unnoticed by the crowd! Strange? No, for the awful rumor had just flashed from lip to lip that Lightning McGinnis was on the grounds and might drift here at any moment, meeting Apache Bill. Where was Sheriff Paxton, who had planned to preside at their first meeting and by soft words turn away the wrath of fifty years? Fearful lest the famous feud end fatally and here, yet morbidly desirous to see it if it did, few of that tense gathering spared even a curious glance for the weather-beaten old cow hand who suddenly appeared on the platform, dumping a red-rompered infant in Apache's lap.

"Take care of him, Apache, till I git back," cried All-in, stooping to pick up the gun Pard had just dropped and forgetting he had it in his haste to depart. "I'm a-goin' to cuss out a man, an' it won't be no place fer young ears."

"Hey!" yelled the startled old plainsman, snatching at All-in's hickory shirt and missing. "I can't take keer of no baby. I'm a chronic cuss—"

"If a Injun fighter, with seventeen notches on his gun, can't look after a baby," All-in flung back, "who kin?"

Then he was gone. Gone berserk! Gone to tell Pinto Slykes just what he thought of him—a two-legged coyote who called a baby names! A snipe with a heart so little, a baby couldn't find it! He'd played his ace and lost. He'd failed to save Hushaby. Now let Hushaby kill Pinto, the sooner the better. He couldn't lose his good name and Little Pard in a nobler cause!

Little did All-in dream as again, feverishly, he sought Hushaby's old enemy to avenge the baby Triangle Z held but little lower than the angels, that, by giving Pard to Apache, he had precipitated the dreaded encounter which might terminate in the filing of the ultimate notch on his hero's gun. For Apache Bill, shrinking from so great a responsibility, afraid almost to open his mouth lest he contribute to the delinquency of Little Pard, had conscientiously set out to find All-in and give the baby back; and he might at any moment meet Lightning, with no hope of official intervention.

And, while he hunted All-in, who hunted Pinto, who sought only a little peace to soothe his quivering nerves ere his gun fight with the big buckaroo he knew as Derringer, all of Triangle Z was frantically seeking any one who could give them word of Little Pard.

"He's all right, Hushaby; you'll see!" Wishful strove to calm the distraught puncher. "All-in's jist got so wrapped up in Apache he can't pry hisself loose."

Hushaby groaned. "He wouldn't do thet, Wishful, knowin' I'm honor-bound to meet Pinto an' dassent till I know Pard's in a safe place. Jist think if I'd run into Pinto now, an' Pard—Wishful, I'd never fergive myself if one hair on his leetle head wuz harmed."

"None won't be!" rejoined the boy, with an assurance he was far from feeling. "But we'll find him quickest if we separate. The crowd's all comin' this way. You boys mix through it, while I scout around the edge. Betcha I see All-in first."

Wishful did. But he heard him long before he saw him—ripping some one's hide right off, giving them merry heck. Racing that way, the boy suddenly halted, spellbound, at sight of All-in's victim—Pinto Slykes! All-in had Pinto backed right up to a tree where he couldn't budge, and he was lambasting him for all he was worth. Wishful

couldn't see All-in's hand, but his right elbow was sure working like a pile driver. No wonder Pinto was buffaloed. Why, he was shaking like a leaf; and his face was all bleached out, except where the color was set.

"You skunk!" cussed the irate old cow hand, punctuating every word with a forward jerk of that flexed right arm. "You gosh-danged, low-down ornery skunk! I heered tell a' bad men in my time, but nary one of your cursed stripe. You—you baby-hater!"

Wishful's face went white—much whiter even than Pinto's. Where was Pard? How had Pinto abused Pard? It must have been awful, the way All-in—

"Yeah, baby-hater!" mercilessly All-in drove the truth home. "An' atter abusin' a baby, you sneak over here to kill a man what loves babies—loves one enough to die to keep his respect. My gosh, Pinto, wuzn't you ever a kid yourself? Didn't you howl? Oh, gosh a'-mighty, if you don't howl afore I'm done with you!"

So terrifying a figure of human wrath did All-in present that Wishful all but collapsed under an added burden of horror. Pinto had abused Pard until All-in went crazy. Look at him, listen to him, batty as a—

"Squirm, drat you!" All-in gloated, with an especially vicious poke at his fascinated victim. "You'll squirm wuss hereafter, fer you'll hev a millstone tied around your neck fer offendin' a leetle one. They'll send your head to one of these here anatomizers fer medical inspection, to see how come you to bate—"

"Pard!" That hoarse cry, the very epitome of agony, tore Wishful's gaze from All-in to a scene not twenty feet behind—a tableau that was forever indelibly imprinted on his mind.

Apache crouched alertly forward on a picnic bench, while nearing him with gliding step, with fingers ominously

curving toward his hip, was Lightning McGinnis. The old foes' eyes were riveted on each other. Those of the horror-stricken crowd were on them. While Wishful saw with fear in his bones amid the flowing whiskers of Apache Bill, right in the line of fire, Little Pard! And, fighting toward him, throwing spectators to right and left, sublimely reckless of personal danger, was Hushaby, whose white lips had uttered that cry of mortal fear.

It was a cry that pierced other ears than Wishful's and that told Sheriff Jerry Paxton, who had been unavoidably detained, he had arrived too late to enact his rôle of peacemaker. Nevertheless, into the tense crowd he dashed, sending before him the stentorian roar, which the Grande Ronde recognized as its master's voice—"Hyar! Hyar!"—but which wasn't fazing Lightning and Apache Bill.

But to one wrecked soul that voice spelled sanctuary. As the officer forged through the paralyzed mob with his eyes on the ancient duelists and his ears listening for the double shot, a wild-eyed, powder-marked figure burst through the press, literally flinging himself into Sheriff Paxton's arms.

"Stop him!" shrieked Pinto Slykes, whose nerves had been screwed one notch too many. "Stop thet locoed ol' wampus! Take thet gun!"

Instinctively swinging, Jerry was amazed—even in his fever to prevent the major crime—to see one of the Grande Ronde's good examples running amuck. "Hold on, All-in," he cried sharply; "what you doin' with thet gun?"

"Gun?" echoed All-in, with a furious gesture toward Pinto. "Which gun?" At that instant his right hand swung in his range of vision, and All-in's jaw dropped, for in it was the gun he had brought for Pard. The gun with which he had prodded Pinto under the impression that it was his index finger! "I—

I didn't know I had it, Jerry," he faltered, fast cooling. "Anyhow I wuzn't usin' it—not hostile."

"Sheriff, he wuz!" wildly contradicted Hushaby's nerve-shattered old enemy. "He jumped me with it when I wuz a-restin' behind a tree—restin' up from his houndin' me all over th' picnic with a howlin' baby. An' he kept a-pokin' me with it. I couldn't tell when it wuz goin' off or where. I don't know which wuz the wust—thet kid a-screechin' or the keerless way he handled thet gun. Hold him, sheriff, till I git my hoss an'—"

But Sheriff Paxton wasn't wasting time on small fry, when he might yet by a saving word turn the tragedy impending just ahead into a jubilee. Nor was there any need of his holding All-in. Right then All-in couldn't have moved had he tried. For, suddenly perceiving Wishful beside him, staring pop-eyed—not at him or Pinto—but beyond, All-in's old eyes had followed and popped, too. There on a picnic bench, the focus of every marveling gaze, a black-eyed infant in rompers of red, gurgled and cooed to an old six-gun, wickedly flaunting its seventeen notches, while over him two hoary heads were fraternally bent.

"You say he's your son?" quavered Lightning, cupping his hand to his best ear.

"I say," obligingly Apache yelled into it, "he took my gun! I set down here with him to rest a spell, an' blamed if the leetle Trojan didn't rassel it plumb outta my holster! Howled like a cata-mount when I tried to take it back, so—"

"The leetle son-of-a-gun!" chuckled Lightning McGinnis.

"So I deshelled it, an' let him keep it. Thet's why I had to give you the peace sign, Lightnin'. When a leetle splinter like him kin disarm Apache Bill, it's time to quit. Reckon we bin on the warpath long enough."

As Hushaby, dazed with joy, stooped to gather Pard to his throbbing heart, the hands of the aged gunmen met in a clasp of perfect reconciliation, that brought tears, then cheers. One for the reconciled! Three ringing ones—in which Sheriff Paxton whole-heartedly led—for the bunk-house baby of Triangle Z who had brought it all about!

Shortly after, Triangle Z held a private reunion near the table that swayed the most.

"Yep, he skinned out!" beamed All-in. "Newt Bowers says he met Pinto on the road a-goin' like the Old Harry wuz atter him. Newt misdoubts if he could stop afore he hit the border. Anyhow, Hushaby, he broke his word to meet you; an' you ain't obligated to meet him ag'in. You've kept your good behavior an' chancet to adopt Pard."

Hushaby's face softened into its old lines. "I ain't fergittin'," and his voice was husky with gratitude, "thet I owe it all to you, All-in!"

For once in his life All-in Lappin disclaimed all credit. "Pard done it," he nobly explained, "by cryin'. You see, boys, I've allus held it takes a leetle of the real stuff to make a good bad man. An' I knowed if a man had a pay streak in him, Pard could find it—like he found Apache's. Thet's what I had in my mind when I left you all. But Pinto wuzn't a good bad man. Thet's why Pard's cryin' an' my gun play broke his nerve."

Reverently Wishful picked up the gun that had helped save the day for Triangle Z. Slowly he turned it over in his palm, broke the cylinder, and stared into it, open-mouthed. "Jumpin' Jehosaphat!" he exclaimed. "Why, it ain't loaded! D'ja mean to tell me you tackled Pinto Slykes with a empty gun?"

"Didn't I tell you," All-in insisted, "thet I didn't know I had a gun? I natcherally went atter him with the weapon I could handle best—my tongue!"



KIOWA INDIAN LANDS SOLD

THE sale of over ten thousand acres of restricted Indian lands at the Kiowa Indian agency in southwestern Oklahoma held recently, brought a total price of over \$331,000. The average price per acre was more than thirty dollars and was one of the largest received for lands in that section. These Indian lands were disposed of in order to enable the Indians of the reservation to secure money for the improvement of their homes and to purchase live stock, household goods, and farming equipment. A few tracts were sold because the Indian owners were incapacitated because of their age and unable to work the land.

In this connection, the Indian Bureau announced that \$272,021 had been expended on Indian improvements on the Kiowa reservation during the last fiscal year. All told, ninety-six new homes for Indians were erected, while twenty homes were rebuilt. In addition, fifty-seven new barns were constructed, including forty-three new chicken houses, thirty-seven storm caves, ten garages, and twelve cisterns. With the expenditure of the receipts of some \$331,000 accruing from the recent sale of lands, it is expected by the bureau that from eighty to eighty-five per cent of the Indians on the Kiowa reservation will be living in new, sanitary homes and will be equipped with modern farming machinery.

Payday on the Ranch

By James Edward Hungerford.

THERE'S heaps o' joy in this ol' world,
That's spinnin' like a top;
Through space at mighty speed it's whirled,
Without a jolt er stop.
It shorely is a fine ol' place
To live an' move an' be;
A smile I wear upon my face—
It shore looks good to me.

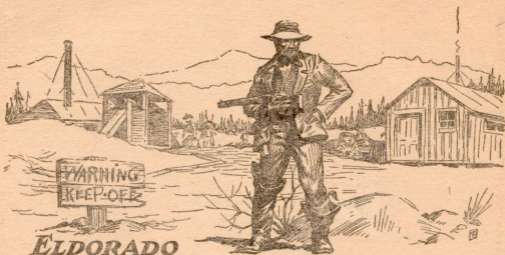
There's heaps o' days in ev'ry year,
An' all o' 'em are fine;
Each one contains a heap o' cheer.
As it comes down the line.
There's wintertime, an' summertime,
An' also spring, an' fall;
But rain, er snow, er sunny clime—
I likes 'em one an' all.

We celebrate a heap o' days,
Upon this here ol' earth,
An' sing to 'em our songs o' praise,
An' "root" fer all we're worth.
But ev'ry month upon the first,
There dawns a day o' joy,
That makes us punchers fairly burst
With song—it's payday, boy.

The Boss he passes out the cash,
Upon the ol' ranch place,
With wreathin' lips, 'neath his mustache,
An' sunny, smilin' face.
Each puncher gits his forty per.
In good ol' U. S. "dough,"
An' he feels good from hat to spur;
His features fairly glow.

We wrangle up our hosses swift,
An' split the ol' wind wide,
As down the ol' town trail we drift,
As swift as we kin ride.
Then thirty more days roll around—
Again that blessed day,
That makes our hearts an' pulses pound
When Boss hands out the pay.





Mining Camp Cameos

Snapshots from Life in the Great Gold Rushes

By Roderick O'Hargan

Author of "Grubstaked," etc.



HE Klondike rush was on. Dawson was booming like a waterfall. Claims on Bonanza and Eldorado creeks were the pick of the basket, and the basket was a rich one. Thirty, forty, and fifty-dollar pans were common. On No. 5 on Eldorado, single pans ran up to one hundred and fifty dollars. Shoveling dirt at a hundred dollars a shovelful, speeds up a man's work, even if the dirt belongs to the other fellow. One just naturally tries to see how quickly one can toss a thousand dollars' worth—an interesting and somewhat rare experience.

Claims on the early creeks in the Klondike were measured by stepping; but, when the rich stuff was turned up, the thought of possible fractions drove the owners to a very careful remeasurement. In the fall of 1898, the Canadian government surveyor, Mr. William

Ogilvie, was engaged in surveying Eldorado Creek. He came down the creek, reaching the Berry group (Nos. 2 to 6) about midafternoon. He finished No. 5 just as the crew were knocking off work. They gathered round to say "Hello." Just then the surveyor's chainman came hurrying up, seemingly perturbed.

"There's no mistake," he whispered "ran it twice."

Ogilvie whistled in surprise, and then checked himself, realizing that the men round him were curious, if not suspicious. To cover the confusion, he called out to the owner, Clarence Berry, who had not yet joined the group.

"How about inviting me to dinner, Berry? I'm frightfully hungry."

"Sure," called Berry, approaching; and then, seeing the queer look on the faces of the group, he asked, "What's up, old man? What's wrong?" he said in alarm.

"A starving man, Berry," called back Ogilvie. "Come on, let's get out of this cold; I'm perishing." And he walked away from the crowd toward Berry's house on the claim.

But Berry was not to be put off. "What's wrong, Mr. Ogilvie? Tell me," he almost shouted.

"Hush!" said the surveyor. "What I have to say is for your ears only—you are nearly fifty feet wide this side of the claim."

"Claim wide! Impossible! We went over all of 'em with a foot rule."

"You must have missed No. 5, Berry. Probably doubled up on No. 4 or 6. It's between forty and fifty feet oversize—no possible doubt of it. That means a fraction for somebody; and this end, too," he said meaningly.

"Great heavens!" Clarence Berry said, stopping in his tracks, "that fraction will take in all our winter's work, shaft, dump, and everything; and we haven't made our clean-up yet. It's half a million dollars' worth, Ogilvie. It'll leave us down and out. What shall I do? Tell me what to do, Ogilvie."

"Keep quiet! That's the first thing to do, Berry. All the crowd are watching you. Walk with me quietly up to the house."

"Now," said the grizzled Dominion surveyor, a man held in high respect throughout the Yukon, "I can't give you advice. I'm a public servant. But if I was in your fix, I'd need a friend."

"Friend? What do you mean?"

"Well, there's fifty feet of open ground. Anybody may locate it. It's worth half a million dollars, you say. I can quite believe it. There is more than a hundred thousand dollars' worth of dust already taken out, lying on the surface. A plum for somebody! Morally it belongs to you and your partners, Berry; no question about that. But, legally, no! You have no claim to it. If you know of a real friend

whom you can implicitly trust, and who has not yet used his filing privilege, who would locate and record it to-night and deed it to you—then your bacon's saved. Otherwise, it will be declared open ground to-morrow, and you know what that means—a rush, a free fight, bloodshed, probably murder, and certainly litigation that will likely spoil your other claims. Can you recall the name of any one who would do this for you?"

Clarence Berry now had control of himself. He whistled and laughed as he thought desperately for the name of some man who might possibly save his fortune.

"I believe George Byrnes is absolutely square, and I know he hasn't used his privilege yet. Do you know him, Ogilvie?"

"Yes, a capital fellow. If he will do this for you, you're saved."

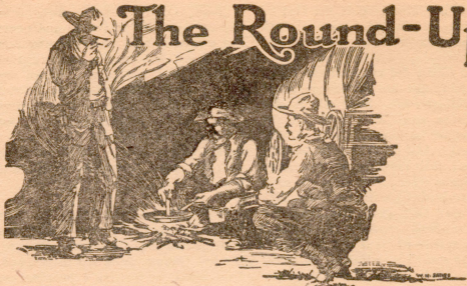
"Not a word to my wife, now, Ogilvie," said Berry. "I'll go down the creek and find him."

Mrs. Berry remonstrated at her husband's rushing off before supper, but he was gone with a shouted message that he wouldn't be long. Four hours later he returned with George Byrnes, who agreed to do the staking, which he did and turned it over to its rightful owners for one dollar.

Next morning when the crew came to work and found a brand-new fraction staked and realized that any one of them might have owned the rich strip, it caused some highly colored language and some moans; but, on second thought, all agreed that it was the only fair course.

Then the story found its way downtown, and Dawson celebrated. In the Dominion, Northern, Pioneer, Blue Elephant, White Elephant and a dozen other saloons, glasses chinked in a solemn memorial to another good chance gone—a half million dollars that lay around all winter with no takers!

The Round-Up



FIRST, a lady, Mrs. W. F., now campin' at Wenatchee, Washington. And this lady will speak with a straight tongue, not a forked one. And she will quote things from the Good Book—he it said to our shame—that we did not know were there. And we are glad indeed that they are there, for we love our horses and our dogs. And anything that strengthens our belief in feeling we will meet them after death in the “happy hunting ground” fills us with delight.

The lady:

“WELL, BOSS AND FOLKS: For being a woman, I’ve sat back here in the shadows and kept still for a powerful long time. Two recent Round-ups contained something that I’ve just *got* to talk about. First, we’ll take Harvey Gustavus’ inquiry as to whether he did right in taking up the cause of the hobbled horse. No question is there, Harvey. Any one can champion the strong, but it takes a real man or a real woman to take up weapons for the weak or helpless. As to the two women—well, Harvey, what’s the matter with you? If they are the right sort of women, the womanly

sort, they should be proud of your spirit and appreciate the principles that prompted your interference. If they are the other kind, then thank your lucky stars that you found out they are not the sort to make good friends, sweethearts or wives.

“Now, as to your article, Boss, relating to the question of Freckles: ‘Do animals have souls?’ Most assuredly they do. I make that assertion backed up by observation, plain common sense, and last, but not least, by the Word of God. I’m not preaching, but allow me to quote a bit to prove my point. Ecclesiastes: 3d Chap. 18-21 verses:

“I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preëminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

“Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

“Again we find, though I do not recall the part of the Bible where you

will find it—'The Lord is the God of the spirits of all flesh.' Get it? *All* flesh, not human alone, but beast and fowl.

"And Christ did not teach, as far as I can find, that the animals or beasts were *without* souls. So, I take it, that there is as much of a hereafter for them as for us, and God knows they deserve it. Also, in no place in the Bible will you find anything to encourage or mitigate cruelty, not even as some misquote from Genesis, 1st Chap. 27th verse, that God gave man dominion over the dumb creatures to do with as he pleased—which is not so; for 'A merciful man is merciful to his beast,' which in itself strongly hints at restrictions to be placed on our treatment of animals, four-footed and feathered, as well as two-legged, for we all belong to the animal kingdom.

"I am sorry to take up so much of your time, but WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE is too good a magazine to miss reading, and the more goodly and kindly things published in it, the more good it will do to its hosts of readers. My husband and I are regular fans and we pass each magazine on to some one else just as soon as we have finished reading them.

"I thank you for your patient attention and trust the Misses Mexico, Spanish Bit, Wheeler and others of such paganistic or rather savage methods, will hear this and then do a little real thinking."

Miss Mexico, here you are! This, from Ed Dotson, Box 68, Proctor, Texas, is sure agoin' to please you:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: I think that Miss Mexico is right about breaking horses. I have broken a good many horses in my time, and I do not believe in feeding sugar and petting a horse, for it just makes them meaner and harder to handle.

"Now, I broke a horse about three months ago. He was wild, and never had a rope on him. After another boy and I got him in the pen, we tied him up good and proper. Then we took a bridle with a Spanish bit and put it on him. Then we took a good saddle and put it on him. Then I put on a good pair of spurs, and took a loaded quirt. And when I got done with that horse, he sure knew who was boss."

Well, Ed, you can break 'em that way if you want to; every man to his choice. But, Ed, not for us. Perhaps, it's jest because we're too tender, and, then again, perhaps, it's jest because we're jest plain yaller, scairt. For, you see, Ed, we kind er feel you done that there horse dirt, by breakin' him that er way; stealin' up behind of him, ropin' of him, throwin' of him, spurrin' of him, beatin' of him, ridin' of him nigh to death. Yes, Ed, it's been our experience that when we do dirt to animals and humans, that animals and humans kind er hang 'round a-waitin' for a chance to do us dirt, and to rub the dirt in good! O' course, Ed, as said first, every man to his choice.

An old-timer rides in to The Round-up with a mighty nice piece o' poetry. We feel it jest about expresses our feelin's on the subject o' the West—an' we envy him the chanct to spend his time in sech a country. How about it, folks? You-all think the same way?

They talk about the city and sights that folks see there,
About the great big buildings and the avenues so fair,
They talk about the sights down East and Coney Island, too,
About the Woolworth Buildin' an' Central Park's big zoo.
Well, we aint' got no Woolworth Buildin', just a little old log shack,
With an old stone chimney on the side, all chinked up at the back.

There's a little lean-to on the front, an' it's shingled up with straw,	It would make that Woolworth Buildin' look pretty small, you know;
But from that little lean-to porch there's sights you never saw.	An' talk about your great big zoo and animals in there,
You kin look across two mountains that's wrapped in clouds of gray	Give me the kind we have out here that breathes the pure, free air.
An' see that golden sun a-settin' at the evenin' of a day.	An' in the evenin', pardner, when stars come in the sky,
The sky's all streaked with colors, the like you never see,	An' the northern lights are shinin', and you hear the north wind sigh—
There's red and yellow, blue and gray; it sure looks good to me.	When you hear the owls a-hootin', up in the timber line,
There's the mountain peaks away up there, that's all capped up with snow;	An' you hear the coyotes howlin', give me the West for mine.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

LONESOME'S LUCK

A Novel

By ROBERT ORMOND CASE

Lonesome thought that dude clothes were what he needed to win the schoolmarm, but Fate seemed to have decreed that she should never see him in his finery. And it took a long time for Lonesome to learn how kind Fate had been.

THE RODEO QUITTER

By RAY HUMPHREYS

A name may mean very little under ordinary circumstances, but it meant the difference between triumph and defeat, life and death, when the Mexican was told that his horse for the rodeo was to be "Lady Killer."

TINFOIL

By HERBERT FARRIS

He stood unarmed before a desperate criminal, with no help in sight. And then aid did come, and from a source whence he least expected it.

AND OTHER STORIES

Order Your Copy Now



"I'm very proud to wear my button badge," says Charles Schober, 618 Columbia Avenue, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Are you wearing the H. T. G. emblem, too?

Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you either a button for your coat lapel, or a pin. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.



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.

THE OWL and I sure were proud to be invited to a Hollow Tree party, a while back; but this is the first opportunity we've had to speak about it. Did we go? No, gangsters, we're sorry to say we couldn't get there on time. The Owl, he could have flown there by night; but he wouldn't leave the Big Sister of the gang behind, and there wasn't time for her to get way out to Chicago before the party would be over.

This is what the invitation said: "You are cordially invited to attend a party to be given by The Hollow Tree Club of Chicago, Saturday evening, June twelfth, at eight o'clock, at the residence of Brother William Hill, 6843 South Washtenaw Avenue." Those of the gangsters as went, sure must have had a fine time.

Speaking of parties, here's a sister who thinks a cowgirl's life is one long party. A City Westerner, who lives in Cleveland, Ohio, says she's envious of Cowgirl Pat, whose letter appeared in The Tree a while back. "Cowgirl Pat can consider herself fortunate" says this girl, "to be enjoying every day what myself and many others would give al-

most a tenth of our lives to enjoy for one day."

How about it, cowgirls? Are you so happy that you don't find the time to make some of the rest of us just as happy as you are? You've been accused, all of you, of not answering the gang's appeals when cowgirl correspondents are wanted. I'm surprised you need a second invitation, cowgirls. If it were a bucking bronc we were asking you to ride, I'm sure we'd not have to ask you twice. Just listen to this:

DEAR COWGIRLS OF THE GANG: I appealed to you before, but didn't receive but one letter in response; so once more a Westerner asks you to write. I live out here in sunny San Joaquin Valley, California, the land of fruit and cattle, and I am a typical out-of-door's girl. I like hiking, camping, and all that goes with the open West. I'm eighteen, and wish correspondents of my own age or a little older. I have a camera and some snapshots that I'd like to exchange.

MISS BUD E. MCDARMENT.
Box 1063, Porterville, California.

Cowgirls, you sure are in demand. A Lonesome Sister, of Los Angeles, is also looking for cowgirl pen pals. Write her in care of The Tree.

"I would like to hear from girls in the West, especially cowgirls," writes Ellen Seelye, Lock Box 410, L'Anse, Michigan. "I have lived in Georgia and Alabama all my life, and I would like to hear from some one in the West, some real cowgirls," says Gussie Eaves, R. F. D. No. 6, Box 85, Birmingham, Alabama. Blue Eyes, in care of The Tree, would especially like to hear from girls who live on ranches. All of these girls are about the same age, and would prefer their correspondents to be somewhere around twenty.

"I am seventeen and would like to correspond with cowgirls," says Muriel Ostrem, 1008 Inter. Avenue, Grand Forks, North Dakota. "I am collecting Western things, such as Western pictures—out of magazines—or post cards, cowboy songs and poems, and anything belonging to a cowboy's outfit."

Here are some others who are collecting cowboy songs and poems. "Will some one please send me the words to 'The Cowboy's Lament?'" writes Eugene Lincoln, 2917 York Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri. In return he will send snapshots, and will give information about South Dakota and Nebraska.

Estelle Roden, Scottsboro, Alabama, says: "Will some one send me the songs: 'Utah Carrol,' and 'Oh, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie.'" She also wants other Western songs that any one will send her.

Another call for "Utah Carrol." A West Texan, in care of The Tree, wants some one to send her the words to "Sam Bass," and "Utah Carrol."

Martin Thomas, Rural Route 3, Parsons, Kansas, wants the words to "The Dying Ranger." He is a young lad, and wants the Hollow Tree boys to write to him.

"I am making a collection of Western songs and poems. Would like the sisters to help me out," says Mary A. Cooke, Route 3, Arnette, Oklahoma.

Lucille Cupp, Madison, Missouri, is making a collection of cowboy songs and is starting a Hollow Tree album. Help her out, sisters.

Harry E. Hart, 716 Park Place, Longmont, Colorado, is also making a collection of Western songs and poems, especially the songs. Don't forget him, folks. He may be last in his appeal, but not the least in his appreciation for what you'll do for him.

Girl Hikers, attention!

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Won't some one who has hiked or otherwise worked her way through the Western States write and tell us of her experiences? There's three of us girls writing this letter. We're nineteen and fond of the out of doors. We've always wanted to travel, especially to go out West, but have never been out of the State of Minnesota. We certainly would appreciate suggestions which would help us in working our way to the coast. Would also be glad to hear from girls on Western ranches. Will answer all letters received.

MISSES X, Y, AND Z.

Care of The Tree.

Want pals on motor trip!

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My husband and myself are planning to go to California in the fall, and would like to have some nice young couple go with us. I am twenty-nine, and would like a pal somewhere near my own age. Will answer all letters received.

MRS. R. C. SMITH.

Quay, Oklahoma, General Delivery.

Oklahomans, take notice!

DEAR MISS RIVERS AND GANG: I hail from the Middle West—Oklahoma. Why don't we hear more from this State? It is a good State—it has some of all crops. Cotton is raised in the southern part; wheat and oats in the north; potatoes in the south; oil wells everywhere; coal mines in several places, and fruits, and most of all melons, sure grow juicy!

I would like to hear especially from the Northwest, Canada, and Alaska. I am going to visit Alaska, and want to learn more about it. If you are interested in Oklahoma, folks, give me a letter shower.

DENNIS MILLER.

Porum, Oklahoma.

A former Pennsylvanian would like to have some pen pals who would like to hear about that State. David Jones, of 64 Oriental Street, Newark, New Jersey, can tell you all about the coal regions of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Newark Rifle Association, boys, and does some good rifle and pistol shooting.

Here's Leonard Granger, 158 Straight Avenue, South West, Grand Rapids, Michigan, who wants to tell the gangsters about Michigan.

Any one want a correspondent from "the land of the long-leaf pine?" Lillie Deaton, Troy, North Carolina, is anxious to extol the beauties of North Carolina.

Thelma Moneyhan, who is nineteen and loves hunting, fishing, boating, and horseback riding, wants to hear from Western girls about ranch life. She will tell about Michigan. Address her at 307 Grand Boulevard, Iron Mountain, Michigan.

Now, you folks who are interested in trapping, why don't you answer your letters? "I have written several letters during the past year to men who wanted to get in touch with trappers," says H. M. Vincent, an old trapper of thirty-five years at the business, "and I've not got an answer yet." Mr. Vincent lives in Chadbourn, North Carolina, folks; and those of you who want information about trapping should show your appreciation by replying promptly.

About mining!

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I know the West quite well, as I follow the mining game, and have worked in mining camps in Arizona, Idaho, Montana, and other States. Have recently worked on the new cascades tunnel on the Great Northern Railroad which, when completed, will be nearly eight miles long, and one of the longest railroad tunnels in the world.

At the present time my partner and I are working in a tunnel three thousand feet under the city of Butte. We are following a vein of copper ore from which we can obtain

many beautiful specimens. Any one wishing to exchange mineral samples will be accommodated. Also have a fund of knowledge regarding mines and mining camps; so ask me lots of questions, Gang.

By the way, we are not old and grizzled prospectors, as this letter might suggest. I am twenty-seven, and my partner, Albert Saari, is twenty-six.

JOHN OSKI.

257 East Park Street, Butte, Montana.

Any one interested in the art of Mexico?

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I have followed your column in the W. S. M. with great interest. Now I wish to avail myself of the opportunities you offer your readers to become acquainted with people who live in the other sections of the country.

I am interested in Mexico—especially the art of the country. I would enjoy word from any young man who has a hobby—collecting, for instance, which happens to be mine.

CHICAGO TED.

Care of The Tree.

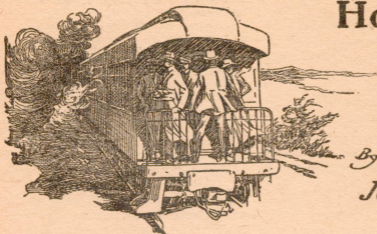
A native of the "wild and woolly West" who was born and raised in the Lone Rock district, will be glad to answer questions about his part of the country. "If you really want to see some broncho busting, come to Unwin, to the stampede," he says. "The country around here is getting settled, however, on account of the Central Pacific Railway. I saw one of the first trains that traveled on it." Write to Jean MacLuckie, Lone Rock, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Harriett Dore, Box 5, Wolfeboro Falls, New Hampshire, would like to tell of the beauty of the White Mountains to some sister who lives in Hawaii. She would like lots of letters, though, from sisters in any country and from any part of the United States as well.

A cowboy correspondent is wanted by a lad of nineteen. He is Gene Hosack, 1840 Wayne Street, Toledo, Ohio.

A Westerner who has drifted as far East as Boston, would like to hear from some Texas pals. Address him as Kid Cactus, c/o Chick Brody, 25 Commercial Street, Malden, Mass.

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.

RIVERS OF THE WEST—THE COLORADO CONQUERED

THE chain of dams within the Grand Cañon will cover a scenic stretch of two hundred and fifty miles. The largest of these will be in that part of the cañon known as Bridge Cañon, and will be as high as the tallest of modern skyscrapers. This will create a lake seventy-seven miles long, reaching upstream toward Bright Angel Trail. Other dams will form lakes extending from dam to dam which will replace the impassable rapids that now fill the channel. When this is done tourists will have the novel sensation, hitherto unknown, of taking a trip through the Grand Cañon in modern motor boats, and will have opportunities of seeing the gorge from an entirely new angle.

Many thrilling journeys over rapids through the cañon have been made by engineers who have taken all sorts of chances as part of the day's work for the geological survey. That they ac-

complished their tasks and survived is not merely a matter of luck, but is due to the careful planning and organizing of those concerned, every one an expert in his line. No inexperienced enthusiast could master the waters of the Grand Cañon. He might try once, but it is doubtful if he would come back to thrill the world with the tale of his adventure.

Many sites have been considered during the past twenty years for the erection of these dams, some of which have been given up as hopeless owing to the difficulties that would attend their construction. Others that were declared impracticable by engineers years ago have been surveyed more recently and have received favorable decisions from modern experts.

At Glen Cañon, near Lee's Ferry, only a few miles south of the Utah Line, a lake about one hundred and eighty miles long will be erected, at the upper end of which the walls of Dark

Cañon Dam will rise five hundred and twelve feet, creating another lake one hundred and fifty miles long.

The accomplishment of this project, which now seems to be a certainty in the not-too-far-distant future, will be of immense benefit to those sections that suffer from excessive dryness alternating with excessive floods. The waters of the Colorado River will be so controlled as to minimize the devastating floods to which the low-lying lands have been subjected with enormous damage in the loss of crops and the destruction of homes and live stock. On the other hand the excessive aridity of Arizona will be overcome by the reclamation of vast areas of dry land, the promised series of dams supplying the water needed for the requirements of the land under irrigation. By the damming of the river it is expected that both flood and irrigation problems will be solved to a great extent; while the electric power, when developed, will yield horse power to be reckoned by the million.

Great beauty will be added to the whole region by the chain of lakes along the course of the river, and new scenic attractions will draw tourists to this part of the world in search of vacation delights such as are to be found very rarely in any part of the world.

The famous Rainbow Natural Bridge in Utah, one of the most wonderful natural formations and extremely difficult of access, will be within easy reach of the motor boat when the lakes formed by the dams are completed.

The work of controlling the waters of the Colorado River is a stupendous one. The amount of material for the construction of the dams alone would sound fantastic to any but engineers who know how to make their calculations to the inch. That this great project will some day be realized is now recognized as a fact and is no longer a myth lodged in the brain of the dreamer. Practical American engineers

have solved the problem and overcome the difficulties with which nature beset their plans. The untamable Colorado will be curbed and will have to do the will of its conquerors.

WHAT A RANCH COSTS

DEAR MR. NORTH: Could you tell me how much money a good-sized ranch costs? Perhaps you could tell me how much land costs an acre and the cost of young cattle. What is the price of the cattle when taken to market? Are there many ranches in Texas? I am asking you these questions to see where I stand and what I need.

JOHN C.

Providence, Rhode Island.

The price of a ranch depends on the number of acres, the location, the quality of the land, and the number of acres that are under cultivation. Naturally a tract that has plenty of rich range grass, abundant water, and is moreover readily accessible to the shipping point will be worth more than a ranch in the back country, or one where the grass is scant and water scarce. Looking over some offerings of ranches recently in one of the journals devoted to the cattle industry, I noticed the following quotations, which will perhaps give you a line on the information you are seeking. A ranch of thirteen thousand acres, said to be well grassed, with as much more leased land within the same fences, was to be had for six dollars an acre. Another ranch, improved, was offered for ten dollars an acre. These two were in Texas. A twelve-thousand-acre ranch in Harding County, New Mexico, was quoted at seven and a half dollars an acre; while a ranch of five thousand five hundred and thirty acres in Chase County, Kansas, with five hundred acres in cultivation, was held at thirty-seven dollars fifty cents an acre. In the same columns a Wyoming ranch of sixteen thousand acres was offered at eight dollars an acre.

In buying ranch property, it is necessary in the first place, to be a judge of values; and, of course, you must see

what you are getting and know the conditions of the particular region in which the ranch is situated. The price of cattle also varies. Seventy dollars a head for young stock is considered a good price, whereas a good sire will cost several hundred, or even run into the thousands. I judge from your questions that you know little or nothing

of cattle ranching; and, if you seriously intend to tackle that business, I would suggest going down to Texas and learning all you can, before deciding on any venture of your own. You will find plenty of ranches and cattle being raised down there. Some of the principal towns adjacent to ranches are San Angelo, Amarillo, and Stamford.



PROTECTING INDIAN RELICS

IN order to curb the enthusiasm of tourists who have destroyed numbers of totem poles and other historical Indian relics in British Columbia, the government of that province has decided to enforce strictly the laws protecting these objects. Hereafter, the Indians will not be allowed to barter away their family heirlooms, no matter how attractive the prices which American visitors may be willing to pay. To accomplish this purpose, the provincial government will declare all these relics historical objects, and then they cannot be removed without government sanction.

The first relics to be guarded in this way will be the remaining totem poles which were carved by the Indian artists to record the deeds of their families, tribes and nations. Thousands of these native works of art have been shipped to the United States, whole villages in some cases, being stripped of their curious historical records.

Last year, many American museums sent parties to British Columbia to buy up totem poles and other native carvings. Some of these were the finest art specimens produced by North American Indians. These primitive curios have risen in value, yet the prices paid for them have been ridiculously low in proportion to their real worth.

The modern Indian is incapable of equaling the work of his forefathers with chisel and paint. He can carve quaint little souvenirs, but the towering poles hewn out of straight cedars centuries ago can never be replaced.

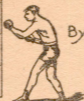
The new legislation is also designed to protect totem poles and other objects against vandalism. Tourists in British Columbia have carved their initials in rocks beside some of the oldest native art known in America. In other places, these ancient stone carvings have been ruined by crude disfigurements.

The British Columbia government is also seeking to preserve Indian art by amassing a large collection in the museum in Victoria. This includes wooden carvings and stone sculpture and is considered the best in existence. The work is not only superior in its craftsmanship, but also reveals an imaginative faculty beyond anything that the natives of to-day possess.



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PUZZLING TRAILS

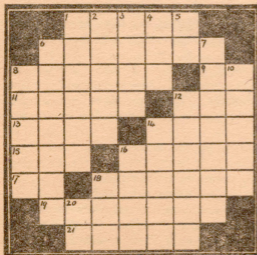


By
Prosper Buranelli

After the Round-up is over, each week Prosper Buranelli will select for readers of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE a couple of tricky problems that will make them get out their pencils and go to it. What kind of puzzle do you like the best? Write and tell us. Send in a puzzle and show us. Maybe you can concoct the one that will make WESTERN STORY readers quit cold.

I TOLD you about that wild-west crossword puzzle. Here it is. You will find a few things out of the cow country. You have been reading about these Western critters, and now you can work them out. Think I did pretty well in getting the great open spaces in this construction. Wonder how many wild and woolly words you could have got in.

Well, let's go! See if you can bust this broncho:



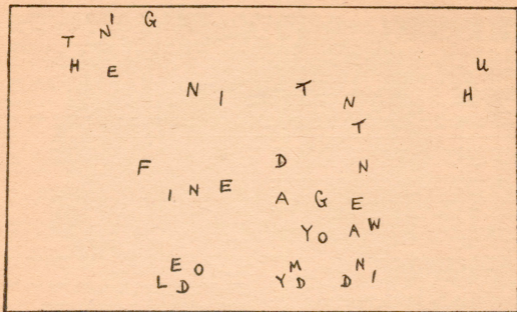
HORIZONTAL.

- 1—Former rulers of Russia.
- 6—Western slang for kind of horse (plural).

- 8—Heel over.
- 9—Syllable used in stories to express hesitation.
- 11—Common surname.
- 12—Brazilian macaw.
- 13—Beef fat.
- 14—Sunken root.
- 15—The way of spelling one of the letters of the alphabet.
- 16—Wading bird.
- 17—Chemical symbol.
- 18—Radiated.
- 19—Mountains familiar in Western stories.
- 21—Part of fishing tackle.

VERTICAL.

- 1—Strait between Australia and New Guinea.
- 2—What the heroine is.
- 3—Diminutive of common given name (plural).
- 4—King Arthur's lance.
- 5—Colloquial for a farming implement.
- 6—Western slang for kind of horse.
- 7—Mexican blanket.
- 8—Boxes.
- 10—What the villain did.
- 12—Living creature.
- 14—Tangle.
- 16—Dry.
- 18—Name.
- 20—Exists.



Get out the boxing gloves, and take a rap at the square at the head of the preceding page. It's got a lot of fighting jaws, flattened noses and cauliflower ears in it. Seven boxers, now prominent in the ring, to be exact. See if you can find them.

You can spell them out by moving from one letter to an adjoining letter. For instance, from the central L you can move to K, R, L, A, B, N, S and E. When you have found a name you can start at any other letter of the square for the next one.

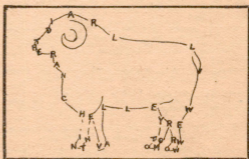
Let's see whether you follow the news in the boxing world or not.

Ever know you could read a line and draw a picture at the same time? You know it if you've been following these puzzles. Seriously, I think a lot of that idea of working a change on the old kid's game where you draw a line from one number to another, from 1 to 2 to 3 and so on, and when you are through you have outlined a picture. In this

stunt you draw a line from letter to letter and spell out a phrase and at the same time outline a picture. See the jumble of letters staring you in the face? That's it. Now slap the pencil to the paper and go ahead.

Look for common letter combinations. See if you can spy a word. If you can you've got a good start.

Last week's answers were:



We will raid the ranch in the valley to-morrow.

Ten thousand cattle straying.

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 these 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.

New 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 etera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

MACK.—Formerly connected with the Florida East Coast R. R. at Fort Pierce, Florida. Please write to your old friend, Marie, P. O. Box 811, Gainesville, Florida.

TADOWSKI, EDWARD.—Was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps, Mar. 8, 1914, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Later lived at Brooklyn, New York. His mother, sister, and brother in Poland would like to locate him. Address his cousin, A. Tadowski, care of Mascarel Hotel, 307 Summit Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

BRADLEY, FRANK.—Last heard of at Detroit, Michigan. Write your sister, Mrs. Emma Williams Wilson, care of this magazine.

GERALD.—Please write to your old pal, Drew, 2602 Albany Street, Houston, Texas.

GRAY, THOMAS EUGENE.—Formerly a resident of Florida. Please write to B. R., care of this magazine.

UNDERHILL, Mrs. LILLIAN.—Last heard of at Miami, Florida. Your niece would like to hear from you. Eula Ringland, General Delivery, Beaumont, Texas.

PLACE, EDDIE and WALTER.—Last heard of in Marine Band, at Washington, D. C. Write to H., care of this magazine.

BUTLER, LAWRENCE.—Fifty-three years old, medium height, gray hair. Native of Los Gatos, California. Please write to R., care of this magazine.

RAMSDOLL, CHARLES E.—Stationed at Marsh Field, Riverside, California, in 1918-1920. Please write to R. A. Medaris, care of this magazine.

WHYTE, FRANK C. P.—Above average height, dark complexion, black eyes and hair, thirty-three years of age. Was U. S. deputy marshal in eastern Michigan, four years ago. Any information about his brother will be gladly received. Charles M. Whyte, Willmar, California.

WALLACE, D. C.—Last heard of at Childress, Texas, in 1915. Please write to Ernest A. Knight, 325 Chestnut Street, Abilene, Texas.

HARDIN, JOHN A.—Native of Chattanooga or Memphis, Tennessee. Last heard from in Alabama, in 1923. May have returned to the navy, where he was formerly an oil-burner fireman. Please write to E., care of this magazine.

STILES, GEORGE P.—William is very ill. Wire money if you have it. Your wife, Esther, 2903 Rutaw Place, Baltimore, Maryland.

LANDRY, JAMES EDWARD.—Of Watertown, Massachusetts. Thirty-nine years of age. Last heard from in California in 1918. Please send any information to his mother, Mrs. Philomena Landry, 483 Waltham Street, West Newton, Massachusetts.

PAPIN, LUVIAN L.—Has been missing four years. Please write to your son, H. E. Papin, care of this magazine.

BICKNELL, WILLIAM J.—Was visiting in Delray, Florida, and left to go to his home, May 2, 1926, but never reached there. Mother very ill. Please write to her or to Hunter, Jess.

HARDESTY, MARY K.—Last heard from in Emporia, Kansas. Write to B. W. S., care of this magazine.

STEWART, BOB.—Was in California in 1925-1924. Write to an old friend, W., care of this magazine.

EARLS, REBECCA.—Last heard of in Michigan eighteen years ago. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Francis Green, Box 172, Willow Springs, Illinois.

RODGER, LESTER, RAY, and ROBERT.—Last heard of in Arkansas and Michigan, eighteen years ago. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Francis Green, Box 172, Willow Springs, Illinois.

ELVA.—Please write to me, for I have some good and important news for you, Norman, 1228 East 14th Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

LIEGEV, Mrs. ELNORA.—Last heard from at York, Pennsylvania. Please write to your old friend, Charles Gray, 228 East Third Street, Pittsburg, California.

BREECE, H. H. C.—Would like to hear from some of my father's people. Also would like to hear from any cousins by the name of Nafey, who lived in Newark, New Jersey, thirty years ago. Mrs. J. M. Lewis, 129 Canal Street, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

GAMBLE, Mrs. ROBERT.—Sister of Charles Kelly. Last heard from about eight years ago in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her nephew, Still, is inquiring for her. Please write in care of this magazine.

ANDREW, ROBERT and INGDOM.—Of Indiana and Kansas. Any information will be appreciated by their great-nephew, H. C. Bradshaw, 162 Johnson Street, Burlington, North Carolina.

RICHTER, BERTA, and Mrs. HAENGEFASS.—Left Detroit for New York about six years ago. Please write to Johanna Muller, care of this magazine.

SKEEZIX.—Received your letter. Have some news for you. Write to I. R., care of this magazine.

FRASER, JAKE.—Last seen around San Francisco. Went to sea at one time as ship's oddler. Please write to an old shipmate, James Carroll, Seaman's Institute, San Pedro, California.

THOMPSON, HULBERT T.—Would highly appreciate a letter from any of the boys of Battery A, 79th Field Artillery, stationed at Camp Logan, Houston, Texas, in June, 1918, who knew my son. Address J. C. Thompson, P. O. Box 124, Old Town, Florida.

J. C. W.—I cannot cash your insurance unless you sign the papers. Send your address and let us come before school starts. M.

WION, PETER WARREN.—About fifty-six years of age, height five feet six inches. Last heard of at Dalhart, Texas, in 1926. Any information will be appreciated by David Wion, Route A, Box 104, Canton, Oklahoma.

PETERSON, BOB.—I want to hear from you, as it is important. Hubert J. Meyer, 3132 Mack Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

ENH, ESTHER.—Last seen in Ashland, Wisconsin, about eleven years ago. Won't you please write to your niece? Anna Enh, R. F. D. 2, Box 22, Phillips, Wisconsin.

CLEARY, HERBERT.—Last heard from at Montague, Texas. Any information will be gladly received by a lonely sister, Margaret Higley, 302 Breckenridge Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

BABE.—Everything O. K. Am worried about you. Please write. Bart, V. R. Hospital, Palo Alto, California.

BROOKS, DOLLY FAY.—Thirteen years old, light-brown hair, blue eyes, small for age. Placed in Parental Orphan's Home at Anchorage, Kentucky, in April, 1919. Any one knowing anything about this little girl will be doing her uncle a great favor by communicating with him. J. H. Brooks, care of this magazine.

CIEPIEWITZ, JOHN.—"Chippy," please write to an old friend, Isay Kraemer, 2535 Orchard Street, Chicago, Illinois.

HAL.—Please write. My address is the same. Harry.

FRYE, JACK C.—Please write to me at once I have some very important news for you regarding your mother and father, who are ill. Write to O. M. L., care of this magazine.

CLARK, JAMES H.—Left home July 10, 1925. Has very thick, black, curly hair, brown eyes, large mouth, full lips, nose slightly crooked, five foot tall, weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. Has a quick walk. Is a printer by trade. Was in the real-estate business in Florida. His heartbroken wife is anxious for any news. Mrs. J. H. Clark, 21 West Beaver Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

REED, HARVEY.—When last heard from was in the "All Texas Show," at West, Texas. Please write to your old friend, Della Mae Hill, 1205 Dallas Street, Waco, Texas.

ST. JOHN, KENNETH.—Of Ontario. Last heard from at Detroit, Michigan, in 1922. Any information will be appreciated by Carroll St. John, 113 Cass Street, Dayton, Ohio.

BRODES, ELIZABETH.—Was living in Dayton, Ohio, in November, 1921. Please write to C. K., care of this magazine.

LATHROP.—Would like to hear from the Lathrop children, who were left in the Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of Portland, Oregon, in 1896 or 1897. The oldest child is now thirty-six, one girl is thirty-three and the youngest thirty-one. Write to Relative, care of this magazine.

GRAIFF, RUBEN H.—Age twenty-six, about six feet tall, light hair, blue eyes, slender build. Was an upholsterer. Last heard from at Spokane, Washington, in 1925. Any information will be appreciated by his aunt, Mrs. C. T. Thompson, 1383 East Eleventh Avenue, Spokane, Washington.

SMITH, CHARLEY E.—Left Amarillo, Texas, November, 1925. Please write to me or come at once. I am so worried. Marguerite, 130 1/2 Union Street, Plaza Hotel, Pueblo, Colorado.

COPE, C.—Please tell me where you are. I am getting the same as you. L. R. B.

BYBEE, LUCY.—Write to an old friend. Am still on the "Arizona." L. R. B.

HATCHER, CHARLES.—Last heard of at Los Angeles, California, Left San Antonio, Texas, in 1922. Tall, blue eyes, has dimples in either cheek. Please write to your friend, Bernice Stokes, Box 580, Sonora, Texas.

BEA.—A waitress. Believed to be in Texas. Auburn hair, blue eyes, twenty-eight years old. Her old friends in Tulsa would like to hear from her. Address S. B., care of this magazine.

LEMLEY, LAUSIN.—About forty years old. Last heard of in Texas. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Ruby Sanders, Route 7, Box 99, care of Cowgill Store, North Birmingham, Alabama.

PARKS, MAY.—Married name unknown. Have never forgotten you or your friendship. Please write to Bertha Corrin, care of Koster Products Company, Verona, Oregon.

JOE.—Please come home. Jackie and I are all alone. It is very important that you should be here. I love you and want you. Hazel.

PETITE, MILDRED.—Twenty-two years of age. Who lived with a family named Van Meter. If you will write to me I will give you information and an heirloom from your mother and grandmother. W. S., care of this magazine.

ESTHER.—Please write home and give us a better address, to that our mail will reach you. Last heard from you from Boston. Father, Mother, and Ralph.

LYLE, SYLVIA MAUD.—Last heard of at Seattle, Washington. Sister, please let us hear from you. Lulu May Strahan, Box 777, care of Cozy Rooms, Yale, Oklahoma.

OLD PAL.—My letter to Troy was returned. Please write to same address as before. We miss you and want you. A. Edna H.

HEMBREE, BEN, KATE, and BEN, Jr.—Left Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1920. Last heard of at Los Angeles, California. Please write to Mrs. George Dumont, 608 East Gandy Street, Denison, Texas.

INGRAM, CALVIN VANCE.—Thirty-six years old, tall, blue eyes, dark complexion. His old home was near Birmingham, Alabama. Last heard from at Jasper, Alabama. Was a coal miner. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Vinnie Chandler, R. F. D. 2, Box 105, Tunica, Mississippi.

GLIRCHEN, First Lieutenant.—Would like to hear from him and any of the members of Battery A, 12th P. A., Second Division. Floyd H. Austin, 415 1/2 Third Street, Red Wing, Minnesota.

CLEMONS, ALONZO.—Please write to your sister. Have not seen you since I was ten years old. Mother and father are dead. Mrs. Julia Winsor, Box 1030, Thatcher, Arizona.

ZERO, FRANK C.—No one can take your place. Remember the times we had together. Will be waiting. Freddie Palso, 1519 West 71st Street, Los Angeles, California.

REED, JOSEPH E.—I am still in G. R. Please write to me. Everything is O. K. I was wrong. Peg.

FISHER or SMITH, WILLIAM.—Missing since September, 1925. Short, heavy build, blue eyes, auburn hair, fair complexion, twenty-eight years old. Your mother, who has married again, is ill. Please write to her, Mrs. Elizabeth Webber, 915 Hardingway E., Gallion, Ohio.

BYRON, EVERETT.—Forty-four years old, black hair, brown eyes, tall, and thin. Last seen at Springfield, Massachusetts, July 12, 1926. Please come back. All is forgotten. C. Ritter, 37 Grove Street, Springfield, Massachusetts.

WADDELL, FERMAN.—Last heard from at Carthage, Missouri. About twenty years old. Information will be appreciated by Thurman G. Toney, R. R. 5, Pittsburg, Kansas.

BLACK, JOHN Q.—Last heard from ten years ago in the silver mines at Wallace, Idaho. A loving mother and sisters waiting. Please write or come home. Mrs. T. M. Desilver, 711 Poplar Street, Erie, Pennsylvania.

GRIFFITHS, WILLIAM J.—Of Westbrook, Maine. Has been missing twenty-five years. Last heard of at Los Angeles, California. About forty-five years old. Any information will be appreciated by his youngest sister, Mary Griffiths, General Delivery, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania.

LEROY E. R.—Still look and pray for your return. Cannot believe you went of your own accord. Will forgive you if you hurry. Your wife, Etta A.

COD, JOE.—Please communicate with me at once. Shuffling Peg.

F. E.—Please write to me. Deb, General Delivery, Aurora.

HADDOX, THOMAS.—Fifty-eight years old, nearly six feet tall, stoop shouldered, bald headed, florid complexion, reddish hair, heavy eyebrows, and deep-set gray eyes. Blacksmith by trade. Please communicate with Ida Brown, 647 S. Wyoming Street, Butte, Montana.

CHATRAW, FRANK.—Twenty-six years old, blue eyes, brown hair, short. Was last heard from five years ago at San Diego, California. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Helen Laborye, R. F. D. 6, Box 44, Potsdam, New York.

FAVERMAN, MORRIS.—Please send your present address to E. J. Leboff, 50 Fayston Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts.

BLANCHARD, AYLISA.—Have not heard from you in two years. Please write and tell me where you are. Mildred Marie Emmert, 383 Aurora Avenue, Grantwood, New Jersey.

BERT.—We love you and want you to come home. Your wife, Louise.

VENNER, W. E.—Why did you go away. Come back or write. I am so lonely without you. May.

NORRIS, PAUL H.—Was in Atlanta, Georgia, last spring. His present address would be deeply appreciated by his mother, Mrs. F. P. Norris, 1131 Fifield Street, St. Paul, Minnesota.

POWELL, CARRIE.—Who lived at Richmond, Virginia, in 1918. Please communicate with John S. Starke, Box 58, Lynchburg, Virginia.

EASTMAN, ALVIN.—Of Iowa or California. Have important news for you. Please write to your cousin, Mrs. Elhardt, 299 East 53d Street, Los Angeles, California.

MacDONALD, HIRAM A.—About forty-five years old, blind in one eye. Last seen at Los Angeles, California, July, 1925. Please communicate with your family through David B. Sharp, 2321 Newport Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

EASTMAN, REBEL.—Worked with you at Norfolk, Virginia, during the war. Write to your old friend, or come and see him. Harry Joyce, 1441 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

WILLIAMS, WEAVER.—Address in 1923 was Lincoln, Nebraska. Son of R. Williams. Write to William Willis, Medical Department, U. S. Navy, Guam, Mariana Islands.

ANDERSON, JIM M.—Thirty-nine years old, born in Concho County, Texas. Last heard from at Cutter, New Mexico, in 1922. An old mother would be made very happy to hear from her son. Mrs. Annie Anderson, R. D. 3, Box 411, Anaheim, California.

TRAVERSY, ALBERT J.—Of Marble, Minnesota. Your brother Ed's billed Insurance made out to you. Write to your family, Mrs. A. J. Traversy, 431 Garfield Avenue, N. Hibbing, Minnesota.

WESTERBERG, GUNNAR "NICK."—Last heard from at Sioux City, Iowa, about five years ago. Your father and sisters are very anxious to hear from you. Gus Westerberg, R. F. D. 1, Box 50, Westbrook, Maine.

WILLIAMS, LOVETT.—Please write to your R. B. P. pal. Last your address, Lloyd W. Ogburn, Leconte Street, De Funak Springs, Florida.

HERNSTROM, AUGUSTUS.—Came from Sweden about 1885, settling in Missouri. His brother, who came with him, settled in Canada. Please notify V. M. Drake, Box 325, 25 South Street, New York City, New York.

HERNSTROM, ELLIS and AUGUSTA STEINNEK.—Formerly of Minnesota. Have not been heard from since 1903. Please notify V. M. Drake, Box 325, 25 South Street, New York City, New York.

HERNSTROM, TILLIE.—Formerly lived at Butte, Montana. Has not been heard from since 1922. Please communicate with V. M. Drake, Box 325, 25 South Street, New York City, New York.

SPICER, WALTER WILLIAM HENRY.—Born at Deal, Kent, England. Last heard from in Georgia and Florida, twelve years ago. Father inquirer, S. H. Spicer, 231 O'Connor Street, Ottawa, Canada.

GATES, FRANK H.—Was in Oklahoma when last heard of. Is about sixty years old. Please send any information to Nina Mae Gates, Fox Park, Wyoming.

CULVER, GERALD B.—Disappeared from his home, November 6, 1925. Medium height, Auburn hair, blue eyes, fair complexion. Any one knowing him kindly notify his mother, Mrs. Sylvia A. Burchell, 879 Broadway, Schenectady, New York.

PERKETT, RACHAEL PEARL.—Born in Winfield, Kansas, in 1914. Left the following year with her mother, upon the death of her father. Has a half sister, Grace, and a half brother, Earl. Last heard from at Berryville, Arkansas. Any information will be gladly received by her half brother, Earl Leuz, Route 15, Box 108, Mt. Healthy, Cincinnati, Ohio.

DOTTY JANE.—I need you so much. Won't you please come home? Harold, care of this magazine.

WILLIAMS, JAMES.—Fifteen years old. Middle finger on the left hand is off at the first joint. Has been gone three years. Your brother, Robert, is anxious to hear from you. Address Mrs. J. F. Pettit, Sheffield, Alabama.

ROOT, JACK ALFRED.—Age twenty-eight. Left Toronto in 1925. Manager of one of the A. P. T. Company stores in Detroit, Michigan. Mother needs you. Please write. Mrs. H. Root, 193 Lander Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

HERVEY, Mrs. NELLIE.—Formerly lived at Oil City, Louisiana. When last heard of was living at Roswell, New Mexico. Any information would be gratefully received by Mrs. E. Hervey, 1422 Twenty-second Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

ABRAHAM, ROSS R.—Formerly of Waverly, Iowa. Fifty-two years old. Last heard from July 19, 1924, at Craig, Colorado. Any one knowing anything about him please write to A. Woodsmance, 288 East 185th Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

BAIRD, JACK.—Last seen at Denver, Colorado, February 19th. Please write to L. D., Box 285, Connouville, Pennsylvania.

WARD, HOWARD.—Of New Jersey. Was ill in the Walter Reed Hospital in 1922. His own sister is trying to find him. Write to B. S., care of this magazine.

RAINS or SMITH, VIOLA.—Left husband and children in Tacoma, Washington, in 1918. Last heard of in a lumber camp in Oregon, working as a cook. All still love you. Please write. Your son, Ben. R. F. D. 5, Stewartstown, Pennsylvania.

ALBERTSON, Mrs. V. A.—Would like to hear from any of her children who were last heard of in California. Your cousin would love to hear from you. Mrs. Maud Lewallen, R. F. D., Box 283, St. Petersburg, Florida.

MUHLBRADT, WILLIAM.—German birth. Speaks Norwegian and English. About thirty-five years old, medium height and weight, light complexion. Last heard from around Jamestown or Valley City, North Dakota. His brother, Herman, lives near his old homestead. His mother in Norway is anxious to hear from him. Address Mrs. H. P. Muhlbradt, Raub, North Dakota.

THOMPSON, JUSTIN.—Last heard of at Hannibal, Missouri. Please come to baby and me. We need you. Ollie Thompson, 1119 Jackson Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

RILEY, R. D.—Was in Vancouver, B. C., Canada, when last heard of, several months ago. It is quite urgent that he be written to his sister, Carrie Simpson, 12 Somerset Road, Acton Green, Cheshire, London, England.

KIGER, LOUISE.—Left Etupes, France, in 1888, and came to New York City, New York. Married name unknown. Fifty-three years old. Please write to A. A. Kiger, care of Tracy Brothers Company, Box 1911, Watertown, Connecticut.

DICKIE.—My address is 59 Wall Street, Auburn, New York. For further information write to M. A. Mitchell, 19 Lodge Street, Albany, New York. Your wife, Viola.

MARTIN, Mrs. EBA.—Sisters Ella, Flenno, and Fannie would like to hear from you. Please write to your niece, daughter of Ella Hays, Mrs. Minnie Kiar, 287 South Third Street, West Kelso, Washington.

SUBLETT, CEPHEUS and EMMA.—Please let us hear from you. Your sister, Beatrice, and two brothers, Thomas and Golden, are together. Address Lewis J. Sublett, Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D. C.

BELCHER, EZRA.—Age fifty-eight, tall, light complexion, gray eyes. Has right leg off at thigh. Last heard of at Washington, D. C. His only sister would like to locate him. Address Mrs. Edie Ficklin, General Delivery, Petersburg, Indiana.

WILHITE or LEWIS, GEORGIE, Mrs. SARAH LEWIS, and SUSIE and ROBERT PVLE.—Last heard of thirty-two years ago, when they left Emporia, Kansas, for either Illinois or New York. Please help me find them. An anxious father, A. A. Wilhite, 813 Armstrong Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas.

WILLIAMS, LEE A. B., and daughter, RUBY.—Please write to your old friend, Dan? you remember La Bolas and San Antonio? Honser S. Stout, 1114 North Cepta Street, El Paso, Texas.

LOVELL, P. L.—About seventy-five years old. Last heard of at Los Angeles, California, in May, 1925. Please write to your children, B. M. and O. L., 831 East 42d Place, Chicago, Illinois.

HEDGE, ROBERT ROLAND.—Last heard of in 1920 at New Orleans. Age twenty-five, black hair, fair complexion, over six feet tall. Served in the 15th Division, Battery C, Coast Artillery. Please communicate with Ed Hedge, Eagle Hotel, 4½ North Twenty-first Street, Paris, Texas.

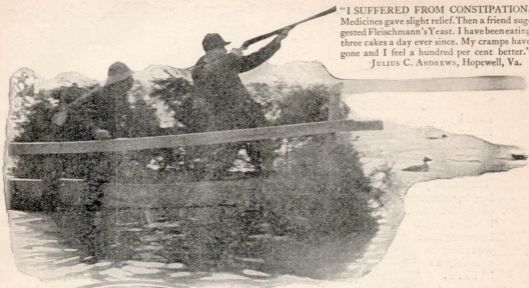
COTTEH, M. B.—Tall, slender, straight brown hair, heavy eyebrows, brown eyes, limps in right leg. Left Claburne, Texas, January, 1926. Any news will be greatly appreciated by his anxious mother. Mrs. J. W. Cotten, 691 Spence Street, Amarillo, Texas.

PACE, LUCILLE.—Of Memphis, Tennessee. Her mother keeps a hotel there. Please write to Bab Fernin, 6389 Trumbull Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

DANIELS, ABRAHAM, WILLIAM, JOHN, and E. N.—Thirty-three, thirty-nine, fifty, and forty-eight years old, respectively. Formerly of Black Hills, South Dakota. Would like to hear from my brothers. Y. H. Daniels, 495 E. Granite Street, Butte, Montana.



"I SUFFERED FROM CONSTIPATION. Medicines gave slight relief. Then a friend suggested Fleischmann's Yeast. I have been eating three cakes a day ever since. My cramps have gone and I feel a hundred per cent better."
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They conquered their ills—
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NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active, daily releasing new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day, one before each meal: on crackers, in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, in small pieces. *For constipation dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before meals and at bedtime. Dangerous habit-forming cathartics will gradually become unnecessary.* All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days.

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-34, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



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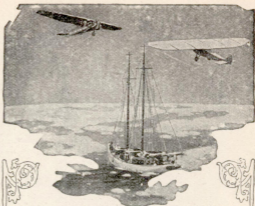
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They flew over the North Pole with Byrd

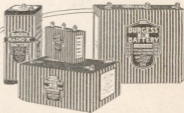
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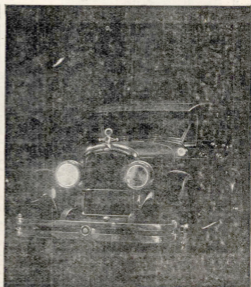
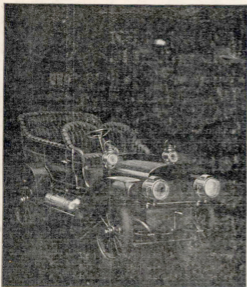


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