

"Once a reader, always a reader"

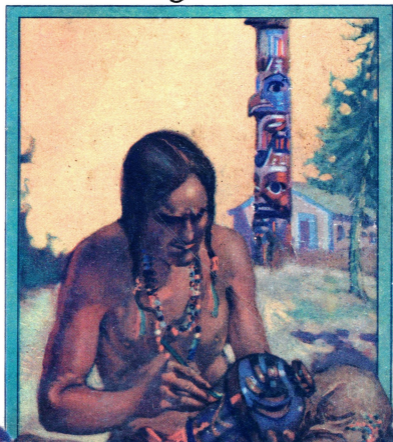
AUSTIN HALL & ADOLPH BENNAUER & ROBERT J. HORTON
GEORGE WASHINGTON OGDEN & RAY HUMPHREYS AND OTHERS

Every Week

MAY 28, 1927
15 CENTS

Western Story

Magazine



STREET & SMITH
PUBLICATION



BIG, CLEAN STORIES OF OUTDOOR LIFE



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WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

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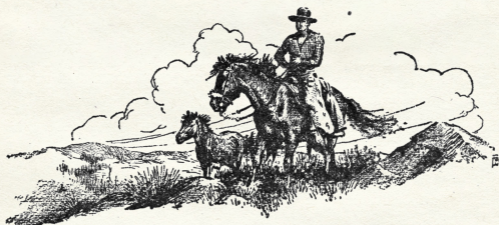
Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXIX

MAY 28, 1927

No. 5



Rolling Stone

by Austin Hall

Author of "Slaves to the Wolf," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THAT DULCET VOICE.

THE proprietor of the Circle Y picked up the stack of letters, spread them out on the dilapidated table, and stuffed his pipe preparatory to their perusal; all the while looking through the window at the big barns, corrals, and the blue ridge of mountains that hedged the horizon. Under the lea of the first barn, three Mexicans were lounging, rolling cigarettes and blowing lazy rings toward the sun-

burned sky. Old Tad Yorgan, master of the Circle Y, and owner of more cattle than he could ever hope to count, had selected a letter and ripped open the end when he stopped to take another look at the indolent cow hands. His thoughts slipped through his teeth.

"Durn Mex!" he muttered. "It's got to be a heck of a note when old Tad Yorgan has to take on scum like that. And right when I've got to make that drive down to the Butterfield Ranch. Six thousand head to be moved and not a white man on the job! I mean men! There's that foreman, to be sure; but what's one foreman to

a bunch of greasers. "Tad!" looking at himself in the broken piece of looking glass that was nailed to the wall. "Tad Yorgan, I'd hate to be you if this had happened in the good old days! You! Hiring Mexicans! Oh, well! It ain't my fault and——"

But Old Tad was thinking. It was difficult for him to acquit himself of what he regarded almost as a cardinal sin. He shoved the pipe into his be-whiskered mouth and his gray eyes looked out at a figure—two figures—trotting in from the foothills; noting absently that one was a horseman and the other either a colt or a very small mount. No doubt, another Mex! The world was full of Mexicans, anyhow. Come to think of it, he did have two white men on the job; one was the foreman and the other was the camp cook—but the latter was a roaring, kicking, fuming Swede, and so he didn't count. Things had come to a pretty pass when there were so many newfangled contraptions to beckon the top hands away from the range. The buckaroos had given way to the chauffeurs. The old men had died, and the young ones had departed for the city.

First one, and then the others had followed. Three of Tad's men had stuck, but two of these had walked in and spoken their little piece when the old man began taking on Mexicans. But that had not been Old Tad's fault; he had gone to town looking for hands and had there encountered Colofiel Barr of the Bar M, Pete Puchu, and several other cattlemen on the same mission; each and every one, much against his will, hiring the Mexicans. And so the old man followed suit. Top help of white persuasion was lacking; there were too many other things to do, and forty per was only forty bucks. Old Tad had ridden home with a swarthy crowd of Savvy Spaniols behind him. And that had settled the

three whites right then and there. Tex Gilbert had marched in with his saddle, tossed it at the old man's feet, and asked for his check.

"Danged if I'll work with a Mex," he announced. "I ain't got down to that. Me? I'm a Texan, and I'm strong on color. I ain't pulled up the line yet, and I ain't a-going to. Besides, them forty berries at present prices ain't enough to buy cigarettes, so I'm making you a present of the saddle because where I'm a-goin', I'll be ridin' different. So long and thanks!"

And right behind him "Biff" Hebrun went through a like ceremony, albeit he almost shed a tear or two at parting with Old Tad. The old man didn't blame them a bit, and he kept the saddles pending the inevitable day when they would get the itching for moving horseflesh. The foreman Johnny Rouen held on; but the very next week he had a run-in with the Swede cook over a piece of steak and was chased by the knife-swinging Viking straight into old Tad's arms.

"Mine, too," exclaimed the ranch boss. "I ain't a-going to boss no Mex, an' I ain't a-going to eat no more Swede steaks. Henceforth I'll stick along the Canadian border where skins are white."

That sent Old Tad into town again where, fortunately, he had discovered a white man who could speak Spanish, who understood greasers and how to run them. The fellow's credentials—and it was the first time that Tad had ever seen such things in writing—were good, and the bargain was made. Just the same, had it not been for the circumstances, the old man would not have hired him; the man's name was Scammon—Jim Scammon to be correct—and he had a heavy leering eye that would have frozen a rattlesnake. He was a great hooknosed bully, with a mop of red hair, and two guns—hung in front—for emergency and intima-

tion. But the old man had no choice. Scammon knew Mex, and that was the qualification. Right now the big fellow was lounging around the corner of the barn with his thumb in the top of his belt; evidently he was saying something funny, for the Mexicans were laughing.

Tad Yorgan heaved a sigh and cast a second look at the figure riding in from the hills; the man was close now, and he could make out plainly that he was not a Mexican; he was riding along with the easy lope of the born cowboy, and Tad would have sworn that he was white. Oh, well! He reached for the letter again, held it up to the light, and read the superscription in the corner:

CHARLEY YORGAN,
Bar X Ranch,
Chickadee, New Mexico.

That would be his brother. Charley was even richer than himself, and he wrote oftener. Old Tad plucked the contents out of the envelope and began reading:

DEAR TAD: Been a long time since I wrote, but it's night, and so I thought I'd give you a line. Things have been moving pretty hot for us here in the last few weeks, and we've been having our time with the border rustlers. They's a bunch of Mex a-workin' around here that's got anything beat since "Billy the Kid." They're horse thieves, this bunch, and they've been cleaning us out. Got ninety head, just past breaking, from me. Slickest job you would want to see. I been a-riding, I'll tell you. The Mex have got a renegade white for a leader, and he's about the worst ever. Killer. Three cow-punchers dead in the last six weeks—that's his record recently. Lightning on the draw—can't see him move they say—and he kills every time. He comes along somewheres, hides out, and waits his time; and whenever he and his Mex make a haul they run over the border. The next time he shows up at a different place. We'd had our turn around here and I guess he won't come back; but we ain't through with him yet. We've sent up to Colorado—

A shout from the barn drew Old

Tad's attention away from the letter; when he looked out, he beheld the Mexicans rushing around, and two of them swinging on their horses. The strange rider had arrived and was sitting in his saddle directly in front of the burly foreman, who, with one arm waving, was motioning toward the road. Beside the newcomer, was a Shetland pony, blue, with a silver mane and tail, and the prettiest little head that ever adorned horseflesh. The little horse's ears were pricked up and she was crowded over against the other mount—a beautiful black stallion of distinctly wild ancestry. The foreman's voice drifted in through the open window.

"Well, you ain't a-going to work here. Savvy? And you ain't a-going to hang around here neither. We don't need no help and we ain't hiring."

"Kind of a nice place though," came the answer from the man on horseback. "And I sure do like it. Just the kind of a ranch that I was aiming on workin' on. And I'm a-thinking I'll stick. Don't you think, pardner, that you made a mistake just now when——"

It was the kind of a voice to attract attention, so soft and dulcet, and yet of chilly, menacing persuasion. Old Tad opened the door and stepped out; he knew what could be behind a voice like that.

"I ain't never made a mistake, yet, kid," Scammon was saying. "And when I say 'Go!' I mean it. I'm giving you just twenty seconds to get a-going."

Old Tad Yorgan missed the next because he was crossing the yard; but when he turned around the corner of the barn, he got the end. The young man, almost a kid, was leaning slightly forward and the big foreman was holding a hesitant hand—all the setting of an averted gun play! The young man was speaking in the same cold voice.

"No, you wouldn't, Scammon," he said, his lips barely moving. "You wouldn't shoot me just for asking for a job, would you? But you can try it if you wish, because I'm just kid enough to shoot with you. You and me now—seems to me, Mister Scammon?"

There was a peculiar suggestive undertone in the young man's trailing voice; there was a twinkle in his eyes, a light that Old Tad Yorgan had known before. Tad had not expected his foreman to back down, but that was just what he had done—backed down cold. The two Mexicans on horseback had evidently been looking for a little fun; and they had been cheated. The significance of the scene was evident to the cattleman—the stranger on horseback, the pony beside him, the bullying foreman suddenly intimidated, and the expectant Mexicans! The young man was of slight frame—not more than one hundred and forty pounds; he had curly brown hair, and a slight pug to an otherwise perfect nose. But there was something to that pug and the blue eyes behind it that carried an awful conviction.

"Well," he was saying calmly, "then we'll let it go at that. I'm hired, ain't I, Mister Scammon? Ain't that what I heard these Mex call you? It looks to me like you'd need a white man or two, and I'm aiming to work."

The foreman blinked; but just then the youth reached for his rope and began working it loose, letting it out with the easy coil of a snake. Every man present watched the movement with a bewildered wonderment, until they beheld what he was about. One of the ranch dogs had pursued a cat out of the barn, cornered it, and then allowed it to get away; from the look of things, he was getting ready for eventualities. It was just a minute from a challenged gun-fest to a test of play; the youth gave one touch to

the stallion's flanks and raced after the dog and cat. The fleeing animals had broken loose and were running toward the man on horseback, the cat not two leaps ahead and the dog ready to snap his teeth, when, like a thing of life, the rope ran along the ground, raced along with a small loop, and enveloped the runaway tabby! A flash and a jerk; a black mass of fur snapped into the air, scratching and fighting. The young man held the poor captive out at arm's length to keep her from scratching the horse, and this time rode back straight to Tad Yorgan. It was a feat of roping that even the Mexican could approve, and they were free to do it; but not Scammon; he was still stubborn and set, his hand kept itching for his gun. Old Tad took the proffered rope, let it down, and loosened the frightened cat.

"That's roping, my son," he exclaimed. "Most of the fellows who come here begin by tellin' what they kin do; but you go ahead and do it. I ain't a-askin' you whether you're a cow hand. I don't have to. You're hired! Just put up your horse, and if that's your pony you kin put her up, too. You kin go over to the cook house and tell that protesting Swede to set you out something to eat. Scammon, from now on this young man is working for the Circle Y. You understand!"

But Scammon said not a word; he merely bit off a huge hunk of tobacco, while his red evil eyes glared a look that betokened trouble in the future.

Old Tad Yorgan returned to his dingy ranch office and picked up the letter to finish reading it, but when he looked for the second page it was gone. Then, to make sure, he read the first page over again.

"Yep," he spoke to himself. "They're having trouble with the Mex back there. And just when I've gone to hiring them myself! Funny, now.

what became of that other sheet. Seems to me I saw one," he held up the envelope and glanced inside. "Just when that first page gets interesting, I lose the next one and miss the rest of the news. Durn Mex! And I don't like that fellow Scammon neither! Anybody who is willing to boss men of another color ain't much better than a breed. 'When you see a mixed ranch,' I used to say, 'look out for it.' They may be all right by themselves, but greasers sure don't mix with gringos. So that makes me no better than they are! That young fellow, now, if he is anything like I used to be, ain't got much respect for Tad Yorgan. But I've sure got to move that herd. Ain't my fault, and——"

He stopped to look around the room, turned the table away from the wall and mused over a year-old stack of papers that had fallen down behind it; but the search was of no avail. After he had hunted over every conceivable place, he thought of the barnyard; perhaps he had had it in his hand when he crossed over; so he stepped out and carefully traced his way toward the corrals. As he turned the corner of the barn, he met the burly foreman coming out with a saddle on his arm; the man stopped inquisitively.

"Looking for something, Tad?"

"Yes. I'm looking for a page to a letter. It was from my brother and I thought I had it in my hand when I come out. Did you see me with it?"

"No, I didn't. I was behind the barn there. Besides, I was too busy with that fresh kid. And say, now that I've got you alone, I want to say something. You hired that kid, and I don't mind it this time because there's a million acres of easy digging around here. I ain't sayin' nothin', but the first move he makes toward his gun, you can start tuh work with a pick and shovel. Get me?"

Tad Yorgan had been thinking about

the lost page; but the words of his foreman made him stop. Over in the corral at one of the feed racks the pony and the stallion were standing side by side; the pony with a wisp of hay protruding from her little mouth, and her ears pointed forward as if listening to the conversation. The old man was wondering how the young stranger had picked her up; also he began thinking about the dulcet voice—the sort of a voice that he had heard but two or three times in his whole life, and each time with fatal results. The scene behind the barn flashed back—the man Scammon backing down, and the other doing the talking.

"Suit yourself, Scammon," said Tad Yorgan. "Suit yourself. You know the law of the range. Only it's got to be in self-defense. Understand! If he draws and you beat him to it, that's your lookout. Only I'd hate to take a chance at provoking him. You heard him speak? Well! That kid's got the voice of a killer. Calm as the dead sea when they're left alone, but a hurricane when anything starts. I hired him because—well, I thought you'd like to have another white man to help out. But it's danged funny what become of that letter. It ain't in the office an' it ain't out here. Mebbe the wind blew it away."

"Mebbe it did, Charley." Scammon reached into the slide lock on the gate and drew it back, at the same time swinging the saddle back to his shoulder. "Mebbe the wind did blow it. At least I ain't seen no letter; but I'll keep a look out for it. And I'll tell the Mex; if one of them happens to pick it up, I'll send it in."

Tad was in a quandary; and perhaps that was the reason why he was halfway across the plaza before he caught the import of the man's words; but it came to him suddenly that the fellow had called him Charley—Charley Yorgan. Tad turned abruptly and

went back to the corral gate. Scammon was fixing a strap.

"See here, Scammon," he asked succinctly. "Didn't you call me Charley just now?"

"Call you Charley?"

"Just that. You called me Charley Yorgan. If you did, you must have known some one by that name. Either that, or you picked up that letter. I ain't a-saying you did, but it seems to me——"

"You're dreaming, Mister Yorgan." The man bit off another chew of tobacco, as calm as could be. "You're dreaming! You must have come out here looking for that letter and had that name in your head. It kept ringing and you must have thought I said it. I called you Tad. Why should I call you Charley?"

Why? thought Tad Yorgan.

Scammon was looking straight at him; but his bloodshot eyes had a snaky glare that belied interpretation. Tad Yorgan had his own thoughts. He was about to speak when, all of a sudden, he turned in his tracks and stamped heavily back to the office.

"Gad!" He spoke softly to himself as he sat in his chair. "I would have sworn it! But it may be that I've just let myself get too deep in my suspicions."

For a long while he sat alone, quietly thinking. Then he made his way in the direction of the cook house.

Over in the Swede's kitchen he found the young man surmounting a six-layer pile of steaming flapjacks with a flow of sirup dripping over the edges. Evidently the method by which he had acquired his job had not impaired his appetite. Yorgan shut the door behind him; and forthwith began to question his new assistant, who, nothing loath, answered what he could.

"My name is Stone," said the youth. "Rollo Stone. Only you won't call me Rollo. That was my fond mother's

fault. God bless her! She was born in Boston, you see, and just couldn't help it. But I was raised in Montana where a name like that doesn't go. So when I got old enough to shoot, I switched it to Rolling. The Rolling Stone. And I been rolling ever since. You've heard——"

He stopped suddenly while his marvelously fast eye wandered over the old man's form from head to foot—an inquisitive, calculating look that might have been expecting recognition; but Yorgan was watching the Swede cook and so the intensity of the scrutiny was lost. Apparently satisfied, the Rolling Stone turned back to his pancakes. Old Tad Yorgan went on talking.

"All right. We'll call you Rolling. It's a queer name, and it's appropriate. You look it. I just come in to ask a few questions and get a line on you. After that, you can go to work. Understand, I don't want to know about your personal affairs nor history; that all belongs to you. But I'm dead curious on one point. You see at the present moment this is a mixed ranch; and I've gone to hiring Mex. How does it come that you, a white man, want to work here?"

"Mebbe it's the Mex," came the answer. "I just rode in, that's all. Saw the place and liked it. Seen it was a Mex layout and a white boss. Looked like they'd be some excitement. I've never seen it fail—and so I hit Scammon for a job."

He speared a hot cake.

"How'd you know his name was Scammon?"

"I heard one of the Mex call him that."

"Oh! Then you never saw him before?"

"Nope," poising a cake on the end of his fork. "First time I ever laid eyes on him. I gues he didn't take to me, neither. Most likely he never will.

But I should worry. That will make it interesting for both of us. I wouldn't give a hang for a job that promised nothing but work. You see, I was just riding over the Jacinto Mountains, easylike, wondering where I was going to hang my hat and not giving a dang neither. That's how I come to run in with that pony you saw me with. Funny, too! You see I've heard about her over on the Wagon-wheel side of the range. Some one was telling me about a pony up around the summit, with a reputation as long as your arm. Said that she'd belonged to some nester's kid and had been turned loose on the range when they left the country; but not until she'd been taught a whole bag of tricks. Regular little horse thief. And you know how any horse will go to a Shetland pony—most likely because it looks like a colt.

"Well, this is a little off my story, but it will tell you how I come in. And I'm sure death on horse thieves. The other night I was camped up there and that pony came in just like they said she would and tried her best to steal my mount. Only I fooled her. Got her up close and coaxed her. Then, durned if she didn't want to shake hands. Yes, sir, she did. And I just happened to have some candy that I'd bought over in Wagonwheel, and I let her have it. Ain't nothin' like candy to a Shetland if you want to make a friend. She and me had more fun that night than a couple of moonlight jack rabbits. Yes, sir, we did. And she ain't never left me since. She knows I like horses, and mebbe she thinks I steal them to boot. And that stallion of mine and her is like Romeo and Juliet. I started out next morning and let her lead the way. She brought me here. That's all there is to it. I had a purpose, I'll admit, but it wasn't definite until I saw your foreman and them Mex. That made a difference.

Well, you know the rest of it. When I hit him for a job, that foreman of yours tried to run me off."

Another pancake.

"You mean that he started to pull a gun on you and you bluffed him out," Tad Yorgan corrected.

"Mebbe."

"No, it wasn't mebbe neither," answered the old man. "Because I seen it. I ain't lived all these years in the gun-toting West for nothing. I seen him move, and I heard you speaking. You've got a voice that I've heard just about three times in my life. When you hear it, it's as clear as a church bell—it's sweet and tender and cold—coaxinglike—and it means just what it says. You've got the voice of righteous killing, if you know what I mean. You're a killer, and so is Scammon. But I know you're honest, and that's why I hired you. Listen."

And with that Tad Yorgan went on to relate just how he had come to have the Mexicans and Scammon on the ranch. Likewise he explained about the letter from his brother.

"And that's the funny part of it," he went on. "You see, when Charley wrote to me about them Mex rustlers and that white leader, he roused my suspicions, because that's just the kind of a layout I've got right here. Only we're a danged long ways from New Mexico, and it ain't a chance in a thousand that it's the same crowd. Then you come along and I seen that fellow make a pass for his gun. So I hired you—because you're white and I may need you around. After that I went back to the office to finish reading brother Charley's letter. But I couldn't find the rest of it. There was just that first page on the table. I must have lost the other page while I was crossing the barnyard, or else it got caught in the wind and was blown away. I've hunted for it high and low. Well, it might not have amounted to anything,

of course. But that first page is what's got me to guessing. And I don't like Mex."

The Rolling Stone had finished his sheaf of hot cakes; he was making a cigarette; he snapped a match head with his thumb-nail and held it up. The old man liked his nonchalant attitude.

"What I want," he went on, "is this. I may be heading straight into trouble, and I've got six thousand head of stock to move down to Butterfield. That's one hundred and eighty miles. These fellows are going to drive that herd, and I want you to go along. But first I want you to look them over in your capacity as a cow hand. If they make the least trouble, or if you think they're a bad outfit, let me know. Course, they're Mexicans and you've got to make allowances. I don't want any gun play, and I don't want any dead men. If they're the wrong kind, I'll get the sheriff and run out every last one of them. If we have to, you and me can move that herd alone. Only I can't ride like I used to, and I don't aim to go along except in an emergency."

The Rolling Stone nodded.

"That would be some job," he answered. "Just a little bit too much for two men to handle, however good they might be. Besides, I don't see anything to get stirred up over. Them Mex is only Mex—that's all. And Scammon only looks bad. Don't worry. Him an' me will be good friends inside of no time. But I'll watch them, just the same. And you can leave it to me to turn in a report."

"That's fine," said Old Tad, standing up. "And I'll feel better with a real white man on the job. And remember—if anything looks crooked, don't be afraid to tell me."

The Rolling Stone, left alone, smiled in his quiet way; a smile that barely affected his lips and appeared more in

his eyes than anywhere else; all the while puffing away contentedly at a cigarette, while the old man stamped back to the office. The big Swede cook came in to clear the table, his greasy apron tied up almost to his chin and his great blond head bobbing. When he had the plates in the crook of his arm, he turned around.

"You bane like dem flapjack?" he asked in an almost belligerent tone. "How you like dem cake?"

"Fine, Ole," answered the "rolling one." "They're just the kind to fill up your innerds. Quality was good, and, best of all, they warn't lacking on quantity. I'm the kid for both. You're a cook of sorts, Ole. I've seen all kinds. I ain't got a kick in the world. Only compliments."

The Swede beamed.

"You bane got yob' on dis ranch, eh?"

"I got something, Ole," answered the other. "I don't know what you'd call it. Mebbe that's it."

"Dot's fine, eh?" Ole came over to the cowboy, tapping his knuckles on the pine table. "Waal, ay bane yust goin' to tell you dot Ole's cook on dis ranch. Ole don' want any faller wot tinks he's hulluva fine cook. You bane like dot pancake, eh? Waal, it bane good for you, if you like everything else wot Ole cooks."

"In other words," said the roaming cowboy, "you want me to stay out of your kitchen and mind my own dang business. Well, the way I get it, that's nothin' but a good cook's friendly advice. Suits me to a calf's tail. Tell you what I'll do, Ole. I got a bargain to make."

"Ya?"

"Yes. And it's just this. You see, Ole, outside of the old man, you and me is the only honest-to-goodness hombres in this outfit. But we don't want to worry old Tad about it a bit, because he's got troubles enough as it is.

Understand? Well, it just happens that I'm here for a little excitement; and them Mex and that foreman don't like me at all. You get me, of course? Well, they might be something happen any minute. Only I don't want you to tell the old man. If he asks you, just let him think that me and them has fallen head over heels in love. So if trouble goes to popping and the lid breaks off the roof, it ain't nothin' but our friendly manifestations. How about it?"

"Ya," answered the Swede with an understanding grin. Ole understands. Dot's a good bargain. But I'm tanking she's tam beeg lie. Dot Mex an' dot Scammon ain't no goot feller. Better look out, you no get killed."

CHAPTER II.

SWEET AND LOW.

FOR all his small stature, the Rolling Stone was possessed of remarkable composure; his step was easy and assured, his smile lingering, and his blue eyes always alert. His two guns hung in front, handles worn smooth, ready for any emergency. He had the gait of the habitual rider. The Mexicans in the barnyard had a respect—either having been warned, or it may have been from instinct—for his evident talent for self-defense. Two of them hung by the corrals watching as he made his way to the feed rack where the pony and the big black were filling up on Tad Yorgan's hay. To all appearances, the Rolling Stone did not see them; yet neither of the men was ready to take a chance. But there was something in the air, nevertheless. The big foreman had caught up his mount and was riding toward the gates. Over in a side corral, a dozen horses, strangely excited, were leaning over the fence to get as close as possible to the interesting Shetland. Rolling Stone knew that they would stay there, and

that henceforth nothing would attract their attention from the prized little piece of horseflesh. Scammon galloped over to the feed rack and pulled up. Rolling Stone was apparently stroking the pony's mane—but only apparently. And Scammon knew it. One move, and the air would have been blazing fire. Both men understood that perfectly.

"Well?" said the foreman.

"Well!" answered the other.

There was no one in sight; only the wide stretch of the ranch beyond the corrals, and the blue outline of the distant mountains. The words themselves might have been insignificant to anybody else; but their respective accents meant almost everything.

"I see you got the job," said Scammon.

"Looks like it."

The Rolling Stone was standing with his hands at his sides, biting his lower lip, his eyes half shut. His voice was calm, cold, pregnant. Scammon's eyes were red as he leered down from his horse. Their short words were like a challenge given and taken. Finally:

"You know who I am, don't you?" asked the foreman.

"Never saw you in my life until an hour ago."

"You're from New Mexico!"

"I rode through it, if that's what you mean. Yes."

"And you're the Rolling Stone. And I'm Jim Scammon. And they ain't a heck of a lot of room for us in the same country," said the other succinctly.

"Mebbe them's your sentiments," said the newcomer. "And they may be true. But first I want to see where you're leading to. What next?"

"Just this." Scammon's voice was cold and menacing. "You've followed me out, and you're aiming to let Tad Yorgan in on everything. You're a-going to squeal."

"Is that so?" queried Stone. "Well, I ain't never squealed yet, and I ain't going to. So let yourself easy on that."

"You're after a thousand dollars—blood money."

"More than that," calmly. "That's merely the price of squealing. I ain't never took nothin' but top price yet. Do you get me?"

A long silence followed, during which both men did some heavy thinking. Scammon finally spoke:

"Coming from you, Rolling, I'd call that a compliment. But it's kinda playing with sudden death, don't you think? You couldn't shoot it out with me in a million years. I got more nicks on the butt of my gun than you can count."

"And I ain't got none," answered the Rolling Stone without batting an eye. "The handle of my shooting iron ain't big enough. When I kill a man, I pull a hair out of my head. That's the only way I can keep myself in markers."

Scammon laughed; whatever the measure of his villany, he had the leaven of humor.

"Well," he went on, after a moment's thought. "You've got something on your side, anyway. You've got the name of being a square shooter, Rolling, as far as your word goes. Every rustler from the Hole in the Wall to Chihuahua gives you credit for that."

The Rolling Stone pulled out his tobacco and papers and began calmly to roll a smoke. But at no time was his hand distant from his shooting irons. Scammon followed suit with a smoke of his own. The truce was mutual while they lit up.

"Yep," said the Rolling Stone when he had finished the first puff. "I'm a square shooter. And I'm a good shooter, too. I ain't never missed yet."

Again Scammon laughed.

"So it's top price you're after, eh? And I got your word that they won't be

no squealin'. That goes with me Rolling, any time. If you think you can pull down the big money—go to it! Only, I warn you, I'll kill you when the time comes."

The Rolling one nodded. From the distance, one would have thought from their attitude, as they smoked and talked, that they were the best of friends.

"That's all in a lifetime," answered Stone. "I expect to get it some day; but not this time. You know my business."

"I sure do. But we're making a bargain. The way I get it, I'm a-going to move that herd, and you're not a-going to stop me."

"Exactly. And I'm a-going along with that same herd. That's just the way I've worked it out. You and me. The best man wins."

Scammon laughed softly.

"We're certainly making a quick bargain; something I didn't expect. It goes with me, Rolling. Only——"

"Only what?"

"I ain't a-going to be responsible for accidents."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning the Mexicans. You know what they are. As far as I'm concerned, they won't be no shootin' until we get down to ourselves. Then it will be a white man's job. But until then, you got to protect yourself in the clinches. That's all."

And with that Jim Scammon rode to the corral gate, swung it open from horseback, and rode off with his Mexicans toward the foothills. The Rolling Stone did not expect to work until the next day. So, when the other was gone, he hunted up a currycomb and proceeded to give his horse the finer touches of a scratch bath. After that he turned his attention to the pony, rubbing her upon the itchy part above the tail, and winning her affections for evermore. Scammon and his men

came in about sundown; all went peaceably until it was time for bed. And then the Rolling Stone fell into the first one of the clinches.

One of the Mexicans, José Mendoza by name or alias, was cleaning his gun. The Rolling Stone was apparently taking off a boot. The other men were sitting around on their bunks, yawning. Then—

Somehow the gun in Mendoza's hand happened to get twisted over in the white man's direction, and went off. But at the same time, or immediately previous, two streaks of fire belched from the vicinity of Rolling Stone's belt. The frightened Mexican went over backward, his gun shot into the air. Screams. Men rolling out of their bunks. Silence. The Rolling Stone was calmly pulling on his boot. The door opened and in came Scammon, one eye shut and his tongue in his cheek. A glance quickly told the story. The Rolling Stone was smiling.

"Confound you, José!" shouted Scammon. "You been playin' with your gun again? Haven't I told you enough? One of these days you'll kill somebody accidental."

"Yeah," said the Rolling Stone, yawning. "I guess you're right. He's sure powerful careless. But I'm a-thinking I'll sleep outside. I got a funny habit when I sleep under the full moon. The moon keeps one of my eyes open. And I might need that eye."

Next morning Tad Yorgan cornered his newest hand and began to ask questions. The Rolling Stone merely shrugged his shoulders.

"You're just borrowing trouble, Tad," he answered. "That's the tamest bunch of Mexicans that I ever run up against. I told you I'd win them over, and I did. Why, say, they ain't a greaser in the outfit that won't eat out of my hand! I hoped I was in

for something; but I guess it's a disappointment. That's the way it always turns out. Now you just take it easy and forget your worries. And that man Scammon? I thought yesterday that I'd have some fun with him. And how did it turn out? Same way. We had a friendly talk yesterday afternoon, and that settled it. But I told you that I'd help drive that herd and I will. Just the same, as soon as it's done, I'm a-going to hit for a job where there's some excitement."

Old Tad Yorgan was glad of that, although he hated to lose a good hand; and he received still more encouragement when he talked to the Swede. He said something about hearing a shot.

"Sure tang," said Ole. "You hear shot. One of dem Mex he practice shoot outside of bunk house. Dat's all. Dot feller w'at you hire bane fine leetle cowboy. An' all dem Mex, he bane fall in love wid heem. Ole never see like. Yust one night—an' dey all love heem. Dat boy drive dat herd an' no meestake."

But still Tad Yorgan did not know; he scratched his gray head.

"Dog-gone!" he said to himself. "It's the funniest layout that I ever did see. But I'm up against it for help, and I can't do anything else. I hired that bunch of Mex; and I'd a sworn next day that they was a bunch of crooks. And Scammon was worse yet. And when that boy rode in with that Shetland pony, it looked like a piece of sudden death. And now they're all peaceable like a flock of turtle-doves. It sure does beat me. Oh, well, mebbe I'm getting old! Just the same, if I could find the rest of that letter, I'd feel a whole lot more satisfied. I just can't understand what become of that there page."

On the second day—the first day's labor for the newcomer—Scammon picked out one of the Mexicans, a wiry little rat named Alvarado, and the Roll-

ing Stone to work the draws of a long canyon that ran into the valley.

"There's a bunch of yearlings up there," he explained, "that we're going to take with the herd. You take Alvarado. I don't think I have to tell either of you what to do, as you both know your business. We're aiming to start south in four days. To-morrow we'll get the horse herd. They're up in Five Finger Meadows. That'll be a harder job. But I think you can manage it."

"Never missed a horse in my life," answered the Rolling Stone, picking up his saddle. "I'm a regular old horse thief when it comes to picking out a remuda. There's only one person in the world who can match my hand at that game."

Jim Scammon laughed softly; but when the Rolling Stone came out of the corral with the pony running beside his stirrup, he called out:

"What's the idea of that pony? You aiming to keep her with you wherever you go?"

"Nothing but——" called the cowboy, with his hand on her slick little nose. "She and me, and my horse Bill here, has got to be pals. And she's another horse thief. Good one, too, Scammon. She's got it on some of us humans, cards and spades. I'm putting her through a course of tramping. Mebbe we'll go into pardnership—her and me—steal a herd, and beat it across into Mexico."

But if he was trying to irritate the foreman, the effect was not manifest in the other's countenance. Scammon's bloodshot eyes narrowed, belying interpretation.

"Yeah? Well, you want to be careful of my Mexicans. And you better look out for accidents. I don't want anything to befall you until we get down toward Butterfield. I'm aiming on doing a little killing myself."

But there was no accident that day.

They were not two miles out when the Rolling Stone sidled up to his swarthy pardner.

"Better give me them guns of yours, Alvarado," he suggested softly. "They're dangerous things for a small man like you to be packing."

The little Mexican turned green, his lips quivered, and his hands stirred.

"Oh, never mind the rest!" The Rolling Stone went on soothingly. "You don't have to hand them out. I'll get them. I understand something about twirling a gun myself. Savvy? Just a little flip of the wrist and there's a dead man. Eh? Now, then! We can both of us feel a whole lot better. I never plug an unarmed man. And you won't be coaxing the name of murderer. So now we can work with a good free heart."

Three hundred yearlings was the result of the day's work. About sundown they came out of the canyon's mouth. Rolling Stone was singing, and the diminutive Mexican was limp and damp. Just as they were nearing the ranch house, two jack rabbits, mates, popped up and started a lightning-flash course across the prairie. Rolling Stone scarcely moved; but twin streaks of fire ran out and both rabbits turned a flip-flop in mid-air. Next minute, with his horse at full career, the wiry cowboy leaned over and picked up both bodies. The Mexican said nothing, then, but that night he was more than loquacious.

"You bet," he said in his native tongue, "that Rolling Stone is one devil! Alvarado ain't a-going to shoot with him at all not even if they give Alvarado one beeg shotgun."

Jim Scammon said nothing that night; but next morning he cornered the Rolling Stone outside. His black teeth showed in a wicked grin.

"You're pretty good, at that, Rolling Stone," he said quietly. "You just about scared that rat Alvarado to death."

It's sure too bad you don't use your talents. You ought to be riding into Mexico with Jim Scammon."

"Mebbe I will," answered the other, without batting an eye. "But if I do, Scammon, you'll be ripping the skin off your horse's back trying to beat me to it."

For a moment nothing was said, but the other grinned again; and no one could grin as wickedly as Jim Scammon.

"Well, suit yourself," he said at length. "You sure know the trail to a sudden death. I ain't a-goin' to head you off none. But when I get back to Rustler's Hole, I'll carry a lock that will make the boys wonder. And now that's over, let's get down to cases. Today, you're going after them horses. And take it from me, Rolling, this here Tad Yorgan's got the finest herd in seven States. I'm just tellin and warnin you, because I want you to be careful. That herd is worth a hunk of money. Remember, you made a bargain—you and I—and you're workin', just now, for me. Eh? Oh, you're going to use the pony. Well, all right."

The Rolling Stone had come out of the corral riding easily, holding the reins in one hand and a stick in the other. By his side the little horse trotted along like a thing walking on air, while the big horse was neighing to keep her close by.

"Ever see her work?" asked the Rolling Stone, nodding at the pony. At the same moment he passed the stick in front of her nose, and then tossed it a short distance away. Ears up, the little animal watched the stick land, and then, very daintily and without ado, walked over, pawed it with her foot, and took it between her teeth.

"See that," cried the Rolling Stone proudly. "Well, she'll do a whole lot more. She'll get down on her knees, shake hands, and stand up. And she'll steal any horse that I send her after.

Well, I'm a-going up and send her after that herd of horses. Won't be a thing to it, except sit down and wait. I'll look them over, and see if they're as fine a bunch as you say."

And the Rolling Stone was more or less of a prophet. Once more Alvarado passed over his guns, and they were in for a full day's work; but this time it was the pony, and not the cowboy and the Mexican, who brought the results. The herd was up among the gulches in one of the Five Finger Meadows, and had the men been compelled to work them out, it might have taken them a long time. But the pony seemed to know. She trotted along, head and tail up, scenting the wind that drifted down the canyon. The horse nickered and pranced along beside her, until, suddenly, she caught the drift of the herd. Alvarado's black, smoky eyes watched closely.

"Dat leetle horse she know lots," said he. "See? She climb over dat ridge and call heem."

Sure enough, the pony had run ahead, stood upon a point, and whinnied. The sound carried. The little horse loomed out against the sky, clear as a statue. Then there was another form—an inquisitive horse running up close to investigate. Then another and another. In no time the ridge was covered with the moving herd—every head striving to get as near as possible to the strange little animal who was neither horse nor colt. When he was sure, the Rolling Stone held his fingers to his lips and gave a shrill whistle. That brought the pony racing down to the black stallion. Five minutes later the whole herd was coming down the canyon in reverse order—the drivers in front, the pony at the stallion's side, and the big pack racing behind.

Alvarado was delighted. That night Rolling Stone heard him talking in Spanish.

"A man have dat horse, say, he could

steal anything! But you got to have heem trained like dat Rolling Stone. I heard tell of dat pony long ago; but I didn't believe. Now I know."

Next morning every last Mexican was out in the corral, trying to make friends with the Shetland. But the Rolling Stone knew that, not for worlds, would Scammon allow her to go along with the drive, for the simple reason that she would upset every horse in the remuda. So Rolling was forced to try another plan. The night before the drive he walked in on Tad Yorgen. Old Tad had been to town to mail a letter.

"Look here, Tad," said Rolling. "We're going south to-morrow, and I want you to do me a favor."

"Yes, Rolling. What is it?"

"It's that pony. We can't take her of course, because, if we did, she'd raise heck with the drive. No telling what she'd do with that remuda! I'm a-going to ride the point of the herd, and that Mex wrangler, José, couldn't hold her a minute. They'd be the devil popping for sure. So I'm a-going to ask you to hold her for three days, and then turn her loose."

"But why three days? And why turn her loose?"

"Because. Three days will bring us to the Wild Horse Opening and, after we get past that, there won't be any place where she can dig out into the mountains. She'll have to stay with the herd, and I want her with me. I sure think a lot of that little horse."

"But I thought she'd stay with you?"

"I know. But just the same, I wouldn't trust her if she got a crack at that remuda and there was a chance of her getting through the mountains. She's stolen horses before. There's a lot of things about that little creature to make a man wonder."

"All right," answered Yorgen. "I'll turn her loose on the third day, just as you say. But are you still sure about

Scammon and these Mexicans? You want to remember, Rolling, that you gave them a clean bill of health, and told me not to worry. I left it all to you."

"You sure did, and I'm still telling you the same. You won't lose a head of stock. So, why fret about it?"

CHAPTER III.

A HIGH NOTE.

AT daybreak next morning the herd was ready to start—a gigantic spear head, with the Rolling Stone at the point of the spear, the Mexicans along the side and in behind, and Jim Scammon to oversee and direct the driving. José Mendoza had the remuda and brought up the rear, the Swede, Ole, coming along with the camp wagon. Tad Yorgen was out to watch the start. The great herd moved slowly—dull brown against the morning green, like a vast cloud stirring across the earth. And although the Rolling Stone was riding with desperate enemies, his voice came clear through the air of dawn. He was singing the "Cowboy's Dream!"

"Dog-gone!" said old Tad Yorgen. "I sure do like that kid. I wonder who he is, and where he come from?"

For three days the great band of cattle moved along easily and under the most expert herding. The cowboys were quiet and talked little. On the third day, they passed the mouth of the Wild Horse, and kept on due south. Five miles farther on, they passed over a rise and then dropped down into the plain of the Panova. The grass was deep and there was water coming from the mountains. As the Rolling Stone rode over the rise, he lost sight of the rest of the herd; but as he went along, they passed over two by two, then by tens, and finally by forties and fifties. But nary a rider! Rolling rode on and watched

the herd spilling into the basin. The Mexicans had disappeared and the herd was free, with only the Rolling Stone to lead them at the point. The lone cowboy sat in his saddle and rolled a cigarette, smoking lazily, until the last of the six thousand had topped the ridge and gone to grazing. Then suddenly he pulled out his six guns and looked them over.

"Dog-gone," he mused. "They ain't nothin' like experience to tell you what a crook will do. I sure had it figured out to a calf's tail. Scammon is pulling his stuff. Now, if Old Tad Yorgan has only turned that pony loose, everything will be just what I calculated."

But when he rode to the camp wagon, he found the big Swede ripping the sky with Viking oaths; and it was only after he had run out of Norseman cuss words, that he told Rolling the truth.

"Ya!" he yelled. "Dot sneak of a José Mendoza he steal dot whole remuda! Every last one of Old Tad Yorgan's horses! When he come to dot Wild Horse Opening, dot Mexican wrangler yust drove dem up dot canyon. An' dot canyon he goes straight to Mexico. Ya! And then, two other Mex come back to see wot's up, and they go back to catch him. Two by two, an' last of all, dot crook of a Scammon he comes back and he say: 'Waal, good-by, Ole. W'en dot Rolling Stone comes along, yust you give him my complimentums.' So! Und dot's the way they treat Ole Tad Yorgan. Steal dot whole tam remuda!"

Rolling Stone laughed, rode over to the camp wagon, and picked up a couple of cold biscuits which he stuffed into his pockets.

"Thanks, Ole," he said. "If Old Tad Yorgan or any one like that should happen along, just tell him that I've gone on a little errand. I'll be back, and so will Scammon."

At the foot of the Wild Horse he

turned and entered the canyon. The tracks of the horse herd were as plain as day—two hundred horses running at full speed and stirring up the sandy bottom. Stone rode slowly, looking down and making sure. At the gait they were traveling, the rustlers were gaining every minute. But some part of Rolling Stone's plan had evidently gone wrong. So he waited and rode deliberately until, about noon, he heard a faint sound coming up the canyon. His horse's head shot up. A nicker! And another nicker in answer! The Rolling Stone nodded.

"That's her! Just what I said. Tad Yorgan turned her loose, and she's picked up the drift of the herd. They ain't a horse in the country that can keep up with her for speed and endurance."

Sure enough, the pony came on, head up and tail straight out, nickering and galloping like wild. The race was on. Straight as an arrow she loped ahead of the stallion, running for the herd. Rolling Stone humped his shoulders and allowed his mount to have his head.

The end came about dusk. They had climbed the high places and had entered the rough country when, suddenly, he heard a sound that warned him to be careful. It would never do to let the pony be seen. The Rolling Stone reached for his rope and ran the loop out over the pony's head, bringing her to a stop as he raced along beside her.

"Now, sweetheart, we got to be careful. We can't go too fast. You got to let me do the managing and, if you listen to orders, everything will come out just beautiful. See? We're going to hide out back of this pile of rocks and see if we can't play a little trick."

He stroked her head to calm her down; and reached into his pocket for one of the biscuits. The pony nibbled and rubbed her nose against his hand.

Twice she started to nicker, but each time he caught her by the nose. Then, when all was ready, he hid himself behind the pile of rocks: The Mexicans and Scammon had driven the remuda into a side pocket and were getting ready for supper. Their horses were still saddled and two of the Mexicans were tinkering with their cinches.

"Dog-gone!" breathed the Rolling Stone, as he watched the pony. "She's the greatest little queen that ever fooled a horse thief. I expected her to run, but she's going up easy."

Sure enough, the Shetland had trotted up slowly, in plain view of the two Mexicans. One of them leaped into his saddle and reached for his rope. He called to his companion. Then he started—full speed. The Rolling Stone grinned, and settled back among the rocks with his own rope ready. The little horse raced back, with the Mexican after him at full speed, his lasso circling. Then something ran out and the Mexican was pulled from his saddle. Rolling Stone had to work like lightning, pulling the Mexican's own rope, tying him, and tossing him to one side. The horses raced on. Rolling had barely time to get back to his hiding place when the other Mexican came trotting along, cautiously, to see what was up. But Stone was a swift worker. His rope went out and was jerked about the man's neck before he had even a chance to squawk.

"That makes two," said the Rolling Stone. "Now if the luck will only continue!"

But there was no such good fortune. The pony had suddenly gone wild with excitement; the saddled horses, free from their riders, were racing along, whinnying and sending out their challenge. In another instant the delighted Shetland was up on a point nickering her little call of the wild, and setting the whole remuda into a frenzy of eagerness. Shouts from Scammon!

And the Mexicans running for their mounts! Some of them made it; but Scammon and the wrangler José lost their horses. A second of fluttering. Then the panic broke! One horse—a hundred, made a wild dash for liberty. Shots, and the Mexicans riding in a frenzy of despair! All in a few seconds. Rolling Stone watched the sleek form of the blue Shetland gliding across the floor of the canyon, saw her kick up her heels as one of the Mexicans grooved her with a bullet. Then the whole herd disappeared around a bend on their way to the valley, the cursing Mexicans racing in pursuit.

But in the sudden turn of events, the Rolling Stone had lost track of Scammon. He had been having trouble to restrain his own horse. The stallion had whinnied, and that had betrayed him to the crafty foreman. That worthy had slipped away and come in behind the rocks! A word to José Mendoza, and he had arranged the death of Rolling Stone! The cowboy was afoot and trying to get his bearings when, suddenly, he found himself face to face with his enemy.

And it was sudden death!

Scammon was so sure of himself that he could afford to tease; also he wanted to get the Rolling Stone in a position where José could do the shooting. And Rolling could see Scammon; but not the Mexican. The rustler laughed mockingly.

"Pretty clever, Rolling. I'll say you are! But I've got you now. Here's where I get that lock of hair to take back to Rustler's Hole. I told you once before that you couldn't shoot it out with me in a million years. You ready to go?"

He had his hands to his sides, but Rolling knew how fast he was on the draw; at the same time he was dead sure that Scammon would never meet him on an equal basis. He stepped behind one of the rocks and, at the same

instant caught sight of the Mexican, José Mendoza, drawing a bead on him from the hill above. That move saved his life; for it brought his head and body behind the rocks. José, discovered, lost his head and fired. The Rolling Stone was knocked spinning off his feet. But his guns were belching. And so were Scammon's. Half in the air and turning a part somersault, Rolling saw the bandit crumple, while he himself went over sidewise and rolled to the bottom of a small ravine. For a moment he stirred, and then stretched out as if dead. Then the Rolling Stone got his revenge! José stuck his head over the bank to investigate the result of his treachery. He was grinning. But it was the last grin of his life. With his left hand the Rolling Stone shot out of the crook of his right arm. The Mexican went down with a hole between the eyes.

Ten minutes later, the Rolling Stone placed the body of Jim Scammon on his horse, and got up behind. José's body could lie where it had fallen. He would send some one back for the bound Mexicans. Stone was all ready to start when his horse pricked up his ears and warned him of another attack. Once again he drew his six-gun. But he did not shoot. Instead he stopped to watch a bewhiskered rider coming along at full speed, with two others—white cowboys—racing behind him. He heard the rider talking.

"Dog-gone your hide! But you got him! Thank the Lord! Rolling Stone, you little beggar, what did you play that trick on me for? Why didn't you tell me? Why, man, you're wounded!"

"Only a shot in the leg," said Rolling softly. "They tried to double cross me. One was drawing me on and the other was going to kill me in cold blood. Instinct warned me, and I got behind a rock. I knew there was some-

thing; but I couldn't exactly figure what. Got Scammon as I went over. He was a good shot, but it looks as though I'm a little bit better. But how did you know about us? I told you to stay back and leave it to me."

Tad Yorgan reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper.

"Just this," he said. "I found the rest of that letter. You remember that that first page said that they had sent up to Colorado for something, but what it was happened to be on the next page. And that first one didn't even tell who the bandit was. Well, I was so curious that I wrote back to brother Charley in New Mexico, and this is what he wrote:"

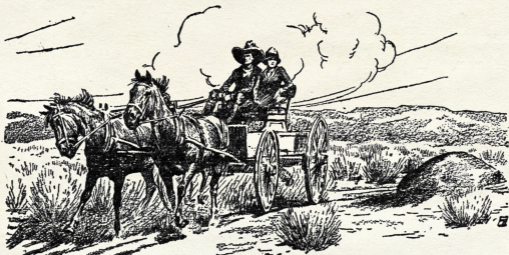
DEAR TAD: Funny, but your letter came in to-day, just when I found that other sheet. I guess I didn't mail it—must have left it out. It was here behind the table. But I'm sending it to satisfy your curiosity. Here it is:

After the greatest cattle detective in the whole West. He's known as the Rolling Stone, and he's never failed on a case yet. He's the one that cleaned out the Biff Keene gang single-handed. And he's got a reputation that's a mile long. Only he won't work unless he goes it alone. He came down when we sent for him, and made a bargain. He agreed to get this renegade Scammon—that's the rustler's name, and he's redheaded and bloodshot to boot—for a thousand dollars. And if he captures him in the act he gets two thousand; and if he shoots it out and wins he gets three thousand. And I haven't a doubt but what he will get three thousand dollars. The last I heard of him he was riding into Mexico all by his lonesome. If you ever get in trouble, you might send for him.

The Rolling Stone was grinning.

"Well?" asked Tad Yorgan.

"I don't see that there is any need of saying anything. I came in and you didn't know me; and that gave me a chance to work alone. If you had got here ten minutes ago it would have cost me two thousand dollars; but, as it is now, I get top price. How's that?"



Ryder of the Hills

by Robert J. Horton

Author of "The Blizzard Herd," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

KILLER SNEED is accidentally the cause of Albert Ryder's death. Sneed adopts Ryder's son Ted, placing him in care of his housekeeper, Lucy Ware. Sheriff Frost arrives to investigate Ryder's death and remove the boy. Ted chooses to remain with Sneed, who treats him kindly and trains him to use a revolver.

Ted quarrels with Lute Balmer, foreman of Nate Sinclair, cattle baron and Sneed's neighbor. Sneed's gang start on a raid, from which Sneed returns wounded in his redoubtable right arm. He tries to keep it secret, but fears that Snark Levant, his lieutenant, suspects. Levant thinks to supplant Sneed.

Ted meets Dorothy Sinclair, and is run off the Sinclair ranch by Balmer. Dorothy tells Ted who Sneed is. Ted, unbelieving, plans vengeance, but tells Sneed what he has learned. Sneed, by his manner, tries to reassure Ted and Lucy. Ted praises Dorothy. Sneed rides to the Sinclair ranch and arranges for the purchase of some cattle. Balmer delivers the herd and taunts Sneed beyond endurance. Before Sneed, enraged, has time to draw, Ted fires, wounding Balmer. Sneed warns Ted that he will take the blame. Sheriff Frost arrives; questions Ted, who, obeying Sneed, denies that he fired the shot. Ted disappears. Sneed, to prove his power, rides through the crowded town, rifle in holster, crippled arm in full view. An unknown assailant fires and Sneed falls dead. Ted promises to avenge him. The sheriff warns him not to attempt trouble, and allows him to take Sneed's body back to the ranch.

CHAPTER XIII.

LUCY WARE.



It took the horses all night and part of the next morning to pull the wagon bearing Sneed's body up the long slopes. Meanwhile, Ted's thoughts were divided between the desire to rush on ahead and prepare Lucy Ware for their coming, and the conviction that it was his place and duty to stay beside the remains of his dead

friend. He started on several times, but always came back.

When they finally reached the ranch in the forenoon it was Lucy, who, by a cruel freak of chance, first saw them coming. She was in the yard before the house, her arms were filled with flowers. She stood and watched, white-faced, as Ted rode up. She looked in his eyes and, before he could speak, she nodded.

"I know," she said in a strange, tired voice. "It had to come some time." She walked slowly toward the wagon

and stood mute and awe-struck while they carried Sneed's body into the house, deaf to Ted's fervid entreaties to wait inside.

She asked one of the men who had come from Morning Glory for details. After they had gone, she listened to Ted's passionate recital of his part in the affair, and what he thought, and what he intended to do.

"No," she said dully, "it wouldn't do to try to get his slayer. It had to come. But I thought it would be Snark Levant who would try it. No, Ted, you mustn't start this way. Jess was always like that, sort of—spectacular. They all were afraid of him and when they saw for sure that his arm was gone, one of them lost his head. Might be sorry now; can't tell."

"But what they said about him bein' a killer," the boy protested.

"All true," said Lucy. And then, with flashing eyes: "There wasn't one of them that would dare face him when his arm was right!"

Ted looked at the still form on the sofa in the cool, dim living room, with flowers heaped upon it; his eyes were wide and wondering, still expressing disbelief. But Lucy Ware would not lie.

"You'll have to help me," she said. "Go out to the kitchen and get some breakfast. Then ride down and get Buck before you take some sleep. Poor boy—you must need it."

Whatever her thoughts were as she sat during those next few hours beside the couch no one could tell. Just once she gave way to tears. In her heart was a lurking dread; she feared the possible return of Snark Levant. She did not fear for herself so much as for the youth. She had always possessed a feeling of security when Sneed was alive. Now for the first time, since those spectacular days of the wild cow towns, this feeling deserted her.

They buried Sneed next day under the cottonwoods in the lower yard. Lucy Ware's face was white and drawn, but whatever emotion she experienced was carefully concealed. That night she told Buck to return to his post in charge of the cattle; but she asked him certain questions about the men, and told him to be in readiness to return to the ranch house on an instant's notice.

"I shall probably sell the place," she finished absently.

She wondered over this. Yes, she would have to sell the ranch. She didn't feel capable of managing it. It made her bitter whenever she thought of Sneed's intention to follow the cattle-raising business and give up his old life. And now, just when he had started, he had been shot down. He had been killed, too, before he had a chance to tell the boy everything. What cruel irony of fate!

"Jess was going to tell you himself," she said to the tall youth that evening when they had lighted the lamp in the living room, which seemed strangely deserted. "Last night he was in terrible anxiety, Ted. We didn't know where you had gone and Jess just walked the floor all night. I could hear him muttering in his room. He missed you. He wasn't all bad, you know. He brought you here because he wanted to—well, to do something for you, I guess. We got to like to have you aroun'. It—it was sometimes lonesome here."

Ted nodded gravely. "I know Sneed wasn't bad," he said. "He treated me white. He even loaned me money on my mine!"

That brought the tears to Lucy Ware's eyes. "Oh, if you only knew, my boy, what we've been through! Why, it was really through *me* that he became an outlaw!"

They stared at each other in the shaded rays of the lamp.

"He shot a man who tried to hurt me!" Lucy cried fiercely. "Those were the days of the *real* cow towns, Ted. An', oh, they were tough! The sights I've seen! You know I'm not young."

There seemed to be no answer to this outburst; and then Lucy Ware found the relief she needed in confiding in this youth who listened wonderingly and intently.

"Listen, Ted, I've seen more than one man killed," she went on excitedly. "I've seen 'em killed in knife battles, in gun plays, with bottles, I've seen 'em fighting like tigers over nothing more than a stack of white chips, or a slip of the tongue, or a refusal to take a drink."

She paused, breathing quickly.

"Listen!" she leaned toward him confidentially. "They once called me the dance-hall queen. It isn't so long ago, either; an' this is a tough country yet. I was in a big place in—well, in a town where at that time there wasn't a soul in the graveyard that had died a natural death. We had a long bar, an' gambling tables, an' a dance floor in back. I had charge of the girls who were paid to dance with the men; an' I sang a few songs every night. It was a big glittering place an' when it was runnin' full blast it was a sight to see, an' really something to listen to."

Her eyes sparkled with their old light of adventure as she drew back the veil of the past.

"After the round-up they'd come in. They'd come from everywhere—punchers, gamblers, prospectors, miners, hangers-on—oh, the whole crew! They'd drink, they'd gamble, they'd sing, they'd fight. An' the noise! Glasses clinking, spurs jingling, chips clicking, dice rattling, the man at the wheel calling the numbers; men laughing, shouting, swearing, singing; the piano player doin' his worst; me givin'

one of my songs—all under the hangin' lamps with the smoke drifting in layers. Well, it was some exciting scene, take it from me! An' I thought that was the life—*then*."

The boy's eyes were gleaming as the word picture grew before his eyes.

"It was Jess Sneed who took me out of all that, without knowin' he was goin' to do it," she continued with a catch in her voice. "During the rodeo a stranger came into the place who stepped over the mark. This man was popular from the start. He had a good make-up, worse several big diamonds—which counted a lot in those days—and spent plenty, which counted more. He was good-looking, had a way about him, an' was a whirlwind of a gambler. I guess that was his trade, if you could call it a trade. Well, he tried to make up to me."

Lucy Ware smiled wryly as she said this. Presently she continued:

"One night he came out on the dance floor an' when I'd finished a song he asked me to dance with him. I refused. Now Jess Sneed was freighting down there then. He was a big man, an' was known to be fast with his gun. He'd stopped a gang that had tried to hold him up once an' he wouldn't stand for any one tryin' to kid him. An' he kept pretty much to himself. I guess he had more personality than this stranger, but because he didn't try to make a show of himself he wasn't so popular.

"I told the stranger I wouldn't dance with him, an' he tried to make me. When he took hold of me, Jess Sneed stepped on the floor an' called him to let up. Well, this stranger was like a tiger in a split second, an' he swore at Jess. Jess handed it back to him an' he went for his gun. The stranger might as well have been picking flowers. Jess bored him for keeps before he could get his gun out of his holster. Then Jess vanished."

Lucy paused again, thinking. Then she went on:

"It seems they liked this stranger better than Jess an' the house was in an uproar in no time. They called him a killer an' went after him with posses. But they never got him. He stopped two of them, an' they gave up. But he had the name of 'Killer' Sneed, an' it wasn't long before he was on the outlaw trail. Maybe it was in him, but I think he was driven to it.

"The affair had a bad effect on me. It—well, I just couldn't seem to sing after that. An' I lost my nerve. I quit. I didn't do any too well from then on, an' I was in a little town in the south, working in a hotel—mind you!—when Jess rode in with his band to take the bank. He saw me an'—well, he asked me how I came to be there an' I told him. He told me about this ranch he'd just got hold of an' how he needed somebody to take care of the house, an' asked me if I wanted to come. I wanted a home. So I came. I've had a good home, an' he always treated me right. But the thing few people—nobody, I guess—knew was a thing we had to keep secret because it was the best policy."

She looked above Ted's head as if seeing something afar; and there was a mist in her eyes:

"You see," she said softly. "I was Killer Sneed's wife. An'—an' now—I'm his *widow*."

She leaned heavily upon the table and her shoulders shook violently with sobs.

Ted, his eyes wide with wonder and pity, rose quickly and put his strong arms about her, awkwardly trying to soothe her. When she looked up he kissed one of her wet cheeks.

"Never mind, Aunt Lucy, we'll make out," he said earnestly.

"I don't know what'll become of you when I sell the ranch," she said, after a time.

"Sell!" His voice rang. "We—you won't sell, Aunt Lucy. Buck's teaching me the business an' we'll make a go of it. Don't you see? This is *your home*. Where you goin' if you leave here? An' it's my home, too. We'll just stick to it. Won't you stick, Aunt Lucy?"

She stared at his sparkling eyes, at the height and strength of him. His enthusiasm fairly filled the room.

"All right," she decided; "I'll keep the ranch."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNSCHEDULED VISIT.

THE discovery of Sneed's real business and Lucy Ware's remarkable story made a great impression on Ted Ryder. Truth was, he felt the loss of Sneed more keenly than he had felt the loss of his father. Perhaps this was because his father had been a hard, silent man, and their life in the little meadow above the mine had been more or less monotonous; whereas there had been more excitement at the ranch, and Sneed, in, his way, had been kind. He had been sympathetic, too. However, Ted gave up all thought of trying to avenge his death. He felt a keen sympathy for Lucy Ware after hearing her extraordinary disclosure. Then, too, Ted's mother had died years ago, and a woman who looked after him, as Lucy did, was bound to have influence over him. Now that she was left alone, he wanted to do all he could for her.

But another thing bothered Ted. After all, Balmer *had* told Dorothy Sinclair the truth about Sneed. Probably her father had confirmed it. And then, with the shooting of Balmer, what did she think of him—of Ted? She would naturally assume he had lied; that he had shot Balmer purposely. He worried about this that night of Lucy Ware's confession, and next day. And then he decided upon

a bold move. He would see Dorothy and tell her the truth!

It was with this end in view that he rode away from the ranch down to the lower meadows, and to the timber screen of the river down there late in the afternoon of the next day. He kept well within the shelter of the trees as he made his way eastward. He passed the upper ranch, which now was practically deserted, and continued to the main buildings of the S Bar S. These were situated in the bottoms, with the bench sheltering them on the north. He followed the river and reached the buildings just at dusk.

It seems that a mysterious element of luck naturally attaches itself to the activities of youth. Ted rode along the shadow of the trees and had hardly had his first view of the house when he caught a telltale flash of white in the yard. As if some latent instinct told him that this signified the presence of Dorothy Sinclair, he rode into a little clump of poplars, left his horse with reins dangling, and scurried about the scrubs until he stood, hat in hand, before the astonished girl.

Dorothy was much too surprised to speak.

"I came to tell you," Ted said, "that what Balmer said about Uncle Jess was true. An' he was killed in Morning Glory three days ago. I didn't know about him when you told me that, an' I didn't want you to think I'd lie to you. That's all, I guess—except that he wasn't as bad as some of them thought, an' he was always good to me."

She looked at him gravely and tossed her head. "You hurt Lute Balmer," she said accusingly. "An' some time you'll be hung because that bad man's made you a gunman."

"That's what they're tellin' you, I suppose," he said scornfully. "Well, you tell 'em I said I'd take care of myself. If I hadn't stopped it, Balmer

would have murdered Uncle Jess. Tell 'em I said that, too!"

"Who'd believe you?" she scoffed. He thought this over. "Listen, Dorothy," he said finally, "just because Jess Sneed took me in when my father got killed, they're against me. Now Jess Sneed is gone. Do you reckon they'll still keep after me?"

"Father says you'll have to go away," said Dorothy. "He says you're dangerous. Don't you think you'd better go away?"

Ted shook his head. "Nope! I reckon I'll stick. Anyway, I couldn't go while Balmer— How is Balmer?"

"He's going to get well," Dorothy replied. "But father says you'll have to go. He heard about that bad man getting killed."

"So he'd drive me out!" cried Ted indignantly. "Why, I couldn't go if I wanted to. Don't you see that would be running away?"

He looked very big in the failing twilight.

"I'll be going away next year myself," she said vaguely.

"I reckon that'll be too bad," decided Ted promptly.

"Oh, you couldn't ever see me again, anyway," she informed him. "Father says I can't have anything to do with you because you're—well, you're bad!"

Ted laughed, forgot himself, and slammed on his hat. "What your dad don't know would fill a lot of books!" he jeered. "How'd I get to see you to-night?"

"If they knew you were here they'd chase you away—maybe they'd shoot you," she said earnestly.

"I'd take my chances!"

She shrank back as his hand dropped swiftly to his gun. There it was! The gesture of a gunfighter! Dorothy knew; she had been born and reared in that very country; she had listened to men talk—and she was smart. But she felt a certain exhilaration in her young

heart. Ted, standing there above her, unafraid, was not unlike a young knight—a knight of the open country.

"You—must be careful," she murmured.

"Listen, Dorothy, don't you let them kid you along none," he said in a tone of confidence. "An'——" He stepped toward her and grasped her hand impulsively. "Don't you let 'em tell you I'm bad!" With a quick pressure of his strong fingers he started away.

As he hurried toward the trees where he had left his horse, a shout came from behind the house. He broke into a run. A man came down the yard.

"Hold on there!" came the sharp command.

Ted didn't recognize the voice, but he realized its import. They had been seen, or *he* had been seen, by some member of the S Bar S outfit who knew him by sight. He increased his pace. As he reached the trees a shot rang out, and a bullet clipped the leaves above his head. Dorothy's scream came to him then. It gave him something of a thrill. She feared for his safety! He laughed boyishly as he gathered his reins and threw himself into his saddle.

There were no more shots, for he was under cover now. He raced for the river. Darkness had closed in; but as he looked back at the house, he could see the yard fairly well in the starlight and could not distinguish the form of any moving thing. Nor could he descry the telltale splash of white which would have indicated Dorothy's presence. He leaped to the conclusion that she had called off his pursuer.

He cantered easily along the trees and walked his horse up the long slope to the bench. This delay brought trouble. As he reached the top of the bench, three riders came pounding up the road from the barn. He heard their horses, then their yells,

and knew they were after him. He straightened out on the open plain and the race westward began.

In selecting a horse for Ted, Buck Andrews had chosen one of the best animals in Sneed's string—and Sneed's mounts had been noted for their speed and endurance. His business had required the best horseflesh obtainable. Thus Ted's horse was far superior to the ordinary range stock. But Sinclair, old-timer and lover of horses as he was, also had some splendid stock; and he liked to see his men well mounted. Therefore, Ted soon found that he wasn't going to have any easy time of it.

He thrilled from head to foot with his first chase. What they wanted him for, he didn't know, didn't care. They were not shooting at him, anyway. Wanted to capture him and take him back to Sinclair, probably. Then Sinclair would have an excuse to make more trouble for him. Might even hint that he was on his range bothering his cattle! Well, they wouldn't get him.

As Ted let his horse out to its swiftest pace, tail and mane flying, the wind rushing past, the vast expanse of plain alive with dancing shadows, he felt a wild exultation. He looked back. They were coming on, a racing trio who figured on getting him before he could get back to the ranch. It was possible they would have a chance when they reached the long slopes leading upward to the lower meadows of the Lazy L. What would Sneed do in such a case? Ted pondered this and realized that Sneed's raids must have put him in a similar predicament time after time. But they'd never caught him! Why? Because Sneed had used his brains, of course.

And now Ted gave evidence of possessing that instinct which often comes natural to those born in a wild, free country—the same instinct which had

been Sneed's, although he didn't know it. He wouldn't wait until they reached the slopes; he would trick them!

He was some distance out on the plain from the river; but now he turned suddenly and headed for the dark band of trees along the stream. The shouts came again and, as he neared his objective, shots broke on the wind. Ted laughed and drove in his spurs for a furious spurt. They were not going to shoot him down or they would have tried it the first glimpse they'd had of him. They were trying to frighten him? Perhaps not; but it made little difference. He gained the shelter of the trees without hearing the whine of a single bullet.

He swung west just within the deep shadow cast by the timber and sped along until he spied an opening. Here he rode in on a trail which he believed would lead to a ford. This proved to be the case and he crossed the stream. As soon as he emerged from the trees on the opposite bank he turned down the stream. He was soon around a bend where he would be out of sight of his pursuers when they crossed after him. They could assume either that he had gone upstream—as would seem natural—or had hidden in the timber. But at the first likely looking opening in the trees he crossed back to the other bank.

He rode out cautiously, but could see nothing of his pursuers. Here Ted exhibited a degree of cunning beyond his sixteen years. He told himself that the S-Bar S riders would figure that he had crossed the river in desperation and was riding up toward the west, or that he was hiding in the timber. They would not give him credit of being capable of a bold ruse. It would be most natural for them to decide he was hiding; for Ted had thought of doing that very thing at first.

He rode slowly upstream until he was nearly at the spot where he had entered the timber. There he listened and finally the sound of voices came to him dimly from the other side of the ford. He rode on past the opening and then spurred his horse at break-neck pace. Any delay was to his advantage.

He kept close to the trees until another bend favored him and then he spurred. He called on his horse for everything there was in him, rode like the wind, and, at last gained the first slope. As he climbed he continued to look back and finally he saw them coming—one on each side of the stream, the third man missing. They had doubtless left their companion at the ford to keep watch there. But the delay, while they were conferring and deciding what to do, had made for the success of Ted's ruse. They could not catch him now. He doubted if they could even see him as he kept putting clumps of aspen and bushes between him and the land below. It would do them no good to come to the ranch. They would have sense enough for that.

He reached the first stand of bull pine and reined in his horse. Far below, two shadows moved uncertainly about the stream. One of them disappeared and soon came out on the side where the other shadow was. The shadows ceased to move. Shortly afterward they separated and soon there was again the shadow of a rider on each side of the stream. *But now they were going back!*

Ted laughed joyously. "They'll have to wait till daylight to make sure they haven't got me trapped," he sang.

Then he continued up toward the Lazy L meadows over the first ridge, chuckling happily.

But his merriment might not have been so keen if he had known what the outcome of this enterprise was to be.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEMAND.

WHILE Ted Ryder was eluding the men sent to capture him, a strange scene was being enacted at the Sinclair Ranch house. Nat Sinclair had been in his little office when he heard Balmer—who was in bed in a downstairs room propped up so he could look out the window—call out. He ran in to see what was the matter and Balmer told him excitedly that Ted was in the yard. He had spied him leaving, had caught a flash of Dorothy. Sinclair rushed out, and it was he who had chased the youth and fired a shot in an effort to halt him. He had thrown Dorothy off as she ran to him and clung to his arm; had ordered out the horsemen to get Ted and bring him back. Then he confronted his pale, trembling daughter in the living room.

"What was he doing here" he demanded furiously.

"He came to see me," Dorothy replied coolly.

"And you didn't call *me!* Why didn't you?"

Dorothy flushed slightly. "He didn't ask to—to see *you*, daddy. He—had something to tell me."

"And you listened to him!" raged her father. "After what I told you about him and about that outlaw up there; after I told you never to speak to him again! After he tried to kill my foreman!"

"I don't believe that," said Dorothy slowly. "He came to tell me he—he didn't know about that bad man up there when I told him what Balmer said. He didn't want me to think he'd lied to me. He said Balmer would have murdered that man and that he—did what he did—well—"

"Stop!" her father interrupted. She was almost frightened at the sight of his darkened face and flashing eyes.

"Do you, my own daughter, mean to stand there and contradict me?" he said sternly. "Don't you suppose I know what that bandit of a Sneed's been up to? Good thing he was killed. I know the breed. I tolerated his being up there because I almost *had* to. But I won't tolerate this young ruffian who's following in his footsteps coming here, or *even looking* at you. You've never disobeyed me before. I—I can't understand it." His look changed from one of anger to pained perplexity.

"Well, daddy," said Dorothy in a low, earnest voice. "I don't believe Ted is a ruffian nor what you say. It wasn't his fault he lived on that ranch with that bad man when he didn't know anything about him."

Sinclair was aghast. "You're sticking up for him?" he said incredulously. "Of course he knew it. He couldn't *help* but know it, with Sneed's gang coming in and out. Why, Dot, that boy's another killer!"

Dorothy shook her head, although she paled as she remembered how Ted's hand had dropped to his gun when she'd hinted they might try to shoot him if they knew he was there. Then she started and looked at her father with wide eyes.

"You shot at him," she accused.

Sinclair's brows knitted. "I shot over his head, thinking that would stop him," he said gruffly. "I had no intention of hitting him."

"But he wouldn't know that, would he?" the girl asked. Then, with a little thrill in her voice: "He didn't stop. He said he could take care of himself." There was a note of triumph in her tone which Nate Sinclair did not miss.

"Oh, he did, did he?" said her father, his frown deepening. "Well, we'll see about *that*. Go to your room!"

Dorothy turned away, but at the bottom of the stairs she hesitated. "I don't think it's right, daddy, to make

trouble for him now that that bad man Sneed is gone."

"Go to your room!" her father thundered.

Upstairs at her window, Dorothy sat looking out at the branches of the cottonwoods weaving against the stars. "Don't let 'em tell you I'm bad!" His words echoed and reechoed in her ears. She remembered the look in his eyes. She was old enough to know when a man's eyes were right. She had heard her father's shouted orders to the horsemen. "They won't catch him," she murmured, resting her chin in her hands upon the window sill. "An'—I don't believe he's bad." Then tears obscured the weaving branches and the stars.

Nate Sinclair paced the living room, an unlighted cigar clenched tightly in his teeth. He chewed it savagely. How long would it take his men to catch the young rogue? He didn't know exactly what he'd do and say when they brought him back. Well, the kid had nerve—and courage. Coming right to the house to see Dorothy! Ignoring the shot! And Dorothy sticking up for him! Sinclair became extremely thoughtful—more thoughtful than he had been for years. The principal thought in his mind—that this youth might defy him and try to see Dorothy again, perhaps often—was intolerable. He was dangerous, this young fellow! He was too good looking; he was well set up; a good rider; he had a dashing way about him; and these things had a glamour for girls—especially young girls. Sinclair frowned heavily and clasped and unclasped his hands behind his back nervously. Why didn't they return with him? Would he trick them. Had he a better horse? Sinclair swore and dropped into a big armchair.

He woke suddenly. Daylight was streaming into the room. He rubbed

his eyes, hardly believing that he had slept. There were footfalls on the porch and a sharp rap at the door. He opened it hurriedly, and looked eagerly at the rider who touched the brim of his hat.

"We didn't get him," the man said shortly. "He tricked us in the timber along the river. Three of us couldn't watch *everything* in the dark."

Sinclair stared. "Couldn't watch *everything*?" he roared. "Couldn't watch *anything*, you mean. I should have gone myself," he added with an oath.

"He had a good hoss," said the rider stoutly. "An' he's no fool. We could have brought him back dead, if we'd had orders."

"Get out of here!" shouted Sinclair, and slammed the door in his face.

Sinclair ordered the housekeeper to prepare his breakfast immediately. Then he went into his office and took some papers from his desk. He looked them over and muttered to himself: "I reckon there's another way. Still, Sneed offered to pay cash for the cattle." He sat thinking steadily until the housekeeper told him his breakfast was ready.

While eating, he instructed her to put up a substantial lunch for him. After the meal he took the packet of food and went out. He ordered his best horse brought from the pasture, and shortly afterward he rode away up the road to the bench, where he turned westward and went on at a steady lope.

Lucy Ware heard a vigorous rapping at her front door about eleven that morning. She paused with misgiving before she answered. She was always fearful of visitors these days, for there was one she expected whose coming she viewed with alarm—Snark Levant. When she saw the huge bulk of Nate Sinclair on the porch she breathed a sigh of relief. After all, perhaps, she had no reason for this

abiding fear. She welcomed the rancher and invited him in.

"I've come on a matter of business," said Sinclair grimly, taking the chair she offered him. "I believe your name is Lucy Ware?"

"Ah—yes," Lucy replied.

Sinclair drew from a pocket a slip of paper. "This," he said, waving it before him, "is a note signed by you for the balance due on the two thousand head of cattle which you, or Sneed, purchased from me recently. It is payable on demand."

Lucy's face went a shade gray. "Yes," she said. "I signed it; I own this place. What about it?"

"I shall have to have this money at once," Sinclair announced.

Lucy started, and then her eyes flashed angrily. "So *that's* it. Now that Jess is dead you're scared about your money. Well, you have plenty of security so you needn't worry. You can find out for yourself up at the shipping point. If Jess were here he'd probably pay you on the spot. He——" She ceased abruptly as an alarming thought struck her.

"No doubt," said Sinclair. "But since he isn't here, I reckon you're prepared to do the same."

Lucy Ware stared at him. "Of course I'm not prepared to do any such thing," she said indignantly.

Something suspiciously like a gleam of triumph came into Sinclair's eyes. "Sneed offered to do it," he said with a shrug. "I've got to have this money, Miss Ware."

"Maybe you're afraid for the cattle," she said scornfully. "Well, I have a good foreman an' some good men, Sinclair. We can run this ranch. I don't see why you should demand this money so soon after the sale."

Sinclair raised his brows. "I have my reasons," he said shortly. "But I'm willing to be reasonable. I'll give you forty-eight hours in which to pay."

"Forty-eight hours!" Lucy exclaimed. "Aren't you the Santa Claus! You don't need this money, Sinclair. You're doing this for some reason that has nothing to do with money. What is it?"

Sinclair compressed his lips. It was very probable that Lucy Ware knew nothing of Ted's visit to the S Bar S the night before. If he were to issue an ultimatum to the effect that the youth was not to go upon his range it would probably do little good.

"I have another proposition to make, Miss Ware," he said slowly. "I don't suppose you figure on keeping on here. You can go somewhere and be—well, be rich. If you say the word, I'll buy you out."

Lucy's eyes widened and then grew thoughtful. Sell the ranch? And where would she go? She liked the hills. As Ted had said, she *had* no place to go. And Ted wanted to stay. He was enthusiastic about learning the stock business. Why, she could leave him the place some day. And here she had a home. Moreover, there was a touch of sentiment about Lucy Ware. Sneed had brought her there after he had married her.

"No," she said firmly. "I won't sell the place an' you can't *make* me sell it!"

"Very well," said Sinclair stiffly, rising, and taking up his hat. "In that case I want this money within forty-eight hours, or I'll take back the cattle under the terms of sale."

"That would be robbery!" cried Lucy in indignation.

Sinclair smiled. "It seems to me," he said mildly, "that that is a—peculiar word for *you* to use."

Lucy's face went white and she clenched her hands. "I know what you mean," she said fiercely. "You're taking a dig at Jess. You wouldn't dare open your mouth if he was here. Now that he's gone, you'd take ad-

vantage of *me*. You're no better than he was, if you're as good!"

"Don't talk to me like that," said Sinclair, his face darkening with rage. "Remember who you are and who I am. This is business."

"Of course I remember who *we* are," said Lucy smoothly. "We're stock-raisers. Don't think for a minute, you double crosser, that you're any better than I am. Now, you leave my house!"

Sinclair fumed, hot words on his tongue. But as he was about to speak, Lucy's hand came from under her apron. The ray of sunlight which filtered through a window sparkled and gleamed on the ivory-handled gun.

"You going?" she asked quietly.

Sinclair stamped out with an oath.

When he had ridden away, Lucy dropped weakly into a chair. She was unaware of Sinclair's real reason for making his demand, and thought he merely wished to acquire the ranch as an addition to his own big property. But where was she to get fifty thousand dollars? Sneed had been prepared to pay cash. She had no doubt of that. But where was the cash? In the bank? She decided not. Sneed was none too sure of banks; perhaps because he knew how easily they could be looted in the isolated towns. He was a hand to hide money. And now her brow clouded with grave concern. It was the first time she had had to think about such matters since Sneed's death.

And she didn't know where Sneed's money was hidden!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SEARCH.

WITHIN the hour Lucy Ware, grimly determined not only to keep the ranch but to disconcert Sinclair by paying him his money, began a thorough search of the house. She

went through the few papers Sneed had left without finding a clew as to the whereabouts of his money. She sent for Buck and Ted and put them to work helping her.

"Have you *any* idea where he would hide the money?" she asked Buck.

Buck thought and thought and shook his head. "He wouldn't hide it in the bunk house where the men hung out, that's a cinch," he pointed out. "Fact is, I don't believe he'd hide it in *any* building, because there's a chance of fire. I'd say it's buried. But we could dig up the whole ranch an' maybe not find it. It's probably somewhere in the hills. But that's like trying to rope a needle. I don't know what to think, Miss Lucy."

And that evening after an all-day fruitless search, Lucy was ready to give up. But the money to pay Sinclair had to be found somewhere.

"I don't know what to do," she told Buck, who had been fully acquainted with the situation. "An' you know, since this came up, I've been thinking that when Snark Levant hears that Jess is gone he'll come back here thinking to get some of this money. Night an' day it worries me—this thought that Snark will come back."

"You needn't be scared of him if young Ted is aroun'," said Buck with a grin. "Ted would fix him."

"Why, Buck," said Lucy, "Snark was almost as fast as Jess with his gun!"

"I know," said Buck with a nod. "But I've seen Ted practicing. He was born to it, I'll say. I'd bet my hoss an' saddle against a canceled postage stamp that right now he's as fast as Sneed was."

Ted came into the room at this juncture and no more was said on the subject. Lucy looked at him curiously. Why, this sixteen-year-old boy was a man! She told him of Sinclair's demand.

"I reckon it's all my fault, Aunt Lucy," said Ted contritely.

Then he told of his visit to the Sinclair Ranch the night before, his purpose in going, and the result. Of course, he knew nothing of the meeting of Sinclair and his daughter.

"I guess it's because he wants to drive *me* out of here," he concluded. "He told Dorothy I'd have to go."

"That settles it!" Lucy exclaimed. "We stay till the cows come home with roses around their necks!"

"I've been thinkin', Miss Lucy," said Buck, "an' maybe for once I've got a ripe idea. You know when we shipped last fall Sneed took me over to the bank where I got some papers to use in Chicago. Maybe he's got money in that bank. Maybe there's more there than you think, Miss Lucy. An' anyway, why wouldn't the bank lend enough money to pay up on the cattle? They're good for it. Of course, we haven't got much to ship this year, maybe nothing. The chief bought young stuff to build up a herd. But just the same, I've got a hunch that banker up there would do something. He's an old-timer an' he acted plumb courteous."

Lucy's eyes lighted. "Why didn't I think of that before?" she said wonderingly. "Why, of course. At a time like this the place to go is to a bank. What're the banks for? That's a good idea, Buck. We'll learn this game yet. You order the buckboard an' Ted an' I'll go up to town in the morning."

That night in her room Lucy lay sleepless. Was she making a mistake? There was no doubt that Nate Sinclair wanted them to get out. By staying she would make an enemy of him; very likely she had already done that. She had been foolish to draw the small gun she always carried. And her reason for carrying it caused her further worry. It was fear of Snark Levant's return that prompted her to keep the

weapon always at hand. Still, in drawing against Sinclair she had made a mistake. On the other hand, had the rancher the right to come into her house and insult her? Was it to be his privilege to drive her from her home? She knew why he wanted Ted to go, of course. It was because of Dorothy. Well, Dorothy could do much worse than marry Ted some day. And Sinclair's assertion that Ted was bad, that Sneed had made a man of his own stamp out of him, caused Lucy to sit up in bed and look out the window with a hardened gaze. No—she wouldn't go! Nor would Ted go. Why, Ted was all she had left. The old spirit of adventure, of self-protection, of fighting for her rights flamed within her. After all she had gone through, was she not entitled in the autumn of her life to have some one to love, to look after, and, in turn, to look after her? Tears—too often strangers—came to her eyes.

She rose, slipped on a dressing gown, and stole quietly to the door of Ted's room. She opened it softly. The soft moonlight filled the room, disclosing the features of the sleeping boy, the tumbled mop of chestnut hair, dark against the white pillows. A sob swelled in Lucy's throat. She had come to look upon him almost as her own. Here he was at home. What would become of him if he went out into the world?"

She closed the door and went out upon the little balcony over the porch. She looked eastward. The basin was a dark, hazy blue, an island adrift in the light of the hanging moon and stars. The dark shadows of the hills loomed on either side. A breeze whispered secrets of the universe in the ruffled foliage of the trees. A night owl voiced its plaintive cry, and from afar came the staccato barking of a coyote. The air was sweetly scented.

Lucy drew a deep breath and, still

looking out toward the far-flung domain of the S Bar S, she spoke softly, tremulously:

"I've a card up my sleeve, Sinclair, that you haven't thought of; and if you drive me too far—I'll play it!"

Then she went back to her room and slept.

Right after breakfast, Lucy and Ted started for the shipping town in the buckboard behind two splendid grays. Ted had learned to drive since he had come to the ranch and he promised Lucy they would be in town before the afternoon was well spent. Lucy got a great deal of pleasure out of Ted's enthusiasm on this drive. They'd fool Sinclair. They'd have one of the best ranches in the foothill country. There would be plenty of hay for the winter. They were moving the stock on forest range where the feed was splendid. That would save the lower range for the winter, too. Next year they would put in more oats.

"And what do you think of this Dorothy Sinclair?" Lucy asked.

"Nice kid," he replied promptly, with a flourish of the whip.

Lucy smiled to herself. She would be more interested in a romance than in all the cattle, hay, oats, and ranches in the world.

Ted kept his word and before three o'clock they were in town. He put the team in the livery barn, while Lucy rested at the hotel, and then they went to the bank. There she ascertained that she had a balance of fifteen thousand dollars. There was no account in Sneed's name.

Lucy considered for a few moments. Sneed had had five thousand dollars in his money belt when he died. There were fifteen thousand more in the bank. That made twenty thousand dollars at her disposal. She made an immediate decision.

"I want to see the president," she told the cashier.

"He's in the back room, ma'am," said the cashier. "I'll tell him."

He walked to a door behind the cage, opened it and went in. In a few moments he came out and motioned Lucy around the cage. Ted followed her into the private office of the banker, who rose from behind his desk as they entered. He was a formidable-looking personage; a heavy, stocky man, with a large head, aggressive chin, thick mustache above firm lips, and bushy, black eyebrows which gave him a fierce aspect. But his hazel eyes were kindly.

"You're the president?" Lucy asked nervously.

"I'm Armstrong, and I own this bank," he said in tones which precluded any doubt as to the truth of his statement. "Sit down, Miss Ware. Who's this young man?"

"This is Ted Ryder," said Lucy, feeling more at ease. "He lives at my place."

"Likely looking hand," said Armstrong. "Well, Miss Ware, what is it?" He sat down in his swivel chair, filling it completely, and leaned his elbows on the desk.

"I—I want to borrow some money," said Lucy.

"Ha! You know, Miss Ware, I guessed that very thing. About the only people who come in here who don't want to borrow money are those who want their notes renewed, or extended. Sometimes I do it, an' sometimes I don't." His eyes twinkled under those terrible brows, reassuring Lucy. "How much do you want?"

Lucy began to explain and, as the banker showed more and more interest, she added details even to the point of confessing that she believed that she had made an enemy of the powerful Nate Sinclair.

"Humph!" the banker ejaculated. "Sinclair hasn't got his rope on me. Now let's see, Miss Ware. You need

fifty thousand. I think he hooked Sneed on those cattle, at that. You've got five thousand cash an' fifteen thousand on deposit, which is twenty thousand, an' a ranch. You ought to have at least five thousand on deposit for running expenses. So we'll say you've got fifteen thousand. That leaves you needing thirty-five thousand."

He paused, frowned, and did some figuring on a pad on his desk.

"You've got two thousand head of thoroughbred cattle an' some hundreds odd of scrubs. Well, I'll lend money on thoroughbreds any day. There ain't enough of 'em in the country, yet. You won't have to mortgage your ranch, Miss Ware. You want around seventeen fifty a head on your good stock. Now, you'll have to look after these cattle mighty careful, Miss Ware. Thirty-five thousand." He looked from one to the other of them, pursing his lips.

"I'll let you have it," he said suddenly.

Lucy gasped, and Ted slammed his hat on his knee enthusiastically. Armstrong looked at him with a scowl. "Don't be too gay, young fellow," he admonished. "Borrowing money is a serious business. Always think three times before you borrow. An' if everybody did that, I don't know how I'd make my money," he added humorously. "But it's right good advice just the same."

He opened a drawer and took out a pad of notes. With pen and ink he filled out a blank. He also made out a check and a deposit slip. Then he looked up at Lucy.

"Now, Miss Ware, there are four things you must do: You must sign this note; you must sign this check for fifteen thousand; you must turn in your five thousand for deposit; an' you must consult me in any emergency concerning the cattle. Do you understand?"

Lucy nodded. "Yes, I understand," she said soberly.

"All right," said the banker cheerfully, "now move your chair up an' get busy with this pen. About the only enjoyment I get out of life is watching folks sign on the dotted line!"

When Lucy had signed the note and check, and turned in the five thousand, Armstrong made out a check for thirty-five thousand dollars in her favor. He blotted it carefully and handed it to her.

"See that Sinclair indorses that note as paid, Miss Ware," he instructed.

"I—I believe he expects cash," said Lucy, taking the slip of paper.

"Tell him to present the check!" snapped Armstrong, rising.

As they reached the street, Lucy and Ted looked at each other. Lucy was dazed at the ease and rapidity with which the transaction had been completed. Ted was jubilant.

"Aunt Lucy," he said joyously. "We've pulled out all Sinclair's tail feathers with one jerk!"

They stayed at the hotel that night and in the morning Ted had the buckboard and team ready at sunup.

"Drive down the southeast road," said Lucy as they started.

Ted had to ask a direction and as they turned into the road he looked slyly at Lucy.

"Where we goin', Aunt Lucy?" he asked softly.

"Straight to the Sinclair Ranch," was the answer.

"Come on, ponies!" sang Ted, shaking out the lines.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ARRIVAL.

SOUTHWARD the sweeping billows of green rolled on and on, with the wind ruffling the grasses until the flowing plain took on the rhythm of a following sea. Here and there,

glowing like topaz or rubies, the yellow and red flowers of the prairie cactus sprinkled the plain with splashes of color. In the west the mountains, trailing their purple robes, held their silver crowns aloft in the great, blue arch of sky. Golden sunshine bathed this world of beauty, brought out the colors sharply, widened the horizon until the sense of distance was lost and the plain seemed limitless. A single butte stood off in the east, pale blue and pink, like a prairie bulwark. The air was warm, delicious, sweet with the scent of spring.

Lucy Ware was happy. The enthusiasm, the bubbling vitality of the youth beside her, served to ameliorate her sense of loss and loneliness. A new life opened to her. She drank in the beauty of the land—the only land she had ever known. Leave it? Her eyes sparkled. Why, she had had a part of the making of it! Drive her out? Her head went up instinctively and she smiled broadly at Ted, who quickly threw an arm about her shoulders and proceeded to give her a bearlike hug.

Although it was a long drive to the Sinclair Ranch, the distance was not as great as to the Lazy L in the southwest hills. Moreover, there was a good road, and the horses made excellent time. They were on the bench above the S Bar S ranch buildings by noon and, as they drove down the winding road, they saw Nate Sinclair come out on the porch of the ranch house, and look up at them, shading his eyes against the sun.

"I'll go in," Lucy said to Ted. "You wait with the team."

Sinclair came down the porch steps as Ted with a flourish brought the team to a halt in the courtyard. He scowled darkly as he looked at the youth, who returned his stare coldly, and nodded to Lucy Ware without attempting to help her down.

"I've come to see you on business," Lucy announced.

Sinclair appeared nonplused, and Ted smiled serenely. This was one time when the rancher couldn't order him from his domain.

"You can water an' feed your team in the barn," said Sinclair gruffly. He could not overlook common ranch courtesy. "You'll find a man out there to show you around."

"Thanks," Ted returned dryly. "I'm carryin' some feed an' I reckon we'll be stopping at the river springs west of here to eat."

Sinclair swung on his heel. "We'll go inside, Miss Ware. I suppose you come about the money owing on the cattle."

"I've come to pay it," said Lucy, following him up the porch steps. She was unable to keep a note of triumph out of her voice, and Sinclair bit his lip.

As they went in, a golden-haired blue-eyed slip of a girl came around the corner of the house, and stopped short as she heard a strong young voice greet her.

"Hello, Dorothy! Here I am again. I reckon I won't get chased this time."

"I knew they wouldn't catch you." There was a sparkle of welcome in her eyes. "Who—what—"

"Aunt Lucy's with me an' we're payin' for our cattle," said Ted proudly. "I guess your dad thought we couldn't do it. Listen, girly, we're goin' to have *some* ranch."

"Oh, I'm glad," said Dorothy, who couldn't resist the impulse to clap her hands. "I hope you'll show daddy you're not bad, because I told him you weren't."

"You did?" Ted's eyes widened. "Good for you! You just stick along an' we'll certainly show him something."

Thus, unconsciously, did Ted link the girl with his interests. Perhaps

she realized this; if she did, she didn't resent it.

"Can't you come up some time an' see us?" he urged. "You must have a good horse an' you could make it between breakfast an' supper. Aunt Lucy's real folks, an' if I'm not there, she'll get me into the house quick."

"I'd get killed," breathed Dorothy, flushing.

A stamp of boots in the hall and Sinclair's huge form was framed in the doorway. "Dorothy!" he roared. "Come in here at once. Do you hear me? *Come in!*"

Dorothy went meekly, while Ted began to whistle a range lullaby. If Sinclair's glare of rage could have killed, Ted would have been struck dead in the seat of the buckboard.

"Go to your room!" the rancher thundered, as Dorothy passed him.

Lucy, standing just within the door of Sinclair's office, caught sight of the girl and smiled. Dorothy smiled back on her way to the stairs.

"Look here, Miss Ware," said Sinclair angrily as he entered the office, "I can't have that young—that—" He paused, fuming.

"Yes?" asked Lucy sweetly.

"Sit down," he said harshly. When she was seated he took the chair by his roll-top desk and looked at her darkly.

"What I want to say is that I can't have that fellow speaking to my daughter," he said evenly. "She is not only the heiress of the S Bar S, she is—she has been brought up different. She doesn't know about such things as you an' Sneed—er—well, I just won't have that scamp talking to her."

"Why don't you tell him so?" was Lucy's comment.

Sinclair sputtered, and bit off the oath that came to his lips.

"I guess you're forgetting that I came here on business," said Lucy coldly.

"Well, have you got the money?" he snapped.

Lucy opened her purse and brought out the check, which she had already indorsed. "Here's your check," she said, again unable to restrain her exultation.

"Check!" exclaimed Sinclair. "I didn't say anything about a check. I asked for the cash. Where is the cash?"

"Present the check!" said Lucy haughtily.

"I don't *have* to take a check," he announced. "I was at the county seat yesterday an' saw my lawyer. I can demand cash. How do I know your check is good, anyway?"

"Oh, if it wasn't you could still take the cattle," said Lucy dryly. "Look at the signature on that check, Sinclair. I've indorsed it to you." She handed him the paper and, as he looked at it, his face grew darker.

"Armstrong, eh?" he muttered. "Well, there's a way to get to him, too."

"Look here, Sinclair," said Lucy in a strange, stern voice. "Do you aim to keep on making trouble for me?"

"Business is business," he growled. "Sneed said cash. I want cash—an' your time's up."

Lucy's laugh, singularly free from mirth, rang in the little room. "You're going to take the check, Sinclair," she said in a low, earnest voice, leaning toward him, "an' you're going to get that note out an' cancel it. But that isn't the point. Are you going to lay off of me an' that boy? I know what you want to do; you want to drive us out. Well, you can't do it. Get that straight, Sinclair. *You can't do it!* We're up there to stay. Now get that note out an' cancel it."

"What makes you think I'm trying to drive you out?" he demanded.

Lucy Ware's eyes flashed. "Why, you fool, don't you think I know

what's stinging you? Do you think I'm simple?" She laughed scornfully. "What do you think I learned in the days when this country was afire—afire, do you hear? I learned about men. I had mostly to do with men, an' most of 'em braver men than you! I can read you like a book—like a book, do you hear? Now listen, Nate Sinclair! If you want trouble on this range you can have it. I can give it to you. I have the means. *Do you want it?*"

"What can you do?" he sneered, although his face paled.

"Do?" Lucy's voice rang with menace. "Do? Nate Sinclair, you cancel that note, as you'd have to do anyway, an' you let me an' the boy alone, if you don't—if you don't——" She paused, her lips drawing into a fine white line.

"Yes?" he said hoarsely.

"*I'll send for Jess Sneed's band!*" she cried shrilly.

Sinclair sat gripping the arms of his chair, his features working, his eyes narrowed and blazing with wrath. No word came from between his clenched teeth.

"Jess Sneed is dead," Lucy went on softly; "but his spirit lives in the wild hearts of the men who followed him. I know those men, Sinclair. They'll follow me if I say the word. I've but to snap my fingers an' the north counties' pact is broken!"

Sinclair snatched open a drawer of his desk and took out a slip of paper which Lucy recognized. He wrote rapidly across the face of the note and handed it to her.

"You're still The Queen, eh?" he said grimly.

Lucy didn't answer. She put the canceled note in her purse and, without looking at him, went out of the office and the house. Ted looked with wonder at her white face and jumped out to help her into the buckboard.

"What's the matter, Aunt Lucy? Did he——"

"Drive out of here," Lucy said in a strained voice. "I want to get home."

They rested at the river springs, where Ted unhooked the horses, watered, fed them, and tied them in the shade of the trees. Then he and Lucy ate the food they had brought with them. They talked; but Lucy did not tell Ted of the threat she had used against the powerful rancher. Indeed, now that it was over, there was doubt in her mind as to whether she could carry out such a threat, even if she so wished. But she believed it would protect them. And yet—why did they now need protection? Sinclair and his lawyer in the county seat! The cattle were paid for; the ranch was clear of debt to Sinclair. Her smile returned as they resumed their journey.

It was late that night when they reached the ranch and Lucy went straight to bed. She was tired, but satisfied.

But peace was not yet to come to the Lazy L.

At four o'clock next afternoon, Sheriff Frost rode up to the ranch accompanied by two deputies. He dismounted and met Lucy on the porch. He greeted her gravely.

"I've got to take the boy down to town," he announced.

Lucy stared, white-faced. She had, for the time being, forgotten the shooting of Balmer. Then she brightened.

"Frost," she said slowly, "you can't touch Ted. I saw that whole business from just inside the door here. I saw Balmer go for his gun first when he *knew* Jess was crippled. He might have shot the two of them if it hadn't been for Ted."

The sheriff's eyes roved about uneasily. He didn't like this business. There was the matter of the rewards connected with Sneed's death. There

was a probability that the thing would be negotiated so that he would profit by that unexpected happening.

"I can't help it," he said. "Sinclair made the complaint day before yesterday. There's a warrant and an indictment coming up. But the boy won't be there long. He'll probably be back to-morrow. I'm pretty sure the county attorney will send him back on his own, an' likely the whole thing will be quashed. But I've got to take him down to-night."

"So *that's* why Sinclair went to the county seat," Lucy said, as if to herself. "All right, Frost, I'll go along. I'll get him out if I have to put up all my cattle an' the ranch for bail!"

"No need to come, Miss Ware," said the sheriff. "We're riding fast. If he shouldn't be back by to-morrow—*then* you could drive down."

At this moment there came a pounding of hoofs and Ted galloped in from the range. His glance darted from one to the other of them, and to the two waiting deputies. Then he understood.

"You wantin' me, sheriff?" he called cheerfully.

"I reckon I'll have to take you in," said Frost wryly. "But I don't think it'll be for long. You'll be back soon."

"When we startin'?" Ted quickly asked.

"Soon's you're ready," replied Frost.

"That'll be in about a quarter of an hour," said Ted, as he started for the barn.

"Honestly, Miss Ware," the sheriff began, "I——"

"Stop!" cried Lucy in a fury. "You're nothing but Nate Sinclair's tool. Don't you know, you fool, that he doesn't care a rap about Balmer's being shot. It's that girl of his—Dorothy. She's sweet enough an' all that; it isn't any of *her* fault. But Ted's seen her an' talked to her a time or two, an' Sinclair's furious! He thinks

Jess wanted to make a bad man out of Ted, an' that's a lie, Frost, an' you know it! Sinclair offered to buy my ranch. He was sore to-day when I paid off the note for the cattle we bought from him. He wants to drive us out of here, an' he *can't!* Listen, Frost, if Sinclair wants trouble on this range, he'll *get* it. An' sooner or later I want to know who *you're* siding with!"

She left him and hurried inside to get some things together for Ted, who was ordering a fresh horse. He came in to find her almost in tears, and he put his arms about her.

"It'll be all right, Aunt Lucy," he said, "we might as well get it over now as later."

She kissed him, and stood on the porch and watched them ride away—watched until all she could see was a thin spiral of dust which the sun touched with gold. Then she went into the living room and sat in a chair, rocking ceaselessly; but no tears came to her eyes. Lucy Ware had long since learned to bear her sorrows in undemonstrative silence.

She ate little supper; and again she sat, rocking and thinking, while the twilight gathered and the night wind stirred in the trees.

In time she made up her mind. In the morning she would send for Buck Andrews, who was with the cattle, and would have him drive her down to the county seat. She would see the county attorney and place every resource at her command at the disposal of the court to secure Ted's release. And for the first time she felt a poignant pain in her heart because Jess Sneed was gone.

Dusk deepened into night and the stars broke through the purple canopy of the sky. The colored woman came in and lighted the lamp. She had hardly left the room when a rolling sound as of thunder reached Lucy's

ear. She started and sat erect. The thunder sharpened into the staccato of flying hoofs on the road. Lucy gripped her chair, but did not rise. She did not seem to have the strength to do so. Then horsemen came swarming into the yard. Lucy heard hoarse

commands given. The stamp of boots and jingle of spurs sounded on the porch steps. Then she saw a slight figure in the doorway and a pair of eyes held her gaze as a shudder swept over her.

Snark Levant had arrived!

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



I-SEE-O, THE PEACEMAKER, GOES TO HAPPY HUNTING GROUND

MANY of the notable American Indians have achieved their fame by virtue of their courage and daring on the field of battle, but the old Kiowa Indian scout, I-See-O, although in the United States army for most of his seventy-five or more years of life, was noted as a man of peace.

I-See-O died a few weeks ago at the military reservation of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, aged between seventy-five and eighty. He held the rank of sergeant in the United States army, and is believed to have been the oldest active soldier in the service. He was also the last of the Kiowa Indian scouts.

The old Indian owed his fame to his accomplishments as a peacemaker between his own people and the white men. His chief achievement in this respect was his preventing the Kiowa and Comanche Indians from joining the "Ghost Dance uprisings" in 1890. At that time, there were rumors of a new messiah or prophet who had arisen among the Piutes, in Nevada, and many of the tribes were taking the warpath. There would have been great loss of life among the white settlers of the adjacent region, if the Kiowas and Comanches had been drawn into the uprising. By eloquent appeals to his people, I-See-O succeeded in dissuading them from taking the warpath. As a recognition of his service, Congress awarded him the position of a regular sergeant in the United States army as long as he should live. He was given a comfortable cottage on the Fort Sill reservation, but he used it as a storehouse, preferring to live in a tepee and cook his own meals over an open fire, rather than partake of the army fare.

Although wearing Uncle Sam's uniform, I-See-O stuck to his moccasins as footgear and also to his long braids of hair, his tepee, and his own style of cooking. His accomplishments as a man of peace, bringing about good feeling and friendliness between red men and white, entitle him to high rank among the people of his race—higher than that of many Indian chieftains whose careers are marked by ruthless warfare and stubborn hostility to the progress of the white man's civilization.



Under Sinking Ground

by Reginald C. Barker

Author of "Grizzly Gallagher, Avenger," etc.



HEY called him "Dickie" in Silver Glance, which shows how much they loved him. For mining camps breed hard men, not given to using terms of endearment even to those whom they love best. In places like Silver Glance men hide their real feelings beneath a crust of gruffness, as the rough old mountains guard their treasure. Fortunate is he whose real name has become almost forgotten by his friends through sixty-four years' usage of a diminutive like Dickie.

Dickie was a Trego by birth—to be exact, a Richard Cornwallis Trego—one of the Tregos of Trewartha, a mining village on the southwest coast of England which was at one time to Cornwall what Silver Glance was fifty years ago to the State of Idaho. Yet there was a difference, too; for while the

wealth of Silver Glance lay in the silver and gold ores hoarded by the ragged gray hills among which the camp is situated, the riches of Trewartha lay in the vast deposits of tin ore found beneath a rocky promontory overlooking the choppy green waters of the English Channel. Upon the summit of that promontory Trewartha was built more than a thousand years ago.

Dickie could have told you more than I can about the village in which he was born and the mine beneath the sea, where the water dripping from the roof of the tunnels was bitter to the tongue, and white salt crystals coated the aged mine timbers of English oak and caught and played with the flickering light of the miners' tallow dips.

"Silver Glance an old camp?" Dickie was wont to remark to an occasional loquacious tourist up from the State capital to visit the 'Ghost City.' "No,

sir; Silver Glance ain't old. You'd ought to see Trewartha. There are two hundred miles of workings in the mine beneath the sea where I first learned to use a pick or poke and a single-jack seventy-two years ago. Nine years old I was when I went to work as a tool nipper in the tin mines of Trewartha. Had to, y'know, after the sea broke in and flooded the heading where father and two more were working. Some one had to support my mother and baby sister. And there was only me. Shilling a day was all I got; had to work ten hours a shift, too. My, but it was hard! Yes, sir; back home they say that the mines of Trewartha used to supply tin to the cities of Sidon and Tyre, and they do say the Phœnician slaves used to work in that same mine where first I learned to hammer on a drill. Maybe they did for all I know. The mines of Trewartha are very old."

It never seemed to occur to Dickie that he, too, was very old, as the age of man goes. A square-built little man he was; maybe an inch over five feet tall, with snowy white hair and mustache and very blue eyes. He had a way of standing on tiptoe when he talked to a man taller than himself. Dickie was seventy-six when he quit mining after having worked the better part of sixty-seven years underground. The last five years of his life he ran a little store in Silver Glance.

It was a ramshackle old building with walls that were all out of plumb, due to the fact that old mine workings beneath them had caused the ground to settle. Across the false front of the store part of an old sign still remained, D—n H—ll.

"That's what it was, too," Dickie would say with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "Never was nothing like that, y'know, back home in Trewartha."

There was one window in the front of the store; a six-paned affair with a faded remnant of what once had been

red curtain still hanging to a corner of the sash. Behind the dusty panes stood a jar containing a few sticks of candy striped in red and white; a caddy of chewing tobacco, and two or three beaded bags of Indian workmanship.

Entering the store, one found himself in a large room divided by a partition which reached only part way to the ceiling. There was a bare, unpainted counter upon which stood an oval-topped glass show case containing a few strings of colored glass beads, cheap articles of jewelery, and some bright-colored neckties. At the back of the counter the wall was lined with three shelves which supported bottles of patent medicines, a supply of canned goods and a few bolts of floweredingham and outing flannel.

A dingy, unprofitable business was Dickie's. It could not have afforded him much more than a bare living. Any summer day he might have been seen sitting in the open doorway gazing across the blue-gray slopes of the Owyhee Mountains; and all winter long, between the hours of eight a. m. and five p. m., the old miner could be found seated near his big box heater puffing away at his black old pipe, waiting for customers and dreaming only he knew what dreams.

"Eight hours a day is a shift," Dickie insisted, "not a minute more nor less."

Once when a newcomer to Silver Glance suggested to Dickie that he put in another window, as the light in the store was quite dim, the old miner removed his pipe from his mouth in surprise and shook his white head.

"No," he said, "I like it this way. Y'see I worked sixty-seven years in the underground."

Every stranger who arrived in Silver Glance came to see Dickie. "Side-hill Johnny," the hotel keeper, saw to that, for although Dickie's stock of merchandise offered few attractions, he possessed something else; something the

fame of which had spread through every mining region in the West. Dickie owned the richest and rarest specimen of gold and silver ore ever taken out of a mine in Silver Glance.

To obtain a view of it, one had to purchase something out of Dickie's store; then from some mysterious hiding place he would bring forth his treasure.

Great museums of the East had sent men out to buy Dickie's specimen. Rich men had offered him more than it was worth; large-bosomed ladies carrying gold mesh purses had tried to tempt him into selling it to them so that they could exhibit it with pride to other ladies. Pretty young things escorted by slick-haired sheiks came to giggle at it, and with smiles and pouts and "I could just love that" and "it's so cute" tried to beguile the old miner into parting with his treasure.

"Can't do it, y'know," Dickie would reply. "It wouldn't do you any good; couldn't mean anything to you, y'see. You'd only put it in the attic after a while and forget it, or give it to the kids to play with. Think a lot of that bit o' rock, I do. Means quite a bit to me! Y'know I dug that out of the ground myself more than fifty years ago. There ain't another like it in the whole world."

Dickie may have been right about that, because he did not mean that it was the most valuable specimen in the world. Not he; he knew all about the great Welcome Nugget of Australia and the Hunker Creek nugget of Alaska, and many others the worth of any one of which would have exceeded the value of his specimen hundreds of times. For Dickie's specimen was not a nugget at all. Its value lay in its oddity rather than in the precious metals it contained; although those alone may have been worth several hundred dollars. But the longer a man follows mining, the greater is the appeal

to him of any unusual rock formation. And the formation of Dickie's specimen was the most unusual he had ever seen in all his sixty-seven years underground.

It was about the shape and size of a man's two hands laid side by side, and its thickness may have been a trifle less than three inches; that is, it was a flat, irregular-shaped piece of stone. Pieces of stone may describe it better, for one side of the slab was granite-stained by oxidization to the color of a well-cooked griddle cake. The other side of the slab was of porphyry, darkish green and covered with yellow splotches that looked like gold. They were not gold, though; the gold lay between the two slabs of rock like a layer of ham in a sandwich. There was a solid inch of it, and it was all filled with crystals of ruby silver—pyrargyrite—of a deep crimson color. Some of these crystals hung on the edges of the specimen like winking crimson diamonds; in fact one rich woman thought those beautiful crystals were "utterly wasted in that dirty old piece of rock."

The specimen had been presented to Dickie in 1865 by the manager of the Poorman Mine as a souvenir. For, at a depth of one hundred feet, Dickie had uncovered a body of native ore which weighed five hundred pounds and was a solid mass of ruby, silver and gold. The specimen had once been part of that Bonanza vein.

"Regular Aladdin's treasure," Dickie would often say, "with me holding of the lamp. Never seen anything like it! When they tried to run it through the mill the gold and silver just flattened out in sheets beneath the stamps. No, they couldn't crush it at all; had to melt it down just the way it came from the mine." And his audience would stare covetously at the specimen; then wink at each other, and wonder how much longer Dickie would live and who would get the specimen when he died.

Having produced about six million dollars in ten years the Poorman Mine closed down; but, after lying idle for some thirteen years, it was taken over and reopened by a new company. And miners from all over the country came to Silver Glance in search of employment.

Among them were Dave Craddock and his wife.

For eighty-five dollars the Craddocks bought an old shack facing Florida Mountain, and for some months Dave worked at the Poorman Mine; then something went wrong with the company's finances and the mine closed down again and an exodus of miners from Silver Glance followed. But the Craddocks did not leave; they couldn't very well, for Dave was one of those fellows who believed that the quickest and easiest way to make a stake was to play poker every night down at Side-hill Johnny's place. That is how it happened that autumn found Dave Craddock out of work, out of money, and very much in debt to Dickie for groceries.

Dickie had never refused credit to any one in Silver Glance. He did not refuse it to Maggie Craddock. And one day when she came into the little store, Dickie showed her the specimen.

She did not enthuse as others had done; just held it in her thin hands as one might hold a treasure; her great blue eyes widening in amazement, for Maggie Craddock was the daughter and granddaughter and wife of a miner. She knew ore.

"High grade!" she breathed, her bosom rising and falling beneath her faded gingham dress. "Don't you show that to Dave."

Standing on tiptoe in the dimly lit store, Dickie gazed earnestly into the face of the girl; there seemed something hauntingly familiar to him in her voice, as though the ghost of a loved one had spoken from beyond the grave.

"D'you think he'd try to steal it, lass," asked Dickie, "from an old man like me?"

The bitterness of a soul that has awakened too late was in Maggie Craddock's eyes as she said fiercely.

"A man who'd gamble all his earnings away with me the way I am, would steal pennies from a child."

Shocked into silence, Dickie could only gaze at her with the childlike innocence of old age, as half hysterically she swept on.

"What'll we do, Dickie? You are old, so you ought to know. Here we are penniless, with winter coming on. I ain't even got the money to do a bit of sewing for what's coming to me soon."

Taking the specimen from Maggie's trembling hands, Dickie laid it on the bare counter, then he placed his gnarled old fingers on her shoulder and with his other hand pointed to the shelves.

"If there's anything there you can use, lass," he said, "take it home with you. Then tell Dave Craddock that Dickie wants to see him."

She caught one of his hands in hers and raised it to her lips.

"I can't pay you," she said chokingly. "I can't pay you, Dickie, now nor never."

"I ain't asked you," said Dickie gruffly, as he snatched away his hand and pulled out his old black pipe. "I'll settle all that with Dave, y'know."

"You won't show him the high grade, will you, Dickie?" she begged.

"Don't worry about the specimen," said Dickie; "nobody would steal from an old man like me."

Lifting down a bolt of gaudy-flowered gingham from a shelf, he laid it on the counter near the specimen of ore.

"Seems to me, lass," he said quaintly. "a yard or so of this would make a rare dress for a baby."

Maggie smiled, and explained to him

that it was better to use white goods for her purpose; and she spoke of other matters which embarrassed Dickie so much that he hurried to his own quarters, ostensibly to look for his scissors, and left her to measure off the number of yards she wanted. When he returned, Maggie was standing near the door with a bundle beneath her arm.

"I found some scissors on the shelf," she said. "I cut off ten yards of your softest white outing flannel, Dickie. Somehow I'll make out to pay you some time."

"There's some left, y'know," said Dickie, as he put the bolts of goods back on the shelves, "if y'need any more."

Courteously he held the door open for her as she passed out; then he stood watching her with wistful old eyes. There was something in her straight-backed carriage and long free stride that vaguely reminded him of the deep-bosomed Cornish girls of Trewartha.

Seating himself in his chair by the stove Dickie looked backward across the years and thought of the white-washed cottage with the brown thatched roof in which he had been born, and of the tin mine beneath the sea. He felt weary and very old.

When Dave Craddock came into the store Dickie was nodding drowsily, as sometimes old men do. It took him a minute or so to remember why Maggie's husband had come.

"Draw up another chair, lad," he said at last; "it's a bit fresh outside, y'know."

"My woman said you wanted to see me," hinted Dave Craddock as he eased himself into a chair and crossed his long legs. "It's about that bill, I s'pose?"

Dickie puffed hard at his pipe and a cloud of blue smoke arose and hung like a veil between him and Dave Craddock.

"If I had a wife," remarked Dickie absently, "I wouldn't say 'my woman.'

I take it you've worked long enough around the mining camps to know the difference."

The miner studied the toe of his boot for a moment; then he gave a reckless laugh.

"If that's all you wanted to say to me," he intimated, "guess I'll be going where there's better company."

Now Dickie had handled men for a matter of fifty years; the unafraid men who work underground. Therefore he chose to ignore his visitor's manner.

"Seems like Maggie will need a doctor soon," said Dickie.

"What's that to you?" growled Dave Craddock. "Might be as well if you'd attend to your own business."

"It is my business," said Dickie placidly. "Y'see, if you don't go to work and take care of your wife, she'll have to go to the county hospital. That's something that has never happened before in Silver Gance."

"There ain't any work in the camp," said Dave Craddock uneasily.

"Then how do you propose to live through the winter?" asked Dickie.

"I thought——" began the miner.

"You thought I would keep on letting you have groceries on credit," interrupted Dickie. Well, I won't. That is, not unless you go to work and support your wife the way you ought to."

"So that's it, is it?" said Dave Craddock. "Mag has been whining around you, has she?" Rising to his feet he towered over the little old Cornishman and shook his fist angrily.

"Sit down," said Dickie, "and don't be a fool. Maggie never spoke a word against you in her life, y'know. It's no use getting nasty about it; I'm not afraid of you."

Dickie had not raised his voice, but after one look at those cold Cornish eyes the big miner slumped back into his chair and dropped his black, curly head between his hands.

"That's better," said Dickie. "Now,

what I was going to say is that I can give you a job——"

"Huh?" interrupted Dave Craddock, looking up.

"Underground," concluded Dickie. "Pretty dangerous ground, too; about the worst I've seen in sixty-seven years of mining."

Dave Craddock sprang up as suddenly as though he had been challenged to fight.

"I ain't never seen any ground yet that I was afraid of," he boasted. "Where is it, and what do you want done?"

"Under this house," replied Dickie, "there are some abandoned mine workings. Unless they are timbered up pretty soon the store will drop out of sight. Let's go and have a look at the old tunnels and see what can be done."

A blast of damp, cold air made the candles flicker, as Dickie opened a trapdoor in the floor and disclosed a timbered hole to one side of which was fastened a ladder which dropped into darkness.

"It is about thirty feet to the level," he explained as he led the way down the ladder. "It is pretty well choked up with fallen rock and broken timbers, but the air is good unless you get too far back."

Rats squeaked and ran from the flickering lights as the two men made their way along a dripping tunnel. Here and there the timbers which had supported the ground had buckled under the terrific weight. In other places they had given way entirely, so that the men had to crawl on their stomachs over evil-smelling heaps of shattered rock and sticky, grayish mud from which, all covered with woolly white fungus, the ends of half-buried timbers stuck out like dead men's legs.

"A bad place to expect a man to work," commented Dave Craddock.

"I've worked in just as bad places," said Dickie, "underneath the sea.

You'd ought to see the old workings of the tin mines of Trewartha."

They reached a wide chamber blasted out of the living granite; a comparatively dry part of the mine that once had been a station. Seating himself on a fallen fragment of rock, Dave Craddock raised his candle until its light fell full on Dickie's wrinkled old face.

"Cousin Jack, ain't you?" he asked.

"Cornish," corrected Dickie. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Dave Craddock carelessly, "only I've heard my woman say that her mother's mother was a Trego of Trewartha. According to what Mag claims, her grandmother married a Cousin Jack back home, and with her husband came to this country long about fifty years ago. But my woman was born and raised in Butte. We were married there while I was working at the Copper Prince Mine 'long about three years ago. Seems like my woman must be some kin to you."

"Now fancy that!" exclaimed Dickie Trego, staring at his feet.

It grew very still; so quiet it seemed as if the flames of the candles stood still to listen. Then a piece of rock dropped from the roof and splashed into a black pool, and a rat squeaked behind a fallen timber. Backward across seventy-two years the thoughts of the old Cornishman sped to the day he had stood beside his mother looking down at his baby sister lying in her crib; backward to the time when he, as a nine-year old lad, was working in the mine beneath the sea. Sixty-four years had passed since he had left Cornwall; fifty-two years since he had heard from his people. Then out of the past a dead hand had reached and touched him. Dickie hardly knew what to say, but he did know that he wanted to get out where he could breathe freely; he wanted to talk to Maggie Craddock about the Tregos of Trewartha. Silently he arose to his feet, feeling his

years weighing heavily upon him, and haltingly he led the way back to the light of day.

In the store he turned to Dave Craddock; for he wanted to get rid of the miner.

"You can start work in the morning," he said, "if you can handle the job." His blue eyes were fierce as he added, "Maggie will draw your pay."

Muttering to himself Dave Craddock left the store, and Dickie almost fell into his chair by the stove. From force of habit he drew out his old black pipe and filled and lit it. Then he leaned back and closed his eyes.

An hour he sat there almost as motionless as though he were dead; then he opened his eyes, laid his pipe on the table, and tottered over to the counter upon which he had last seen the specimen of rich ore he had cherished so long.

The specimen was gone.

Yet Dave Craddock had not been out of Dickie's sight for a moment.

Dickie never had been one to jump at hasty conclusions, nor was he easily angered; so he just stood there with the knuckles of one hand showing white beneath the freckled skin as he gripped the corner of the counter. He just stood there staring at the spot where the specimen had lain, trying his best not to believe that Maggie Craddock was a thief.

There never had been a thief among the Tregos of Trewartha.

Yet Dickie knew that Dave Craddock had not taken the specimen; that was incontrovertible; and although the store had not been locked while the two men were underground, it never occurred to Dickie that the specimen had been stolen by any of his neighbors in Silver Glance.

Dickie knew what would happen if he went to Sheriff Callard and told his story. Dave Craddock and his wife would be asked to leave Silver Glance.

Dickie didn't see that that would do any particular good; it seemed to him that there ought to be some way of straightening the matter out without breaking Maggie's heart.

So Dickie determined to say nothing to anybody about the disappearance of the specimen until he had talked with Maggie.

He was still thinking the matter over when Side-hill Johnny came in to buy a plug of tobacco. He was a man of beefy build who owed his nickname to a physical peculiarity which caused him to sidle in his gait very much like a crab. He ran the hotel in Silver Glance, and it was said that the only way he could reach the post office was by starting up the opposite side of the street. He had a trick of repeating to himself anything that was said to him, much as a schoolboy repeats a word he is asked to spell.

"Plug of chewing tobacco," said Side-hill Johnny as, breathing heavily, he lowered his bulk into a creaking chair.

"Dave Craddock is going to work for me in the morning," said Dickie.

"Dave Craddock is going to work for you in the morning," repeated Side-hill Johnny dutifully.

"Setting new timbers under the building, y'know," explained Dickie.

"Setting new timbers under the building, you know," repeated Side-hill Johnny staring at the stove.

"Did you by any chance mention to Dave that my name is Trego?" asked Dickie.

"Did I by any chance mention to Dave that your name is Trego?" repeated Side-hill Johnny. "Seems to me I did."

"A Trego of Trewartha?" persisted Dickie.

"A Trego of Trewartha," agreed Side-hill Johnny. Suddenly his brain seemed to function on its own account and he looked almost intelligent.

"Dave and me are through playing cards," he remarked. "I've won his last dollar."

"Yes?" said Dickie interrogatively.

"Yes," echoed the fat man over his shoulder, as he sidled out of the store.

Dave Craddock came to work next morning. His face was haggard, as though from lack of sleep, and there was a certain terror in his eyes.

"I'd like to get a little grub to take home with me when I come off shift to-night," he said hesitatingly. "Mag can't come herself; she ain't none too well."

The wisdom acquired in eighty-one years was in Dickie's eyes as he studied the miner's face. In it was the fear which only one thing can awaken in the heart of a man who loves his wife. And all the more terrible it is when it lays its hand on those men who guard their hearts as the mountains guard their treasure.

"I'll take the things down to your place myself, y'know," said Dickie. "Maggie will be glad to hear you have touched your last card."

"How did you know?" the miner asked, with bent head.

"I can read what's written on your face," said Dickie shortly. He pulled out an old silver watch and glanced at the dial. It showed seven minutes to eight o'clock. Lighting two candles, he handed one to Craddock and remarked, "Time to go on shift."

Leaving Dave Craddock at work among the rotting timbers of the old mine, Dickie ascended the ladder. In the store he filled a basket with groceries. He had forgotten about the specimen.

A woman opened the door of the Craddock's house to Dickie; a tall, gaunt woman with fierce, black eyes. Silver Glance knew her as Sal. For more than forty years she had lived alone in a great house at the upper end of the camp. With a hand on each

door jamb she barred the way and said harshly.

"You can't come in."

Dickie didn't want to go in; money couldn't have hired him to go through that door. For he understood.

"I'll get Dave," he said hurriedly; "seems like Maggie needs him, y'know."

"Only God can help Maggie now," said Sal. And she shut the door gently in Dickie's face.

On his way back to the store Dickie passed Side-hill Johnny ambling toward the post office.

"Get Doc Herries on long distance phone," shouted Dickie. "Tell him to get here as fast as his car can bring him. My expense. Maggie Craddock is dying."

"Get Doc Herries on——" began Side-hill Johnny, but Dickie was gone.

Candle in hand, Dickie descended the shaft in the floor of the store. When his feet touched bottom he stood still and listened.

Only the drip, drip, drip of water broke the heavy silence.

The sixth sense common to men who have worked long in the mines told Dickie what had happened, even before he found Dave Craddock pinned down by a mass of broken timbers and rock.

Dave's white face stared up into the flickering light of the candle as Dickie bent over him.

"Get out of here, you old fool," he whispered, "the ground is going to cave again."

Dickie picked up an iron bar and slid the end under the largest of the timbers which were pinning the miner down. Then with his powerful old shoulder beneath the other end of the crowbar he heaved with all his strength.

"Crawl out of there if you can," he ordered. "Maggie needs you."

Fragments of rock began to fall from the black void above, giving warning that the ground was about to cave again. Dickie stood fast.

With the fear of death in his soul, Dave Craddock spoke.

"Maggie ain't no kin of yours, Dickie. I lied to you about that. I thought you would help us out if you thought she was a Trego of Trewartha."

"Shut up!" gasped Dickie, bent almost double under the weight of the timber he was trying to move. "Get out of there before I ki-kick you in the ribs."

Dripping white mud, the timber rose with a sucking sound, higher, higher, until at last on one hand and his knees Dave Craddock crawled out. Blood was oozing slowly from under the mud that caked his face.

"You——" he began, then rocks crashed down and the candle went out, just as they reached a point in the tunnel beyond the reach of the caving ground.

Dave Craddock had one arm broken, and a falling rock had gashed his face from brow to chin; but he was able to stagger to the foot of the ladder in the shaft and at last, with Dickie's aid, he reached the store.

"Wash your face," said Dickie curtly, "and I'll tie up your head. Can't go to Maggie that way, y'know."

From a shelf the old man took down the bolt of white outing flannel from which Maggie had cut what she wanted. It did not occur to him that it was not at all suitable for a bandage. As he threw it down on the counter it unrolled and there, between two layers of the white flannel, lay Dickie's lost specimen.

The old miner stared, then hurriedly he laid the specimen back on a shelf where Dave Craddock could not see it when he returned from the back room where he was washing his face.

"Maggie is waiting for you," said Dickie, when he had bandaged Dave's head. "The doctor will set your arm when he comes."

"Sorry I told you that lie about Mag-

gie being a Trego," apologized Craddock as he put out his sound hand.

"Oh, shut up," said Dickie, "and go home to your wife. You didn't fool me a bit, for the last of my folks died more than fifty years ago."

After Craddock had gone Dickie pulled out his old black pipe and lit it. Then he took the specimen from the shelf and sat looking at it for a long time.

Three weeks later Dave Craddock came into the store to find Dickie in his accustomed position near the stove.

"Sit down," he said, "it's a bit fresh outside."

"Maggie wants to see you," said Dave, "right away."

"Your job's waiting for you," said Dickie absently, "but I'll have to show you how to put new timbers under this store. Y'see, you don't know very much about working underground."

"You've taught me a lot I didn't know," said Craddock as they left the store.

With her thin hands in his, Maggie told Dickie how she had hidden the specimen for fear that he would show it to Dave, who might be unable to resist the temptation to steal it.

"I meant to tell you before," she explained, "but I couldn't get back. I suppose you thought I had stolen it myself."

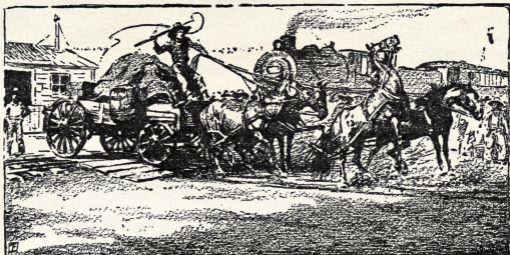
"I thought it would turn up sooner or later," said Dickie. Uneasily he stood there, twisting his old hat in his hands, wondering how soon they'd let him go.

"Don't you want to see our baby?" asked Maggie. "We've named him after you."

"After me?" repeated the old miner.

"Bet you," corroborated Craddock; "we've named him Dickie."

"Fancy that!" exclaimed the old Cornishman. "Y'know my name isn't Dickie at all; it is Richard Cornwallis Trego."



Cherokee Trails

by George Washington Ogden

Author of "Short Grass," "The Cow Jerry," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

THOMAS SIMPSON is befriended by Sid Coburn, cattleman. Simpson defends Wallace Ramsey, one of Coburn's men, in a fight, and rides off on Coburn's horse, unaware that it also carries thirty-five thousand dollars of Coburn's. Simpson lands at the Block E Ranch, where Eudora Ellison and her mother try to increase their income by selling the bones of cattle which had perished in the great storm three years before.

The Ellisons like Simpson and are hospitable. A posse arrives at the ranch, ostensibly in pursuit of the stolen horse, but really after the gold. Simpson shoots the leader, the notorious Wade Harrison. Simpson returns the money to Coburn and joins the Ellisons' bone business.

Sheriff Treadwell trails Harrison's gang. He and Simpson become friends. "Waco" Johnson, fired by Coburn, is admitted to partnership in the bone business.

Simpson rides to town for supplies. The Harrison gang raid the Ellison ranch in search of him, drive off the cattle, and wound Johnson.

Simpson follows the thieves, recaptures the horses, and drives them home before him. Pursued, his horse is shot under him. The bandits are triumphant, but disappear at sight of two newcomers on horseback. Simpson joyfully greets Sheriff Treadwell and Wallace Ramsey, for whom he had fought.

The three ride home together, stopping at one of Coburn's camps. Coburn apologizes for his suspicions of Simpson. Simpson returns to the Ellison ranch alone, en route returning the rescued horses to the homesteaders.

Simpson drives a load of bones to the railroad station, near which he has the agent's permission to dump them, and is interrupted by the marshal. Realizing that this is merely an attempt of the latter to save his own dignity, Simpson disarms him, drives him out beyond his jurisdiction, and challenges him to fight. The marshal runs away. Tom, driving home with the empty bone wagon, reflects on his past and speculates on his future.

CHAPTER XXI.

LAME PRETENSE.



MRS. ELLISON had given Tom a list of groceries and the money to buy them; Waco Johnson had commissioned him to bring out a supply of tobacco. Tom's hasty exit from Drumwell was responsible for his return to

the gate empty-handed, and he was much troubled to devise an explanation that would satisfy them without divulging the true reason for his apparent negligence.

Waco, evidently on the watch, heard the wagon before it came in sight. He hobbled to the gate, opened it, and stationed himself there like a toll taker, his mouth dry for a smoke. A grin spread all over his face as Tom rounded

to and struck the gate with the double team as nicely as Waco himself could have done it. He reached up a broad rough hand as Tom came to a stop exactly beside him.

"Hi, Tom?" he hailed heartily. "How you likes to be a w'ale?"

Tom understood this peculiar pleasantry somewhat better than Mrs. Ellison. While he had no more notion than anybody else what felicity there was in the life of a whale that would inspire anybody on the Kansas prairie with a desire to exchange places with one, he knew that Waco meant to express the utmost feeling of friendship, good-fellowship and admiration when he put the absurd question. Indeed, his manner of speech might lead one uninitiated to suppose it that Waco took him for a whale, for he invariably put it that way:

"How you likes to be a w'ale?"

Tom assured him, as always, that he'd like it fine, and then jumped right in to take the blame for coming home without tobacco. Waco's face elongated till there was not a horse in the team that could have bested him much on measurement.

"Hell's woodpeckers! I'm out!" he said.

"So am I," Tom admitted glumly. "I left there in a whale of a hurry—tell you about it later—here comes Eudora."

Waco knew it was something important that made a man leave town in such a hurry as to forget not only his friend's tobacco but his own, and he suspected it was a business that Tom wanted to keep from the women, above all.

"You made a flyin' trip, Tom," Eudora said, running up, the brightness of welcome in her face.

"He's a flyin' gopher," said Waco, pulling his long, lugubrious face down to wet-leather length. "He come off and forgot my t'backer."

"Oh, you Tom!" she laughed. Then she tiptoed to peep into the wagon. "And you forgot the groceries!" she said, looking up at him in reproving amazement.

"I'm altogether untrustworthy and unfit to run around without a nurse," Tom said contritely. "I didn't think of them, Eudora, till I was fifteen or twenty miles along. Then I didn't want to turn back."

"Of course not," she agreed, but with evident disappointment. "You can get them next trip—but I don't know what we're going to do without sugar and coffee."

Tom brightened a little.

"I think Waco and I've got enough of both to hold you till I can bring your supplies."

"We sure have, Eudory. If that's all that's worryin' you, take it easy."

Waco was quick to support his partner in the difficulty, leaving explanations to their proper time and place.

"You'll have to lend us a cup or two, then. But what on earth were you thinkin' of, Tom, to forget them that way?"

"I was figuring on prospective profits, I expect—building air castles, you know."

"Bone mansions," said Waco, his big grin stretching all over his face.

Mrs. Ellison arrived on the scene before Tom could drive on to unhitch. She inquired about the trip, of which Tom gave a glowing, although brief, account.

"But he forgot the groceries!" Eudora said with tragic accusation.

Mrs. Ellison looked at him in speechless vexation, Tom's face growing so hot and red that it almost hurt.

"Well, Tom Simpson! You sure are a bright one!" she said.

"Ain't I?" said he, miserably abject.

"Comin' off and forgettin' them groceries, when I told you we was nearly out of soda, and sugar, and

coffee, and canned tomatoes, and beans, and—and nearly everything you didn't get. Think of a grown man—why, Tom Simpson, you must be in love!"

"He ort to be in jail, forgettin' my t'backer," said Waco.

Waco thought to throw a little comic relief into the situation, but his break had the opposite effect on Mrs. Ellison, who looked sharply at Tom. She reached up suddenly and touched his arm, her face white, fright in her eyes.

"What happened down there, Tom?" she asked, her voice as gentle as if she consoled him for a loss.

"Oh, now," said Tom, depreciating her concern. "I'm just a stupid ass!"

"Well, you haven't had your dinner, have you?" She withdrew her hand from his arm slowly, watching him for a betraying flicker of the eye.

"No, I started early and drove slowly, without a stop."

"Come in when you unharness," she said, and would hear of no disobedience to the hospitable order.

Tom drove to the corral, Waco after him.

"If t'backer was all I needed in this world to make me happy," he said, "I'd be throwin' my leg over the moon."

He stopped, turned back and closed the gate, putting up his hand in a mock threat of immediate violence when Eudora would have done it. Mrs. Ellison was looking after Tom, trouble knitting her black brows in a frown. Waco started off again to help unhitch, swinging his game leg, singing his song:

"Oh duhr me, and my duhr too,
If it wasn't for *my* duhr what'd I do?"

He gave Eudora a wink as he passed her, probably to imply in his humorous way that he identified her with the lady of the couplet. She grinned, but not very mirthfully, the cloud of suspicion that all had not been plain going with Tom having spread from her mother's face to her own.

"A man *may* forget sugar and coffee when he's flighty over a woman or something, but when he forgets *t'backer!*" Mrs. Ellison said.

"Mother"—Eudora's voice wavered, her heart felt sad—"mother, do you think——"

"I guess if it's for us to know, he'll tell us," Mrs. Ellison replied gently.

She turned in at the kitchen gate. Eudora followed, her light feet suddenly heavy, the ache of dread, the oppression of fear, in her breast.

It seemed it was not for them to know. Waco and Tom came to the kitchen, where Tom's lunch was spread, talking gayly. Tom praised the team, the wagon, the roads, as he wrought havoc on the hot meal. He said it was a lark to haul bones forty miles, and he was going to load up immediately to be ready for an early start in the morning.

Waco suggested trying out the other four horses which he had broken. Mrs. Ellison made an objection, which Waco calmly overruled. They were as gentle as dogs, he declared, but if you let 'em stand around and forget what they'd learned they'd be as mean as buzzards by the time he wanted to use them. Fine, said Tom; he'd put them through their paces; and he wanted Mrs. Ellison to tie different colors of yarn in his buttonholes, each representing some article in the grocery line. He wasn't coming home without those supplies this trip.

"Yes, and I'll tie a gunny sack around your neck to make you think of that t'backer," Waco said.

Then Waco began to speak of the horses which were left over from the number Tom had brought up from the Nation after the neighbors had taken their animals. Seven of the five were good; the other two fair. He thought it was a shame for the sheriff to take them and waste three or four months trying to find their owners. Feed bills and expenses of one kind and another

would eat their heads off, and there would be nothing left for Tom in the end.

"I couldn't think of laying claim to any of them. The idea is preposterous," said Tom, with his high, frozen dignity.

"The one you rode home," said Waco, "he's a dang good horse. There's only one horse on this place better'n that colt, if you'll take it from a simple-minded feller like me. You're entitled to that one as much as you're entitled to the teeth in your head."

"Not at all," said Tom, distantly.

"The sheriff said so, didn't he, Eudora?"

"That's what he said, Tom."

"He's wrong," said Tom, stiffly. "Somebody owns that horse; it's the sheriff's business to find the owner."

Waco looked at him intently for a moment, incredulity in his leathery old face.

"You're weak," said he.

"You've hit it," Tom said, with the satisfaction he might have displayed if Waco had guessed a riddle which he had thought beyond his powers.

Waco and Eudora laughed, and that glimmer of mirth like firelight on a wall came into Tom Simpson's bright wise eyes. Only Mrs. Ellison was not moved by the humor of the moment. She was sitting a little apart, the crochet work she had been half heartedly doing lying in her lap, a sunbeam coming through the window bright on her idle needle.

"We'll take him for the one they shot under you," Eudora said, touching an episode of his adventure that had not been mentioned between them before.

Tom flushed as if confusion would drown him. If Eudora had accused him of complicity in the loss of the horse his embarrassment could not have been greater.

"Eudora!" her mother reproved gently, but slightly shocked.

Eudora reached out impulsively and touched Tom's hand.

"Oh, Tom! I didn't mean——"

"Very good—*very*, very good!" Tom said, his confusion vanishing before her own. "That will be a fair arrangement, fair compensation. Very, very good."

Waco had taken up his quarters in the bunk house, his wound having grown up, as he expressed it, the recuperative powers of his kind being remarkable. The same qualities which inured these hard riders of the range to its vicissitudes stored up in them phenomenal healing powers. There was no creature alive—with the probable exception of a fishin' worm, as Waco had said—that cured itself of distressing wounds with such celerity as the old-time range man. His mode of life put him pretty much on a level with the lower animals, and a bullet hole more or less, if no bone was broken, no vital part touched, did not long inconvenience him.

All his leg needed now, Waco said, was movement to prevent its stiffening and keeping tender too long. He went around cobbling the harness, the saddles, and everything about the place that stood in need of repairs—and there was plenty to keep him engaged—using his crutch only because Mrs. Ellison insisted, and threatened him with heavy penalties if she caught him without it. His misfortune had turned out a fruitful diversion in Waco's days. He probably never had enjoyed himself so long and continuously before in his life, singing his unvarying two-line song, greasing and hammering and tinkering around in his clever, handy way.

Mrs. Ellison and Eudora liked him as much as he liked them, everybody being on a perfect plane of equality, comfortable, and unrestricted by hampering conventions. Waco knew it was not precisely the polite thing to sit in the house with his hat on, or to remove his boots in the presence of ladies, or

cuss overmuch when they were in hearing, although mild ejaculations were permissible when one hit his thumb with a hammer.

Tom was not surprised when Waco, after standing around while he loaded the wagon for to-morrow's trip, throwing in a bone now and then to prove his returned vigor, proposed that he go along. He said it was beginning to get kind of dull around there, that being the longest vacation he had taken since he was shot up the last time, down in New Mexico eight or nine years ago. He gave this as a pretext to keep his real person under cover—about as successfully as the ostrich who tries to hide by sticking his head in the sand.

He could ride along just as comfortable as a bird in a tree, Waco said, and a man needed company on a slow drive like that. It wasn't the same as rackin' out on a feller's horse to go some place, when he could streak right through. Wagon travel was worse than walkin', the way he looked at it; even a slab-sided old centipede like him was better than no company under such conditions.

Tom thanked him heartily, told him he'd appreciate his company above the company of any man alive, but that his was a one-man business, a purely personal affair at that stage, and he could not permit a friend to become involved. He was appreciative, but firm; so firm that Waco realized further argument would not advance his desires an inch.

"All right, Tom," he yielded. "I fixed up that rifle yisterday so it works fine."

"Thanks, old feller."

"There's a good shotgun here, too. I ain't in favor of a shotgun as a regular, but there's exceptions, as the widder woman said when she married the one-eyed man. I could load you up a dozen shells with buckshot—it'd be excusable if they tried to gang a man. Of course, I always like to keep in the law

myself and stick to my old gun, but a shotgun's excusable, at times, perfectly excusable."

"I don't think anything is going to happen, Waco. That marshal's a crook, with a streak down his back as broad as a skunk's, only his is yellow. The sheriff told me about him, knows him of old. The fellow used to be a sort of outpost for Wade Harrison; he's tipped off the sheriff's hand more than once when Treadwell was about to close in on that outfit. I believe he's due to lie down this trip."

"Yeah, maybe. But I wish you had a cast-iron wagon bed, pardner. You know, I found my old gun—did I tell you? Yeah! Out in the krel, where they either dropped it or threwed it away. It had a bunch of my silvery locks stuck to it—they had the nerve to hit me with my own gun! Guess that's all they thought it was good for, or maybe that they'd bent it over my old rock so it wasn't no use to nobody. It don't look fancy, but you can depend on it like pension money. You can take it along."

"You might need it, old chap; you never can tell. Keep it stickin' around you pretty close—I'll have plenty, a whole lot more than I'll need."

"Maybe," said Waco, but with little faith. "Anyhow, I'll be plenty able to drive next trip. About to-morrow I'm goin' to hitch up them colts and drag in some more bones."

"Don't get too fresh and overdo it, Waco. Many a good man's been ruined by drink and hard work."

"Nobody has to warn me agin' hard work," Waco said, grinning his biggest. "I've been shyin' at it so long I'm wall-eyed."

Eudora came to the porch to hang dish towels on a line strung between the posts. Waco looked at her abstractedly, as if his thoughts were of her but not with her.

"Them two girls suspicion you got

something in your hoof down at Drumwell, Tom," he said.

"Um-m-m," Tom grunted, bending over the pile of bones, pretending little concern in their suspicions.

"Missus Ellison's as uneasy as a cow with a calf hid in the brush," Waco went on, resorting to such homely simile not through any want of respect but because he made his comparisons with the most familiar things. "She'll not sleep a wink till she sees you drivin' up that road ag'in. I don't know, but I think sometimes it's worse to raise up a woman's suspicions by keepin' something from her than to tell her straight out. A woman's funny that way; she can sense things."

"You seem to know them pretty well," Tom remarked, turning on him a quick humorous glance.

"I ort to," Waco sighed.

As he volunteered no additional information on how he came to be master of female psychology, Tom was too polite to inquire. But he supposed Waco's education had come through practical channels, perhaps by marrying. He must have gone quite extensively into the adventure, judging by his oracular declaration.

Eudora, who had stood looking their way as if she considered joining them, hesitated, appearing somewhat wistful and lonely, and returned to the house.

"She's as bright as a lookin'-glass," Waco admired her, "and as handy around the place as a man. She's a good tie-up for some young feller. You remember the time I thought you was married into the fam'ly?"

"Silly old ass!" said Tom.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ANXIOUS DAY.

AS Waco had foretold, the next was an anxious day for the women. Tom had gone off at dawn with his load drawn by the partly broken horses,

which were frisky and frivolous, inclined to lunge at the collar and throw their heels somewhat too high for earnest work. Waco was on hand to give some parting advice.

"Keep 'em steppin' lively for the first hour or two, Tom, and don't let 'em git their tails over the lines or straddle the tugs. You'll soon take the ginger out of 'em. By sunup they'll be as gentle as house cats."

Tom promised to watch the slack of the lines and the frisking tails, and keep them stepping so fast they wouldn't have time to hoist a leg over a tug. He also made Waco do a little pledging on his own account to the effect that he wouldn't attempt to do any hauling that day.

"You lay off of it till I come back, old man," Tom advised. "You've been overdoin' it already from the way you're cripplin' around this morning."

"I got a crimp in my leg; guess I musta slep' crooked on it," Waco explained his limp. "But I'll wait till you come home if you say so, Tom, even if I *could* run a shanghai rooster down when my leg gits limbered up a little. You sure you don't want that shotgun?"

He whispered this question, turning a cautious look toward the kitchen windows. The Ellisons were up, quietly as Tom had made ready and attempted to drive away without disturbing them.

"No, I'll pass it up," Tom replied.

Mrs. Ellison and Eudora came out as Tom was mounting to the high seat, to wish him good luck and say good-by. They attempted a sprightliness which they did not feel, and which did not deceive the man on the load of bones. He drove away with their unvoiced anxiety tinged with gloom the promise of a bright day, a foreboding of trouble ahead of him which his own spirit could not banish.

All that morning Mrs. Ellison went around the house restlessly. She would go to a window and peer down the road

which, since Tom mowed the orchard and cut away the low-hanging limbs, could be seen to the point where it passed over the hill; then to the kitchen porch, where she would stand listening, her head turned as if she expected the sound of distant shots, her face furrowed by an anxiety that would not let her rest.

"I shouldn't have let him go," she said time and again, as the bright morning passed.

Waco was busy in the barn; Eudora slipped into the men's quarters and came back big-eyed and white, to report that Tom had taken the rifle, the revolver he had captured in the raid, her father's pistol, and no telling what else that Waco had supplied!

"I knew it! I knew it!" Mrs. Ellison said fatefully. "I never should have allowed that boy to go."

"We couldn't have stopped him—no-body could," Eudora said hopelessly.

"Waco knows all about it, I can tell by his actions. He's as restless as a wet hen. For two cents I'd have you hitch up the buckboard and I'd go after Tom and make him come back."

"We couldn't." Eudora shook her head slowly, in deep and somber conviction. "He'd make us feel as small as two pins the way he'd hold his head up and bite off his words. He can *look* more insulted and say less about it than any man I ever saw."

"I guess it's the Eastern style; they're said to be cold-hearted folks, although that's the last thing anybody could say of Tom."

"We ought to be the last to think that of him, all he's done for us. I wonder if he thought I blamed him for that horse gettin' killed?"

"A smaller man mighta, the way you said it, but not Tom Simpson. He's quick to feel and know—quicker than any man I ever saw. He's a—I guess what you might call a gentleman, whatever his past may be."

"Mother! I don't believe he's got any past."

"Every man has, if he amounts to a hill of beans. I'll bet that Waco feller's got a history a mile long, and he's so downright honest it does a person good to look at him. Of course we can't blame him for keepin' Tom's trouble from us; he was told to. And men'll stick together—they *will* stick together—whatever other faults they've got."

If everything was all right with Tom, he'd be about at this creek or that hill, Mrs. Ellison anxiously logged his progress through the day. At evening she computed the distance he had made if all had favored him, and the dreaded, unknown danger had not overtaken him on the road. He would be camping at this branch, or at that well with the windmill, or in a named piece of timber where he'd have wood for his fire.

It had been a long time since she had felt this disturbing anxiety for one of her men abroad, not since Ellison used to laugh at her fears in the old Pawnee days. And he had lived through those perils, and healed of many a wound received in battles with those swift-riding raiders who swept up from the south. She had not worried much about him when he spent day and night for three weeks on the blizzard-bound prairies trying to save some of his cattle from the disastrous winter kill, for the woman at home is not so much afraid of nature at its worst as she is of man at his meanest.

The winter storm had done what the Pawnee raiders, the horse thieves and rustlers of the Cherokee trails had failed to do. It had taken Ellison's life. And yet, nothing in the sound of the rising storm made her face blanch, her heart ache with the slow pain of apprehension as did the beat of galloping hoofs on the road at night. So many messengers of danger and disaster, so many appeals for help in extremity, had

come on clattering hoofs to her door through the hampering, frightening, villainy shrouding dark!

All those old ghosts of dead fears had risen with this unknown peril into which Tom Simpson had driven from her gate. She arraigned herself for permitting him to go, when she knew neither command nor persuasion would have restrained him. All night she lay in that state of unrest between wakefulness and sleep, straining for the sound of a galloping horse. She had yielded to the weary strain at dawn, and was asleep when the rider came. It was Wallace Ramsey who came riding hard as the sun was rising. Mrs. Ellison's heart gave one great bound of apprehension, then seemed to stop as she heard the rider halt at the gate. She was at the window as he rode through. Waco Johnson, his breakfast eaten, was coming from the corral to meet him.

Wallace had come directly from Coburn's ranch, having been an incredibly short time on the way. By the time Mrs. Ellison and Eudora had dressed, quickly as only prairie women can accomplish that feat, Wallace had told the news that had quickly brought him riding.

Coburn had returned home from Drumwell between midnight and morning after a forced ride. A gang of squaw men and mongrels was up from the Nation, drinking and carousing at Kane's, making no secret of their intention to wait there until Simpson came in with another load of bones, when they intended to kill him. The toughs of Drumwell, notably the marshal, were lined up with the friends and relatives of Wade Harrison's gang who had lost their lives in Simpson's recent foray against them.

Wallace had hopped his horse at once, at Coburn's request as well as his own inclination, in the hope of reaching the Ellison Ranch before Simpson left. He was greatly concerned when he

learned that he was twenty-four hours too late.

Mrs. Ellison rebuked Waco severely for keeping the facts from her when he knew Tom was going out against such great odds. Waco did not shrivel in the hot blast of her wrath, although she gave it to him unsparingly and without a chance to defend himself until she had said a great deal more than her temperate disposition would have betrayed her into had she not reached the breaking point of strain. Waco heard her to the end, then calmly told her what he knew.

Tom had had trouble with the marshal on his last trip, the hangover of a former row, to which Wallace could and did testify. Tom had not known anything about this graver development which Wallace had come to report.

Ashamed of her outburst, Mrs. Ellison attempted to say she was sorry, but Waco put up his large hand, which seemed to shut her off like a closed door, turned and hurried toward the barn, going as nimbly as if it was somebody else's leg the bullet had gone through a little less than two weeks ago.

Wallace, big-eyed, and white around the end of his nose as if somebody lately had let go that member, was in a fever to start to his friend's assistance. He told the two women how Tom had stood up for him when he needed help; and swore he'd wade through wildcats to pay off what he still felt to be owing on that debt. But how to do it was the question. Eudora suggested the sheriff, giving up the thought almost at once when the element of time was considered. Tom must have made twenty-five or thirty miles yesterday; he would reach town around noon, and it would be all over before the sheriff, or anybody else, could do him a bit of good.

"Give me another horse and turn me loose!" said Wallace.

Wallace was on edge to speed to

Drumwell; he began to strip the saddle off his horse as he spoke, and Eudora went tearing to the barn after Frank—who was never turned out to pasture at night with the other animals—to drive up the horses for Wallace to select his remount.

Waco came out of the barn as she ran up. He was leading his tall lean horse, the one that had carried Simpson on the long ride south trailing the horse thieves. He carried the shotgun over his shoulder; his gun was buckled around his lank body; he was a grim and determined man, ready to ride on a grim and determined business, with a good deal of lead available for delivery.

"Where are you goin', Waco?" Eudora asked, a question that her own eyes had answered the moment she saw him in the door.

"Down the road a piece."

"Wait! That man wants a fresh horse—he'll go with you."

It wasn't much of a job to find the horses, as they always wandered up to the corrals in the morning, where they stood around after their custom, putting their necks over the fence; waiting, it seemed, to learn if they were wanted and, if not, to have it off their minds so they could enjoy the day. Eudora had them in the corral in less than fifteen minutes; and her mother, steady as a clock now, had a pot of coffee on the stove, biscuits in the oven and bacon and eggs in the pan, by the time Wallace had a fresh horse saddled.

Eudora had hopped her horse bare-backed to go to the pasture. She saddled him now, and came to the kitchen gate with him as Wallace was drawn to the table to eat a hasty breakfast. She chafed under this delay; but she was as polite as Wallace was wise. He knew that ten minutes meant little in the job ahead of him, and that a full man was worth more than a hungry one for a long, hard ride. Waco was loading shotgun shells in the bunk house;

he was through by the time Wallace had finished his meal.

Eudora, looking pinched and very pale, rushed out of the house dressed for the saddle, having made the change in two minutes. Her breast heaved as if she had been under water. She said she thought they could get some help down the road from the homesteaders, who all felt deep gratitude and obligation to Tom. She said she was going at once to see what could be done.

"You've got a good head," Waco approved. "Come on."

"Waco Johnson, you get right down off of that horse!" Mrs. Ellison called sharply from the kitchen porch.

"Ma'am?" said Waco, twisting around in surprised comicality, shotgun in hand.

"Do you want to lose that leg?" she demanded.

"If I lose both of 'em clean up to my belly band, I don't give a cuss!" Waco replied.

The three were off, starting with a bound, leaning like jockeys, their resolution made and acted on with celerity that promised badly for the gang at Drumwell, should they have the luck to get there in time.

The long lean veteran of Jo Shelby's brigade was tinkering around his wagon, which stood in the yard loaded with bones, when the three rode up. When Waco, who acted as spokesman, laid the case before him in a few words, the homesteader did not speak; he simply turned and disappeared in his little board shack, which was already beginning to let loose the customary overflow of tow heads.

Eudora looked at Wallace; both turned to Waco. Disappointment and indignation blazed in the girl's eyes. Wallace's jaw went slack in unuttered contempt. He recovered almost at once, however, and started to express himself according to his feelings. Waco put up his big interdicting hand. The home-

steadier stood in the door, buckling a very competent and experienced-looking gun around his middle.

"Where do we meet?" he inquired.

Waco turned to Eudora.

"Where?" he repeated. "You know this country better than I do."

"Down the road where the old cattle trail crosses," she said.

They rode on.

Their forces had been increased by three when they reached the house of the old soldier who had been with Grant at Appomattox. Yes, by heavens! he said; wait till he got his horse and gun. He was a cavalryman—his name was Kerns—and the cunning for quick saddling had not left his hand. He was up and with them, the eager light of adventure in his blue eyes, although his only weapon was a single-barreled, breech-loading shotgun of the type called Zulu.

Eleven men gathered at the crossing of the old cattle trail, including Wallace and Waco, within an hour of the first appeal for help. They were all fairly well mounted; all were accustomed to the saddle, and if luck was with them they could make the thirty-two miles, more or less, between that point and Drumwell in five hours. There was scarcely a man among them that had not suffered some insult or humiliation at the hands of the Drumwell roughs. One had lost a son in a gambling brawl there; all were bitter against the conditions which made the town a place to be avoided.

Added to this was the recent terrifying ordeal they had experienced in being stripped of the very means of existence by the thieves from the Cherokee trails. Simpson had restored their property, by a feat of admirable heroism in their eyes; their gratitude was as great as their relief, and most of them were steady brave men who had already faced death in more than one guise.

Eudora would have gone with them;

but Waco, who had taken the lead by a kind of inherent generalship which all appeared to recognize, lifted his hand sternly and said that was where she turned back. But he lowered it slowly, until his finger tips touched her hair as in a benediction. Then Waco wheeled his horse, and set himself at the head of the little force, Wallace beside him; and the girl was alone at the crossing of the trails, the track of tears on her cold white face.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BRANDED BONES.

FOR all the advice Waco had given him on methods of handling half-broken draft animals, Simpson found himself lacking in a most essential one on the road that day, namely: a prescription for the cure of a balky horse.

Undoubtedly there is no more vexatious animal living than a balky horse, especially one that is usually swift and eager but that stops short in the most critical situations and stands meanly unresponsive to force and persuasion alike. Tom found he had such a horse in his team, a comely, chunky roan gelding with that facial distinction described among horses and men as a roman nose.

Due to the eccentricities of this beast, Simpson covered little more than half the distance between the ranch and Drumwell the first day. According to the inscrutable rules of balky horses the world over—among which there appears to be a close brotherhood with rules and regulations like any labor union—this animal frequently did his share, and more, on hills, leaning to the collar manfully, only to stop in stubborn defiance when he reached the top. Again, he would come up short on level ground, where the pressure of the collar on his shoulders would not have hurt a fly.

Tom tried all the remedies he ever

had heard of, including strapping up a foreleg, leaving the fellow only three to stand on, which appeared to be quite sufficient for his purpose. Sometimes he went on when released from this mild punishment; more often he shook his head in haughty defiance, not at all unlike Tom Simpson's own expression of high aloofness from the petty things of life. Then Tom stuffed the striker's ears with grass, and cinched his belly hard with a rope, which he might as well have tied around himself for all the effect it had on the refractory beast. When it got ready to go, it went, always with a headlong suddenness that upset the balance of all concerned; with ears back, teeth clenched on the bit, and a general expression of desperation.

Frequently the horse held up the load half an hour before taking a notion to go on. Owing to these many delays, Simpson found himself a good fifteen miles from town when he made camp, although he had pushed on until after dark. The balky horse's method had kept the horses fresh, at any rate, trying as it was to the patience of the driver.

Next morning things started off happily, that being, apparently, the day set aside by the balky horse for unprotesting labor. It was one of those bright, invigorating mornings which lift a man's spirits until he minimizes his liabilities and frequently puts an excessive valuation on his prospects. All hopes take on the color of the day at such times, perhaps due to the physical comfort and beauty which autumn lavishes upon the travail-eased earth. A man is beguiled from speculation upon the worst phases of his present by luxurious dreams of things to come.

So it was with Tom Simpson, riding on his load of bones, although he did not allow himself to believe the balky horse had undergone a lasting reformation. Every hour gained was at least three miles more on the way. At the

rate he was going, Tom calculated on reaching town about noon.

In gratifying variance of his form, the troublesome horse kept steadily on. When he set to it earnestly that way, there was not a better animal in the team. Tom forgave him for much of yesterday's annoyance on account of his willingness of to-day. It was a little past noon when he came in sight of town, a sight which dispelled the pleasant speculations of the morning and brought him straight down to earth.

Yet Tom Simpson had seen trouble enough to know that it will come fast enough and that it is unnecessary to run ahead, even speculatively, to encounter it. If trouble was to come, it would be through the contrivance of somebody else. He had not come here hunting trouble, although he had come heeled to meet it. His plan was to drive to the unloading place; leave his bones; pull up before a store like a man with a clear conscience and well within his rights; make his purchases, and get out of town as quickly and quietly as dignity would permit.

A stretch of road, half a mile or more, led into Drumwell as straight as the surveyor's transit could draw it; designed, one might believe, as a special straight-away for cowboys to put on a spurt and make a demonstration of speed and racket as they rode into the place of refreshment. This piece of road had a slight downhill pitch into town, where it met the main and only street at right angles in front of Eddie Kane's hotel and bar. Simpson let the horses swing along at a brisk trot down this finishing stretch, while he buckled on the guns which had been hung on the dashboard.

The balky horse was the liveliest stepper in the team, as he had been all morning. It seemed as if he knew that he was approaching the end of the journey and desired to make a favorable impression on all beholders, after the manner of hypocrites everywhere. So

Simpson came bowling into town rather gallantly, perched high on the spring seat, a gun on each hip, rifle beside him, a shining mark for anybody who might have the mean inclination to take a shot at him.

Nobody appeared to be so inclined, although his arrival was not without spectators. Apparently, he was to go on his way unmolested. He knew nothing of the prowlers from the Nation, his only conceivable source of trouble being the city marshal and such of his friends as might step out in his behalf. The marshal was not in sight, nor anybody else who appeared to have more than a passing interest in a bone man with a good lively team.

To reach the unloading place which the agent had assigned him beside the house track—as that particular switch is called in railroad parlance—Simpson had to make a right turn on entering the street, and then drive across the main line of railroad. All went as smoothly as a greased slide until the wagon was squarely across the main-line track. Then the balky horse was seized with the notion of showing the town how mean he could be, and what a spectacle he could make of the creature on the load of bones who posed as his master.

Tom knew there was nothing he could do to make the stubborn brute move on. The best thing, he decided, was to take him out, tie his mate's end of the double-tree, and drive the short distance without him. Accordingly he got down and began to unhitch the rebel.

At that point in the balky horse's act, the station agent entered. He came on with spirit, adding considerably to the entertainment of the small crowd of men and boys who had collected in surprisingly short time out of the town's apparently barren possibilities. They wondered why a man would want to unhitch his team and leave his wagon straddle of an active piece of railroad like that.

"Git that wagon off of there!" the agent yelled, his voice apparently cracked by a sense of outrage to his dignity. "Don't you see that board? Git 'em off of there quick!"

He pointed to the semaphore, a red sheet-iron contrivance at the end of a rod which protruded to the edge of the platform from above the depot's bay window. Tom looked at it as if it were of unusual interest.

"Very pretty," he said.

The bystanders laughed, a derisive haw-haw of appreciation, station agents being almost invariably unpopular men in towns of the size and character of Drumwell. The agent became more annoyed.

"She's due in less'n a minute," he said, his shallow passion splitting about equally between anger and fear. "He's got to git up to that tank"—a change in the sex of the approaching or impending thing which might have been confusing to anybody but a railroader, who would have known he was speaking of the train in one instance, the engineer in the other—"and how's he goin' to do it with that wagon on the track? Git them horses off of here, I tell you—git 'em off!"

Tom was calmly, quietly unhitching the balky horse. He looked up with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

"Send it along," he said. "Maybe a locomotive could move this horse; I've tried about everything else."

The crowd laughed again, a note of friendliness in the sound for this calm young man who didn't hop any faster for all the agent's wrath. Some of the older men offered suggestions, some help; the latter quite in order, the former wasted wind. Tom gave one of them a rope and asked him to tie the end of the double-tree back to the axle, then threw the tugs across the balky animal's back and started to lead him out.

But the horse had other plans! He

braced his legs and set back against the pull on his bit. The crowd slapped him with hats; jabbed him in the belly with thumbs; twisted his tail, and the frantic agent, his eyes protruding with the effort, got behind him and pushed. Wasted effort, all! The horse stood there, maliciously stubborn; and the train against which the red board was turned came around a curve a quarter of a mile or so north of the station with such a head of speed that it looked as if nothing could save that wagon load of bones, to say nothing of adding those of four pretty good horses to the collection.

The crowd broke, clearing the track; and the agent, flapping his arms in terrified signal to stop, went galloping down the road to meet the train. The engine came to a stop. Tom Simpson, standing at the horse's head, his hand on its bridle—with effect nicely calculated to thrill all beholders—was about five feet from the wagon; while the engineer leaned haughtily out of the cab, crabbed as if he regretted that there was anything in law or morals which restrained him from making a mess of the whole affair.

It was beneath his dignity to speak to a man so low as a driver of a bone wagon, or of any wagon whatever; railroad engineers being deeply jealous of all who guide the course of anything that moves on wheels. Not so the conductor, who came jogging forward in that little goat trot peculiar to passenger-train conductors, the gesticulating agent with him. The agent was almost speechless at this awful sacrilege of blocking the way of Number Five—or Five, as he called it—which was a prince among railroad trains in his eyes, although only a little plug of three coaches to everybody else. But there was that granger with his load of bones, blocking the way to the water tank and the station, and the agent and conductor were as vindictive as if the train had a

thousand miles to go to get to its journey's end instead of just a hundred yards.

"Git out o' there! git—out—o'—there!" the conductor ordered, spacing his words farther as they ran out to the end of his command. "Don't stand there holdin' up this train!"

"Oh, very well," said Tom, in that moment understanding the horse's view of force and duress better than ever before.

But how to get to anywhere out of there was the question. The passengers were leaving the train, not caring much where it stopped, many of them gathering around to enjoy the spectacle of a balky horse holding up a train. Tom had tried everything he knew on that horse; if anybody had a remedy to offer that would make him move before his own good time, suggestions were then in order.

The conductor said, "Here, some of you fellers"—speaking to all assembled—"git a hold of this wagon and roll it somewhere off of this track." But conductors were even less popular than agents in Drumwell, where most of the male inhabitants had memories of high-handed dealings over fares and excess fares, and the question of taking dogs on board. They gave him cold looks, but no assistance.

It looked as if the conductor would himself have to stoop to help remove that obstruction, when Tom Simpson, nonchalantly striking a match on the sole of his boot, held the little flame to the balky horse's belly. The animal moved with a grunt, and much twisting of the tail—and a look of wide-awake surprise on his roman-nosed countenance.

Tom had much pleasure in his discovery as he climbed to the seat and drove his bones clear of the track and onto his unloading place, without a look behind to see the engineer range up to the water tank, and the agent go hopping

along the platform to get a truck for the trunks and express packages.

Tom was not greatly surprised to find the place where he had left his first load empty. There was not a bone; not a horn; not even a tooth out of a jawbone. Their mark was visible in the soft ground, as well as man tracks and wagon tracks. A cattle car partly loaded with bones stood up the track a little way, its freight showing between its slatted siding. All evidence bore out the suspicion that his bones had been appropriated to help out that load and not many hours before his arrival.

This time Tom did not take the seat off the wagon, but pushed it up near the dashboard, ready to move in an emergency without leaving it behind. He unloaded quickly, unhampered by even an onlooker, public interest in him having waned when he cleared the track. By the time he had emptied the wagon, the train had pulled down below the station, where it lay on the dead end of track like a little chunky lizard in the sun. Everybody had gone from the depot and the town had lapsed into its daytime state, the plaintive yelling of cowboys mingling with the lonesome lowing of cattle where the noisy work of loading was going on at the pens. These loading pens were on the other side of the lumber yard, not visible from Simpson's situation behind the depot. There was not one spectator of his activities.

Leaving his team standing, Tom went to the car which he had very good reason to believe had gobbled up his first jag of bones, as Mrs. Ellison had called the load. The car was only partly loaded; its side door stood open to receive additional freight. Waiting for him to bring it, Tom thought! He examined several skulls in the pile that blocked the door; then returned hastily to his wagon, drove up to the car, and began loading it from the heap that lay within arm's reach.

Tom's indignation rose with every bone that he threw into the wagon. There was little use in asking the agent who was loading that car, for the splay-footed coward would shield the thief; but it was due to him, Tom Simpson, to proclaim to the skulking citizenry of that town that his property must remain untouched. He was in the car, throwing out bones with a clatter equal to that of the living cattle marching into the chutes not far away, when the one man above all others that Simpson desired to meet that day appeared.

Simpson had heard him coming from the direction of the lumber yard; his feet noisy on the cinders of the roadbed; his manner of coming betraying his interest in that car of bones. Tom was in the door when he appeared. He was a large man, coatless, a wide brown hat shading his scowling eyes. From the little canvas apron he wore Tom knew he was the lumber dealer, the bone monopolist of the town.

There was an expression of petulant injury, rather than anger or surprise, on the man's harsh-featured brown face. He stood a moment chewing his tobacco, running a quick eye over Tom's accouterments; taking in the rifle standing just inside the door.

"What do you think you're doin' in that car?" he inquired, with all the sarcasm he could infuse into the words, as if he were merely trying to convey that a mistake had been made, when he knew very well he was surely being robbed.

"Recovering stolen property," Simpson replied bluntly.

"You're talkin' kind of careless, it seems to me, pardner. You git out of that car and put them bones back, and you do it quick!"

"I left a load of bones beside the track a few days ago, and I come back to find them in your car," Tom told him, not greatly moved by the blustering order. "When I've loaded that wagon

I'll come out—unless you get too nasty about it."

"You'll have a sweet time provin' title to a load of bones!"

"Not at all," Tom corrected him. "I expected some thief would try to get away with them, and I marked a lot of them. Here, look at that, you sneakin' pirate!"

Tom tossed a skull across the wagon. On the forehead it bore the penciled brand of the Block E ranch. The lumberman threw it down with a sneer; but a flush that was not all due to virtue on his face.

"You've had time to mark a hundred of 'em," he said. "You can't git away with that in this man's town!"

The man's manner was portentous. He spoke with the swaggering threat, the bullying certainty, of a boy who knows his parent will take up his row. Tom did not stop to argue the case any longer. He resumed the job of filling his wagon with bones, the lumberman watching him with malignant scowl for a little while. He appeared to be trying to get his resentment up to fighting pitch by witnessing this high handed work of a man who would not conform to the established local code, under which a man pocketed his loss and rode away, charging it up to the expense of a sucker's education.

Presently the lumberman went away, perhaps to get his gun, maybe to summon his friends, Tom thought. Whatever his intention, it was not a pacific one. He would not throw down his hand and confess himself a thief and a coward before the ribald citizens of that town. Trouble was coming, and it would be there pretty soon. This would be the final show-down for him, Tom Simpson knew.

Simpson finished his work quickly—piling the bones high as indemnity for the labor he had spent in their recovery—drove to his heap beside the track, and began to unload. He kept a wary

eye out for the first hostile approach, surprised that it was so long in coming.

This surprise gave way to troubled conjecture when nothing happened. He worked down to the bottom, rearranged his seat; left the horses standing, and went to the depot to order his car. The agent received the order sulkily, as if to imply that the railroad didn't want Tom's business any more than the lumberman relished his rivalry in the merry market of osseous remains.

As matters stood, Simpson didn't see much future to that business just then. He believed the lumberman would clean up his pile of bones the minute he left town. The only way to meet such competition would be for him or Waco to remain there all the time, which would not be profitable unless they could work up a bigger trade among the homesteaders than seemed possible.

True, they had enough bones contracted for—with what he had on the ground and would bring the next trip, when Waco would be able to handle a load—to fill a car. His customers were to deliver to Drumwell on the day he had ordered the car, but he had grave doubts now whether that bald-faced agent intended to place the order at all. It looked like a hopeless prospect for bones.

Thus turning the several discouraging obstacles in his mind, Tom went back to the wagon and drove across the track into the street, the gap in his wheel team unfilled, the balky horse in tow. For the trip home he intended to rearrange the horses, move the lead team back and hitch the willing horse by a single-tree to the end of the tongue, with a rope around the balky fellow's neck behind. There he could travel with the rest of them or drag, according to his perverse inclination. If he hung back and got his fool head pulled off it would be a good riddance.

Tom was puzzled, but he was not betrayed into any feeling of security, by

the disappearance of the lumberman and the apparent indifference of everybody in town to his presence. The marshal had not come forward to display the authority he was fonder of asserting than he was successful in enforcing—in Tom Simpson's case, at least.

Many horses were hitched in front of stores and restaurants; cowboys, but a few moments out of their saddles, were jangling up and down the board sidewalks with spurs on their heels, their sweating horses close by while mixed groups of cow-punchers and farmers chatted amiably here and there.

The cowboys laughed at this granger's queer way of hitching a harnessed horse behind his wagon and leaving that comical gap in his wheel team. Some of them geyed him good-naturedly as he drove down the street looking for a place to hitch, but drew in their horns quickly when they got a nearer look at the face of the driver and the two guns under his elbows. They stopped to discuss him in speculative wonder, watching him as he drove slowly along looking for a space between horses and wagons to accommodate his lengthy outfit.

There was space in front of the Railroad Restaurant, the place conducted by

Eddie Kane's more or less estimable mother-in-law; a family tie of which Simpson was wholly unaware. He was firmly fixed on steak and potatoes, and that joint looked about as good as any. He drew up his cumbersome wagon, ponderously, along the edge of the sidewalk, like a steamboat making its berth; and as he threw his legs over the side to get down and hitch, the lumberman and the city marshal popped suddenly around the corner of the calaboose and began to shoot.

It was no time for argument, or consideration of legal aspects of his situation; it was the pinch between life and death. Simpson grabbed the rifle from the seat beside him, the bullets of his pursuers slapping the planks of the restaurant's high false front. He heard somebody squeal inside the place, and the front door slam violently, as he cut loose.

The two men were diagonally across the broad street, about two hundred feet away. At Simpson's first shot the city marshal dropped in his tracks and went rolling a little way, as if he had fallen on a hillside. The lumberman ran behind the calaboose when his companion fell, and the gust of shooting ended as suddenly as it had begun.

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



OREGON DOLLARS

THE dollars of the frontier period of Oregon minted of native gold are now extremely valuable. At an auction in New York, held a few weeks ago, ten of these coins sold for \$1,425, an average price of \$142.50 each. In an era when every one is lamenting the diminished value of the dollar, an argument for the other side is offered in these dollars used by the Oregon pioneers, but unfortunately, they are possessed by too few to be of any general benefit to the country-wide status of the almighty coin. The Oregon dollars were part of the extensive collection of Wayte Raymond. Some of the other Western coins of historic interest that brought high prices were ten California 1852 dollars, which sold for \$170, and a Colorado twenty-dollar gold piece of 1860, sold for \$475.



When the Desert Bloomed

By Adolph Bennauer

Author of "Out of the Pool," etc.



LAZING white noon-tide lay upon the land. Under the pitiless glare the air in Yucca Canyon was like the breath of a furnace.

The high, precipitous walls not only shut off all breeze but threw back the heat of the sun with redoubled intensity, setting each rock and shrub to dancing grotesquely. Overhead, was no wheeling or crying of birds; underfoot, no slithering of reptiles. In that hour of oppressive torridity every wild thing that crept or flew had sought its accustomed shelter.

The four horsemen who toiled so painfully along the bottom of the canyon, however, were denied such refuge, for nothing larger than a greasewood bush reared itself above that barren soil. They could only ride on, cursing the heat, and drinking long and frequently from their canteens. Fortunately, the water in those canteens was cool, for they had been filled but a few miles back where a spring bubbled miraculously forth. The riders were now prac-

tically at the end of the canyon. When they reached the open sageland that lay beyond they might expect to find a little breeze.

Cowboys, to all appearances, these four; and in a country where cattle ranged far and wide, their presence in Yucca Canyon should have occasioned no comment. Only their manner would have aroused speculation, for they did not conduct themselves with the abandon of the typical cowboy. They rode well strung out, conversing but little, and, at every turn in the canyon, glancing about them alertly; an act performed so unconsciously that it seemed the outcome of long habit. None but those who fear the law would ride and act in such manner.

Abruptly, the length of straightaway they had been traversing terminated and the canyon swung off sharply to the left. Reaching that point, each man halted in turn and gave an exclamation of relief. Half a mile ahead of them lay the open sage.

"Well, that's the end o' that, boys."

the man in the lead proclaimed emphatically, "an' I'd ride a long, long ways to keep from goin' through such a hell-hole again, no matter how many sheriffs' posses was after me."

He spoke with the impulsiveness of youth, and a mere youth he seemed, both in years and physique. He could not have been over twenty-three. His figure was slight and boyish, his dark, lean face lighted by flashing black eyes. Yet, despite his years, he was unquestionably the dominating spirit of the party.

At his remark, the heavy-set, bearded man who rode next to him shifted his quid of tobacco and grunted.

"Huh! If there's goin' to be any change at all, it'll only be from the fire into the fryin' pan. That twenty-mile stretch that still lays between us an' the line don't look any too cool to me."

The leader threw back his head and laughed, though it was not the sort of laugh that is usually heard from one of his age.

"Cheer up, Ransy! We can make our own breeze across that sage. But we had to crawl like ants through this cursed canyon. How I hate it—hate everything in it! If there was even a horned toad here that I could take out my spite on——"

He left the wish unfinished, for his glance, sweeping the eastern wall of the canyon, had come to rest upon the only refreshing bit of life the place boasted—a group of yucca plants standing, sentinellike, far up near the rim. Indigenous to only a few localities, these plants had given Yucca Canyon its name. Beautiful in any surroundings, with their white, waxlike blossoms in full bloom, their beauty here was literally enshrined by the sterility that lay about them. None but a vandal would think of molesting them. Yet as the young man gazed upon them a malicious gleam appeared in his eyes. His hand went back to his holster.

"No, no, señor!" The interruption came from the Mexican, who thus far had remained silent. "You mus' not harm the yucca! To shoot *la paloma* ees bad 'nough, to keel the vulture ees worse still; but to destroy the Devil's Candlesticks—*por Dios*, Señor King, that would make for us the end, sure!"

With his hand on the butt of his gun the leader wheeled about, his dark eyes narrowing.

"I shoots to express myself, Manuel," he droned dangerously. "An right now I craves to express myself a lot. Will it bring me any better luck to shoot a greaser?"

Utter silence. King laughed, and, whipping out his gun, awoke thundering echoes between those narrow walls. The next instant Manuel crossed himself, and the other two evinced grudging admiration. For, immediately following that shot, one of the majestic yucca stalks parted; and the top half, with its wealth of white, waxy blossoms, went tumbling down to the bottom of the canyon. Grinning maliciously, the leader dismounted and strode toward it. He picked it up and with wanton cruelty beat off its flowers against the rocks till only a single blossom remained. This he removed and defiantly placed in the band of his hat.

"All right, boys," he called as he started back to his horse. "I've done expressed myself an' I'm ready to go now. An' Manuel, there, can bring on his bad luck whenever he's a mind' to."

He reached his horse and slipped his foot into the stirrup. But in the very act of mounting he paused, startled by a sudden cry from Marshall, the fourth member of the party. Following the direction of the other's gaze, King echoed his exclamation. Just entering the mouth of the canyon were two men on foot!

It was instinct alone that caused the four to reach for their guns. The next instant they perceived now needless

were their apprehensions. For the newcomers were not only afoot, but stumbled as they walked. Obviously they were aware of the presence of the four horsemen, for they headed straight toward them, halting frequently and leaning against each other for support. But though the horsemen perceived their condition they made no attempt to go forward and assist them. This attitude may have been due to sheer indifference, or to another discovery they made as the pair drew nearer. They saw, then, that the right arm of one was linked to the left arm of the other.

It was King who voiced the common thought.

"A sheriff an' his prisoner," he said with an oath. "But it ain't any sheriff that we know, boys, so hold yuhr fire. Must 'a' lost their hosses some time back, from the looks of 'em! Prob'ly makin' for the spring at the head o' the canyon! We'll pass 'em the time o' day."

Sensing the grim humor of the situation, he indulged in a sinister smile. He drew out tobacco and papers and fashioned a cigarette while the unfortunate pair continued their advance. Both were men of middle age, similarly clad, and bearing a week's growth of beard, but here their similarity ceased. The one was short and stockily built, with black hair and a skin so dark as to be almost brown; the other was tall and slim, with sandy hair and a face burned red from unaccustomed exposure to the sun. No badge appeared upon the breast of either, but the appearance and attitude of the dark-faced man were enough to distinguish him as the officer. He it was who supplied the energy for that advance, literally dragging his companion along with him. Fifty yards away he halted to raise his free hand to his mouth.

"Water," he called hoarsely. "Water!"

This evidence of suffering proved too

much for the leader of the four horsemen, hardened beyond all conscience though he seemed. It was obvious that, in their present condition, the officer and his prisoner could never reach the spring that lay at the head of Yucca Canyon, and King evidently drew the line at wanton murder. He turned and sent an inquiring glance at his companions. Receiving an answering nod, he removed his canteen from the saddle and led the way forward.

"Yuh'll have to split this, fifty fifty," he warned the pair. "We've got a long ride ahead of us an' ain't got any too much water ourselves. That spring yuh're headin' for is only about three miles away an' yuh ought to reach it easy in a couple o' hours."

The canteen was snatched rather than taken, from his hand. But, though the dark-faced man snatched it, he turned it over to his companion before helping himself. Not until the last drop was gone did the pair cease drinking, for they had not yet reached that stage where much water proves fatal. With their physical craving satisfied they seemed to regain control of themselves. It was with an air of quiet dignity that the officer returned the canteen to its owner.

"That was a close call, boys," he commented wryly. "If we hadn't heard yuhr shot I'm afraid we'd have been done for, because we couldn't hoof it very far without water in heat like this. Whatever it was you aimed at, that certainly was a lucky shot for us."

The young leader darted a swift glance at Manuel, then turned back to the pair with a speculative frown.

"So it was my shot that brought yuh here, sheriff," he mused. "An' yuh didn't know anything about that spring up at the head o' the canyon?"

The other's puzzled expression was answer enough.

"I didn't even know there was a canyon here," he confessed. "I'm way off my range down in this country. I be-

long up around Magdalena. Name is Harmon, Ben Harmon! And I'm not rightly a sheriff, as you mistook me to be. I'm one of the guards at the State penitentiary up there, and I came trailing down here after a man that broke out of the institution about a week ago."

He paused to glance at the slim, sandy-haired man beside him, who, at this turn of the conversation, dropped his eyes and stared sullenly at the ground.

"I got my man, as you see," the guard went on, a little more briskly. "But not without a good deal of trouble. And I know, now; that he wasn't named 'Slippery' Saunders for nothing. He got shotted me from behind a rock yesterday and killed my horse, and I had to shoot his own to prevent him from getting clean away. After that he tried to give me the slip twice while we were on foot, so I had to snap the bracelets on both of us.

"We were heading for Deadrock, the nearest settlement, when we passed by here. We can't get there very well without horses, though, for it must be a good ten miles away. So I hope you punchers will be willing to accommodate me again. If you can let me borrow one of these animals I'll pay you well for the use of it, and you'll find it waiting for you in Deadrock the next time you ride in from the ranch."

There was an interval of silence. King and his men exchanged glances. When the young leader turned back to the officer there was a suspicious gleam in his dark eyes.

"Sorry, but I'm afraid we can't accommodate yuh this time, Mr. Harmon," he declared with mock gravity.

An expression of surprise, followed by a slight flush, appeared upon the other's face.

"If you question my identity, gentlemen," he began, with a show of resentment, "I have a badge of office and other credentials here that——"

The young leader cut him short with a harsh laugh.

"We ain't doubtin' yuhr identity one bit, Mr. Harmon," he retorted, dispensing with all further hypocrisy. "It's our own identity that's in question. Look us over again, real close, an' then tell me if we bear any resemblance to peaceable, law-abidin' cow-punchers."

It was his manner, as much as his words, that caused the officer's perceptible start. Even Slippery Saunders glanced up and joined his captor in a sharp scrutiny of the odd-looking group before them. Under that rigid inspection their true characters were not difficult to read. What group of cow-punchers bore such sinister visages as these? What cow-punchers wore a gun at each hip? Where were their chaps; the lariats that should have been coiled about the pommels of their saddles?

The answer came to Ben Harmon in a flash, but, true officer that he was, he expressed only contempt.

"A gang of outlaws, no doubt," he announced coolly. "Would-be outlaws, I might say! I know the most celebrated ones by sight."

Ransy snickered. King heard that snicker, and his black eyes fairly snapped. No man is so jealous of his reputation as the typical "bad-man."

"Yeh?" The young leader's voice was like the pur of a panther. "Mebbe the only ones yuh know by sight is them that was fools enough to be caught. Mebbe yuh're a little better on rememberin' names, Mr. Harmon. It might be that, at some time or another, yuh've heard of an outlaw named King—Billy King."

He pronounced that name slowly, distinctly, confident of its effect. But he could not have anticipated an effect as dramatic as that which followed. Harmon's jaw dropped and his face turned a sickly white. If ever consternation showed in a man's features, it did in his. It was from his prisoner, Slippery Saun-

ders, however, that the most marked demonstration came. Where the latter had been sullenly silent before, his attitude now became one of keenest elation. Forgetful of the steel link that bound him to his captor, he started forward.

"Billy King," he gasped, his eyes fairly dancing. "I guess everybody this side of the border has heard about Billy King! Your name sure sounds good to me, cull, and I'm ready to shake this bird and ride with your gang whenever you say so."

Brought to a halt by the steel cuff on his right wrist, he concluded by impulsively holding out his left hand. But Billy King made no attempt to take that hand. There are degrees of social standing, even among outcasts, and one look into those pale, shifty eyes brought to the bandit leader's lips only an expression of scorn.

"Thanks, Saunders," he returned coldly. "I ain't takin' any new members into my gang right now. When I do, I aim to be kinda choosy. An', besides"—this with an ironical glance at Harmon—"it wouldn't hardly be fair for me to rob an officer of his prisoner, 'specially when he's been at so much trouble to get him. We've done enough favors for one day, an' wasted more time than we can afford. We'll be top-pin' our hosses, now, an' ridin' on ag'in. An' if I was yuh I wouldn't try to make it to Deadrock in yuhr present condition. I'd go on up to that spring an' lay around there till sundown. After dark yuh ought to make it into town without no trouble."

He nodded curtly and turned back to his horse. By that time Ben Harmon had regained control of himself. As if fearful that King would change his mind at the last moment and decide not to let him off so easily, he swung abreast of his prisoner and started to lead him up the canyon. But that was not Slippery Saunders' wish at all. Though plainly taken aback by King's rebuff, he

was determined not to let slip this last golden chance to regain his liberty. He pulled with all his strength against that encircling band of steel, his eyes lighting with a desperate resolve.

"Wait a minute, King! I ain't askin' to be taken into your gang. All I want is to be set free. And I'm willin' to pay for that, too. I'm willin' to pay you five thousand dollars!"

King had picked up the reins. His hand was on the pommel of his saddle. But at Saunders' concluding words he turned and glanced at him sharply. So did his companions.

"Five thousand dollars?" The leader's tone was derisive, but his eyes eager. "Are yuh tryin' to kid me, Saunders?"

Though equally astonished, Harmon was quick to sense the danger of that offer.

"Of course, he's lying to you," he broke in harshly. "Didn't I search him when I took him in? You won't find over ten dollars, all told, on the both of us."

He sought to start his prisoner forward again, but the latter's cry of protest was almost hysterical.

"I ain't lyin', King—so help me! I don't claim to have that much on me, and I didn't say it was in money, either. But it's in somethin' just as good—di'monds! And I can put you in the way of gettin' them di'monds to-night!"

There is a state of excitement to which no liar, however gifted, may attain, and Slippery Saunders had reached that state now. Even had King and his men been less avaricious, they could not have failed to be moved by such a startling announcement. From Ransy and Marshall came low-voiced exclamations of approval. King swore softly, and stepped in front of the officer and his prisoner, with his black eyes gleaming.

"Just a minute, Harmon," he commanded. "This listens pretty good to

me an' I aim to hear Saunders out. Yuh say we'll be able to get them sparklers to-night?"

Flushed by excitement, Saunders' sunburned face appeared redder still.

"To-night, King," he asserted emphatically. "As soon as you let me loose, I can take you to 'em. Fact is, I was on my way to get them di'monds when Harmon nabbed me. They've been waitin' for me for three years, them sparklers have, ever since I was sent to Magdalena. That's what they sent me up for! I cracked a jewelry store up in Sante Fe three years ago and was nabbed over here in Deadrock while I was beatin' it to the border. But I hid the di'monds away while I was under arrest and they never found 'em. I figgered some day I'd be able to break out of the pen and come and get 'em. There's ten thousand dollars' worth of 'em, King, and if you'll turn me loose I'll show you where they are and split with you, fifty fifty!"

From the three men behind King came a simultaneous gasp. The leader wheeled sharply upon Harmon.

"Is that the charge he was sent up on?" he demanded.

Still dazed from that startling confession, the officer was caught off his guard.

"Yes," he stammered. "But, surely, you're not fool enough to——"

"That's all I wanted to know," King interrupted him curtly. "Fork over the key to them handcuffs—an' make it snappy!"

Harmon recovered himself instantly and stepped behind his prisoner.

"Not as long as I've got a shot left in my six-gun," he cried defiantly. "I've never yet failed to bring back my man and——"

Once more Yucca Canyon echoed to a thundering report, and the gun that Harmon had essayed to draw from his holster fell from his hand, shattered at the breech.

"Get that key, boys," snapped the bandit leader as he sheathed his own smoking weapon.

Ransy and Marshall were off their horses on the instant and, despite his valiant struggles, the key was taken from the guard and his prisoner set free.

"Now, Saunders!" Kings voice was like the lash of a whip. "Where was it yuh hid them sparklers?"

Saunders grinned and rubbed at his chafed wrist.

"I hid 'em in a mighty safe place, you bet—a place where not even another crook'd be likely to find 'em. When I was picked up in Deadrock I was carryin' the di'monds in the linin' of my coat, and Jacob Myers, the hick sheriff that arrested me, never thought to look for 'em there. He figgered I'd already turned 'em over to a fence, so he slapped me into his hoose-gow to hold me over till the officers could come down from Sante Fe and put me through the third degree. I knew them guys wouldn't overlook anything, even if they had to pull out my teeth, so I ditched the sparklers in the only place that was left me—right under the board floor of the calaboose!"

There was an interval of stunned silence. Had the occasion been less serious, the change that came over the faces of Billy King and his men might have appeared ludicrous. Their former eagerness gave way to blank amazement, bordering closely upon disgust.

"The calaboose?" echoed the leader caustically. "Yuh hid 'em in a safe place, all right. How in the world do yuh expect——"

Saunders interrupted him with an impatient gesture.

"Don't worry any about that! I'd never have left the di'monds there if I hadn't figgered out a way of gettin' 'em back again. That calaboose is made o' wood, see, and it's settin' way out on the edge o' town. All we got to do is touch

a match to the old tinderbox and it'll be in a blaze before the citizens of Deadrock can tumble out o' their beds. Then, just before daylight, we can go back and get the sparklers, easy, 'cause I remember the exact spot where I hid 'em—in the northeast corner."

The faces of his hearers revealed a returning interest. Ransy and Marshall growled approvingly and glanced expectantly at their leader. But, though the latter's expression was a little more favorable, his narrowed eyes showed that he was doing some quick thinking. In the end he shook his head decisively.

"It won't do, Saunders. Too much danger o' the fire bein' put out before the calaboose burns down. An' I couldn't stay around there waitin' for another chance. We got to be across the border by mornin'."

Slippery Saunders started to protest, thought better of it, and shrugged indifferently.

"Well, if you feel that way about it, of course, I won't insist on your goin' along. But I don't care how long I stick around there, so long as you keep Harmon off my trail. Just tell me what place your headin' for and a soon as I get the di'monds I'll meet you there."

The bandit leader grinned.

"Don't make me laugh, Saunders. Yuh sure amusin'. I know an easier way to get them di'monds than by burnin' down the calaboose. An' I aim to handle the job all by myself." He turned, with a sudden tensing of his features, upon Ben Harmon. "A minute ago yuh mentioned somethin' about a badge of office an' some credentials," he said crisply. "Let's have a look at 'em."

For a moment the officer hesitated. But a glance at Ransy and Marshall on either side of him showed him the folly of resistance. He passed the desired articles over to King, who inspected them with a grimace of satisfaction. One was the regulation badge of a Mag-

dalena penitentiary guard, the other a prison warrant for the re-arrest and incarceration of James H., alias "Slippery," Saunders, escaped convict. With mock dignity the leader placed the warrant in his pocket and pinned the badge on his vest.

"Yuh fellahs wait here till I get back," he directed, turning briskly upon Ransy and the other riders. "An' don't let Saunders or Harmon out o' yuhr sight. I won't be gone long; mebbe I'll be back by sundown. An' when I do show up, I'll be packin' that ten thousand dollars' worth o' di'monds along with me."

Once more he started for his horse. But he was halted halfway by the excited exclamations of his companions, even Slippery Saunders seeming more astonished than chagrined at his action.

"Have yuh gone plumb loco, chief?" gasped Ransy. "Headin' into town all by yuhrself in broad daylight! What in thunder—"

King interrupted him with a scornful laugh.

"I didn't expect yuh to understand," he retorted. "The only way to get them di'monds is to play a bold hand—an' I intend to play it. But just what my game is I ain't sayin'. All I want yuh boys to do is to stick here like I ordered. Time enough to go frettin' if I don't show up by midnight. Only, there ain't no goin' to be any danger o' that."

He strode up to his horse, seized the reins and vaulted lightly into the saddle. As he did so, his eyes encountered the somber gaze of the Mexican, who, since their meeting with Harmon and his prisoner, had not spoken. That expression of gloom caused the leader's features to break into a sardonic smile.

"So that's the bad luck yuhr yucca brought us, Manuel," he taunted. "Five thousand dollars' worth o' di'monds! If I thought I could do a tenth as well ag'in, I'd shoot down every yucca in the canyon."

The Mexican's face paled slightly, but he met his leader's gaze without flinching.

"You have not yet possessed the diamonds, Señor King," he returned quietly. "So long as you wear that flower in your hat the curse of the Devil's Candlesticks will follow you."

King laughed and, leaning forward, snapped his fingers derisively in the Mexican's face.

"Bah! Yuh talk like a *muchacho*, Manuel. If it wasn't that yuh're so all-fired handy with a knife I'd run yuh out o' the gang. But to-night, when I bring back them di'monds yuh'll sing a different song. Yuhrs'll be the first greedy fingers that'll be reachin' for 'em. Have a care how yuh handle that raven's tongue o' yuhrs then."

He swung his horse about, jabbed his heels into the animal's flanks, and with a careless wave of the hand, passed quickly out of the canyon.

It was not yet one o'clock. The mid-day sun still blazed fiercely overhead. But out upon the open sageland that lay between Yucca Canyon and Deadrock a little prairie breeze was blowing. King's horse seemed to quicken to this, as did the man himself, and they made excellent progress over that sun-baked soil. No trail led from the mouth of the canyon to the town, and this was the first time the bandit leader had passed that way, but he possessed information that could not fail to enable him to reach his destination. He knew that the town lay about ten miles west, adjacent to the huge pile of disintegrated rock from which it had taken its name. Even now he could glimpse this rock—a dun-colored spot against the slate-gray sage—which he had heard was an outcropping of basalt formation, fully half a mile square and over a hundred feet in height. With such a signpost as that to guide him, he could not very well go astray.

It was a little over an hour and a half

later that he reached the weird formation. His throat was parched from the ride, and his horse showed lather beneath the cinches. But just beyond that pile of rock lay his destination. It was not much of a town; just a single main street, bordered on both sides by false-fronted store buildings and cabins, standing out, hot, silent and deserted in that treeless plain. Evidently the inhabitants were taking their siesta, for, though King raked the street sharply, he saw nothing but a few horses dozing at the hitching rails. This relieved his last feeling of apprehension and he rode forward, grinning.

He was entering Deadrock from the east end. Out here the buildings were few indeed; yet, as he advanced, he inspected them carefully. Presently he made out the one he sought. It was a small, square, wooden structure, with an unusually heavy door and a single barred window. King's eyes lighted at sight of it, for beneath the floor of that drab little building lay ten thousand dollars' worth of diamonds! But he laughed when he remembered Slippery Saunders' plan for obtaining those diamonds. Though the calaboose was built of wood, the wood was in the form of hewn logs. Even if the townspeople made no effort to extinguish the fire, such a structure would burn for days before it was destroyed.

"It's just like I told 'em," the young leader growled disgustedly. "It takes brains to handle a job like this—brains an' nerve. An' that's somethin' that poor simp, Saunders, ain't got." He glanced down at the badge upon his vest and grinned complacently. "But I guess Ransy or Marshall wouldn't have the nerve to play as bold a hand as this, either."

One other thing attracted his attention as he was passing by. That was a row of flowers that bordered the calaboose on all four sides. They were not wild, those flowers, but cultivated—as

large and full-blown as any that ever decorated a dooryard. In a country as arid as this, where only sage and greasewood thrived, such a sight was remarkable. It reflected the character of the man who attended to that jail, and as he realized this the black eyes of Billy King gleamed with a double satisfaction.

"Saunders was correct in one thing, anyway. That fellah, Jacob Myers, is a sure-enough hick. No real, go-gettin' sheriff would waste his time over flowers! It's a cinch, I ain't goin' to have no trouble with this bird—an' that's over-half the battle."

He was openly smiling as he approached the center of the little town. But not for an instant did his confidence render him incautious. He rode with one hand dangling beside his holster, while from beneath the brim of his slouch hat his eyes swept every window and doorway. From a few of those doorways his glance was returned, though incuriously, and the people were not known to him. Once more he was looking for a particular building, and he found it in a comparatively open space at the end of the block. It was a small, one-room structure, new and neat; and the wealth of roses, geraniums and dahlias that bloomed all about it told him, even before his eyes caught sight of the shingle above the door, that this was the sheriff's office.

As confidently as he would have ridden to his own rendezvous, he turned his horse to the hitching rail and dismounted. But it was significant that instead of tying the animal to the rack he merely dropped the reins upon the ground. The office door was open, and between the neat but faded curtains that framed the single window King could make out the figure of a man sitting at a desk. With a last searching glance up and down the street he turned and started for that open doorway.

Once across the threshold, he paused

in utter amazement. His conception of Jacob Myers, drawn from the latter's association with flowers, had been that of a diminutive, fussy individual. But Jacob Myers was a large man, so large that he appeared gigantic against the setting of that small, plainly furnished room. Obviously of Teutonic ancestry, his closely cropped poll, his pink and white skin and his stolid, china-blue eyes were typical of his race. He sat in a huge swivel chair before his desk, absorbed in a book; and he continued to be absorbed, though the alert black eyes of his visitor played over him with rapierlike flashes.

It was the business of Billy King to read a man quickly, and after that comprehensive inspection of Sheriff Myers all diffidence left him and he smothered a grin.

"An overgrown kid," was his mental comment. "Plenty o' beef an' ivory—but that's all! It's almost a shame to do it."

He cleared his throat audibly.

"Greetings, sheriff!"

Another man would have glanced up, startled. But Jacob Myers turned a leaf carefully to mark his place, closed the book, and laid it upon the desk before raising his eyes.

"How do you do, sir," he returned gravely. "Have a chair."

Looking into those china-blue eyes, the bandit found, was not so easy as looking at them, and he fumbled nervously for papers and tobacco.

"Thanks, Myers! I come to see yuh on official business an' I reckon I can talk better standin'."

"So?"

Apparently only mildly interested, the officer reached for the long meerschaum pipe which lay on the desk beside him.

"Yeh! An', in addition to bein' official, this business is sort o' personal, too. My name is Harmon, sheriff—Ben Harmon, an' I'm one o' the guards up at the Magdalena penitentiary."

Though he spoke the words casually, the bandit leader was at the tension of a coiled spring. This was the one card he had dreaded to play, but once safely played, the game was his. So he showed it at the start.

No slightest change came over the big, childlike face before him. After a brief glance at the badge which King showed him, the sheriff's eyes wandered up to the outlaw's hat. For some reason he continued to stare at that hat, while his huge thumb tamped the tobacco into the bowl of the delicate meerschaum.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Harmon! And I see you know my name already. Now, what is this business?"

The surge of relief that swept over King left him almost giddy, for he had begun to feel just the least apprehensive of that imperturbable gaze.

"Well, it's about a crook named Saunders—Slippery Saunders, I think his monicker is, though he's down on the books as James H. He was sent to the institution three years ago for a safe-crackin' job he done up to Sante Fe. Yuh prob'ly remember arrestin' him at that time, sheriff, an' holdin' him here till the officers come down after him."

Jacob Myers lit his pipe and drew upon it slowly, though his eyes never left the bandit leader's hat.

"I remember, Mr. Harmon. What's it about this Slippery Saunders now?"

For the first time King sensed the reason for the sheriff's gaze and, with a confused apology, removed his hat and laid it upon the desk.

"He broke jail about a week ago," he explained, passing over the prison warrant for Saunders' rearrest, "an' me an' a couple o' deppities come trailin' down here after him. We picked him up this noon over to Ophir Sink. Yuh remember, it was ten thousand dollars' worth o' di'monds that he got away with on that safe-crackin' job an' he was sent up without tellin' where they was, hopin' to break out later an' get 'em. When

we nabbed him this noon, he broke down an' confessed. He told us where they was."

Jacob Myers glanced briefly at the warrant and returned it.

"So," he said slowly, and his gaze reverted to King's hat upon his desk.

Himself keyed up to highest tension, King could only regard the other's indifference with bewilderment. He had met men of many types, but none like this. And once more he noted the direction of the sheriff's gaze. His temper broke.

"What in heck's wrong with that hat, sheriff?" he demanded bluntly.

Myers regarded him gravely.

"The hat? Nothing. But I see you have a yucca flower in it."

The bandit leader stared at him a moment, then broke out into a mirthless laugh.

"Oh, I see! Yuh're strong on flowers, ain't yuh? I noticed 'em up at the calaboose an' around yuhr office here. But yuh want to lay off o' them yuccas, sheriff. You know, a gent told me to-day that they bring a man bad luck."

If he caught the derisive light in those black eyes, Myers gave no sign.

"Yes, I like flowers," he replied slowly. "They are a hobby with me. I know the names of all the wild flowers in New Mexico, and just where they grow. But the yucca is one flower I would not pick. As your friend stated, it can bring the wearer only bad luck."

For just an instant it seemed as if those round, china-blue eyes revealed more than the words, but the expression was so fleeting that King did not catch it.

"We'll let it go at that," he said with a grin. "I left them bedtime stories in my cradle. What's worryin' me now is them di'monds that Slippery Saunders hid away. An' yuh're the only man that can help me get 'em back, Myers. 'Cause it was under the floor o' yuhr calaboose that Saunders hid 'em!"

He had expected that shot to have

some effect. And he was not mistaken. Jacob Myers underwent what, for him, was evidently a paroxysm of emotion. He withdrew his pipe from his mouth, and stroked the black stubble on his chin.

"In my calaboose? I remember searching him carefully before I locked him up. He must have had the di'monds hidden in his clothing. I will remember that for the next one."

Despite his grin of satisfaction, Billy King could not help regarding this strange man with a little more respect. Though the mind of the sheriff functioned as slowly as his body, it evidently possessed the same power. King pictured the futility of the next attempt of any prisoner to put anything over on Jacob Myers.

"That's just what he done, sheriff," he continued. "Had the di'monds sewed in the linin' of his coat, an' that night when he was alone in the calaboose, he took 'em out an' dropped 'em through a crack in the floor of the northeast corner. He explained all that to me so I wouldn't have to waste any time huntin' for 'em. Now, if yuh'll just go over there with me I'll dig 'em up an' be on my way ag'in."

The sheriff drew meditatively upon his pipe.

"I should think, Mr. Harmon, that you would have brought this Slippery Saunders along to dig them up himself."

The outlaw had been expecting that.

"Too much notoriety, sheriff! There's men here in Deadrock who'd remember Saunders an' what he was sent up for. If they seen us bringin' him back to the calaboose an' then takin' him away ag'in they'd likely remember about them missin' di'monds, too. An' we've got a long, lonesome ride ahead of us before we reach the nearest railroad station."

Myers caught his meaning and nodded slowly.

"So you left him with your deputies

over in Ophir Sink? That is about fifteen miles north of here."

The bandit leader nodded, congratulating himself upon his general knowledge of the locality which had enabled him to pick out a spot so remote from Yucca Canyon. For it would not have done for him to mention the latter place. He had still to consider those northern sheriffs who were on his trail. He had dodged them temporarily by going through Yucca Canyon, but they were heading in this general direction and they would be certain to stop at Deadrock and enlist the aid of Jacob Myers. They might ride into the town shortly after he rode out of it, and as they could furnish an accurate description of him, would start Myers on his trail immediately, with the probability that he would be overtaken before he could reach the border. By sending them up to Ophir Sink he would obviate all such danger. Another instance, he reflected, where it paid to have brains.

"That's right, Myers," he declared briskly. "An' they're parboilin' with the heat up there while they're waitin' for me. So let's get goin'."

The gigantic sheriff continued to draw slowly upon his pipe.

"And you followed Saunders straight south from Magdalena, Mr. Harmon?"

"Straight as the crow flies, sheriff! Yuh bet, he didn't make any detours on his way to get them di'monds."

Myers inspected the bowl of his pipe.

"That is strange," he reflected.

King was losing patience.

"Strange? Mebbe to a man o' yuhr temper'ment, Myers! But not to me! If I was in Saunders' shoes I'd 'a' done just like he did. The point is, are we goin' after them di'monds now, or ain't we?"

Jacob Myers arose slowly, knocked the ashes from his pipe and laid it upon his desk.

"We will go at once, Mr. Harmon. It is only a short walk, so you can leave

your horse here. There is a crowbar out at the calaboose which you can use to pry up the boards. If you wish, I will remain and assist you."

King had not dared hope to pursue that search alone. But the sheriff's words offered him that opportunity. In his eagerness he almost forgot his caution.

"Don't need any help, Myers! Once yuh've opened up that calaboose, yuh go on about yuhr regular business. When I've located them di'monds I'll come back here."

Myers nodded indifferently, reached for his hat, and a moment later the two were outside and making their way along the narrow plank sidewalk in the direction of the calaboose.

A peculiar aspect of the situation which now became apparent to the bandit leader, seasoned his satisfaction with amusement. He, who was wanted for so many crimes, had never yet seen the inside of a jail! And now he was to see it, not as a prisoner, but as a visitor. As Myers unlocked and swung back the heavy outer door of the building, he glanced about him with genuine curiosity.

They entered a sort of ante-chamber which ran the full width of the calaboose. Beyond this, and separated from it by an iron grill, was the jail proper; dimly lighted by the high, barred window and furnished only with a cot and a small bench, upon which stood a wash-basin and pitcher. It was not a very cheering spectacle, even to the casual visitor, and King could not repress an involuntary shudder. For an instant he felt a desire to turn and flee, as if, in entering that man trap, he had tempted the fates too far. It was not until his eyes traveled to the northeast corner and he noted the well-defined cracks in the floor that he regained self-control.

Myers rejoined him with a short iron bar which he had picked up from a corner of the antechamber.

"So," he declared, handing the article over. "With this you should have no trouble. I put some new hinges on the outer door yesterday and used this bar to pry off the old ones. I will close that outer door again when I go, so that you will not be disturbed. This door to the cell I will leave open. If you need more light you will find a candle on that bench by the water pitcher."

King waited impatiently until the narrow iron door swung open before him, then stepped boldly into the cell.

"O. K., Myers," he called briskly. "Yuh can go back to yuhr office now. I'll show up in ten or fifteen minutes."

Not until he heard that outer door close behind the other, however, and caught the sound of those heavy, retreating footsteps, did he actually go to work. With the diamonds so nearly in his grasp he had become seized by a strange and jealous fear of them. If Jacob Myers were to glimpse those jewels with his own eyes he might not be so willing to surrender them. And even when he went back to the office, King decided that he would not show them. He would tarry only long enough to thank the sheriff for his services, then be on his way. Were it not for his horse, he would not return to the office at all. But he had been compelled to leave the animal there to avoid arousing Myers' suspicions.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, his hands were busy with his task. Inserting the bar beneath one of the boards, he bent his weight upon it, and with a long-drawn squeal the nails came clear. This opened up a strip six inches wide in the northeast corner of the floor, but realizing that he would require a larger area to work in, he ripped up the board next to it. If Slippery Saunders had informed him correctly as to the location of the diamonds, this was all the space he needed. With a palpitating heart he dropped to his knees and reached out an

exploring hand. His fingers touched cool, dry earth, not a foot below the floor, but it was so dark down there that he could see nothing. Remembering the candle on the bench, he got up and started for it.

He had always complimented himself upon his self-control, but now his hands were trembling so violently that he wasted two matches before he succeeded in lighting the candle. At best, it threw only a feeble radiance about the cell, but it promised to answer very well for close work, and his eyes were fairly dancing as he carried the candle back to his corner. Now that foot-wide strip of earth was bared to view, and, bending low, King scanned every inch of it. But where was the pile of diamonds he had expected to find gleaming back at him? There was not even a pebble to mar that smooth, hard surface!

He sprang erect with an oath of irritation. Had he been confused in his sense of direction? But, no! He remembered that the calaboose faced the south and, as one approached it, he was now in the opposite, left-hand corner. Could Slippery Saunders have deliberately lied to him? Quite unlikely, for the other had offered to accompany him on the quest. Perhaps the diamonds were not so close to the wall! The "northeast corner" may have been only their general location. In a burst of renewed zeal, he caught up the crowbar and ripped out two more of the boards. But when he bent to examine that newly made aperture only a similar bare strip of ground met his gaze.

Cold sweat broke out upon his forehead. What was the answer to this riddle? No one save Saunders and himself knew the location of those diamonds, therefore no other person could have taken them away. Yet it was evident that they *had* been taken away and — He did not complete that thought, but started involuntarily backward as a dark form scurried out into the lighted

area beneath him, then scurried frightedly away again. From the darkness into which it had disappeared gleamed two beady eyes, and as King stared, fascinated, those gleaming eyes were augmented by another pair—by another pair—and by still another pair!

King uttered a cry of anger, for now the riddle was made entirely clear to him.

"Pack rats!" he gasped. "The thiev-in' devils! They've carried off their di'monds an' hid 'em in their nest!"

For a moment his rage left him impotently cursing. Not that he feared to lose the diamonds, for they must still be somewhere within the confines of those four walls. But he saw that now he had merely started upon his task. Including the anteroom, which he must also take into consideration, the jail was about twenty feet long by fifteen feet wide. This meant that, unless he came upon the rats' nest by accident, he might have to rip up three hundred square feet of flooring before he recovered the diamonds. It was already mid-afternoon and he could not hope to complete such a formidable task before dark. Pressed for time as he was, he debated for a moment whether it were not better to let the diamonds go.

But, even as that thought came to him, he rejected it. There was not one chance in ten that the pursuing sheriffs would reach Deadrock before sundown. On the other hand, he might come upon the rats' hiding place at any moment. And when he did— The thought of those gleaming jewels acted upon him like a tonic. He had already discarded his gun belt and now, in a fever of impatience, he tore off his coat and vest, caught up the crowbar, and returned savagely to his task.

The minutes passed, lengthened into hours, and Billy King continued to rip up boards and curse. The calaboose had been noticeably hot when he entered it, but now his temperature, augmented by

the heat of his own efforts, it felt like an oven. His shirt soon followed his vest, and time and again he knocked off to make a trip to the water pitcher, whose lukewarm contents seemed merely to increase, instead of slacking, his thirst. And then—when there were but two more boards left, and when he had reached such a state of exhaustion that he felt he would never be able to remove them—he came upon the diamonds!

He came upon them just so suddenly. He had been ripping up boards so long without effect that, to his benumbed brain, the act had become an end in itself, and he was not prepared for the diamonds when he found them. In the wavering glow of the candle they flashed back at him like the eyes of some myriad-headed monster whose body still lay hidden in the recesses of the nest. A dozen or more stones there were, some as large as the end of his middle finger, and it was evident even to King that Slippery Saunders had not overestimated their value.

It was the thought of their value, not their beauty, that brought King back to himself. He gave a strangled cry, and, dropping to his knees, snatched the diamonds from their hiding place. Ten thousand dollars' worth, and they had cost him the hardest day's work of his life—yet they occupied no more space in his hand than the "makin's" for a cigarette! Hysterical from excitement and exhaustion, he laughed and wept and cursed at them. And if these few stones represented the full amount of the find, how many would there be for his own share?

Abruptly he sobered, and his black eyes gleamed with a crafty light. The thought that had been in the back of his mind ever since he started for Deadrock now assumed complete control. Had he figured out this plan, risked his liberty, toiled like a slave, only to share his reward with others? To split fifty-

fifty with Slippery Saunders would be bad enough, but to split further with his companions would be the act of a fool. Neither Ransy nor Marshall had lent him any aid in this scheme, and, as for the Mexican—

He broke into sardonic laughter.

"Why, that fool greaser never tried to scare me out of it! Said I'd never get the di'monds as long as I was wearin' that yucca flower in my hat! Wonder what he'd think if he could see me now?" The black eyes suddenly hardened. "But he'll never see me ag'in—nor will any o' the rest of 'em! I've earned them di'monds through work an' brains, an' no other sneakin' crook is goin' to take 'em from me!"

Quite by chance, he happened to glance through the high, barred window. He uttered an exclamation and, dropping the diamonds into his trousers' pocket, sprang to his feet. A glimpse of the rose-colored clouds overhead had told him that the sun was just setting, and—even though he did not intend to return to his companions—it was high time he was getting out of there. Forgetful of his fatigue, he hurried on his discarded garments, buckled his gun belt and started for the door. As he did so, he noted the frightful wreckage that his efforts had created, but the contemplation of it brought only a grin.

"It'll give that fool, Myers, somethin' to do besides nursin' flowers," was his sneering comment.

He reached the heavy outer door, turned the knob and pulled toward him. The latch was released and the door moved inward—but no more than an inch. With a mutter of annoyance the bandit leader seized the knob in both hands and yanked at it again, assuming that the door had stuck and that his reduced strength had been unable to move it. But, though he added his full weight to his pull this time, the door refused to open further. At the same instant, a dull, thumping sound without told him

why. It was secured on the other side by a heavy padlock!

What little strength was left in the outlaw's body deserted him then, and he leaned, inert as a wet rag, against the wall of the calaboose. He was locked in—trapped! And he had been locked in all the time that he toiled and sweated over that accursed floor! But his sense of rage at that thought was overborne by an even greater curiosity. *Why?* What reason had he given this seemingly stupid sheriff for mistrusting him? His badge and warrant for Saunders' arrest had evidently been accepted at their face value, and he had been careful to overlook no other detail, no matter how slight, that might react against him. Then for what earthly reason?

He straightened abruptly, his conjectures instantly forgotten. Through the heavy wall his ears had caught a faint sound, the sound of some one approaching the door. Instead of further alarm, his black eyes gleamed satisfaction. This was the one chance he wanted. Jacob Myers might go him one better on brains, but when it came to getting the drop on a man! He grinned evilly. Closing the door softly, he stepped aside, his hands on the butts of his .45s.

The footsteps reached the door and stopped. A moment later he heard hands fumbling at the padlock. So loud and prolonged was that noise that King snorted in disgust. He had given Myers credit for brains but evidently the sheriff did not always use them. For no one but a fool would so recklessly approach a door behind which he must know an armed enemy was waiting. As he stood there, tensely watching, the gloom of the calaboose was further darkened. Realizing that it was growing late, he gave it no further thought. An instant later the silence was shattered by a harsh command.

"Stick 'em up, King! I've got yuh covered with both guns!"

The bandit leader wheeled like a flash, for that sound had come from his rear. Framed in the high, barred window of the opposite wall were the head and shoulders of a man who was evidently mounted on a horse. His hands rested upon the sill, and in each of those hands was gripped a Colt .45. The face was that of Ben Harmon of the Magdalena penitentiary.

Mechanically the hands of the vain-glorious Billy King went upward, for intuition told him that, quick as he was, he could never get his guns out before Harmon flattened him against the wall. And he was too stunned to have taken the chance, even had the odds been more nearly equal! He understood, now, why the wily sheriff had made so much noise at the door. But to have Ben Harmon for his accomplice, of all men! How in the world had *he* been able to get here? Had Ransy and Marshall lost their nerve and allowed him to—

"All right, Myers," called Harmon clearly.

The bandit leader had just time enough to step back, his hands still up-raised, when the heavy door swung open and Sheriff Myers entered. His face was a little more flushed than usual, as if he had recently undergone some strenuous exercise, but otherwise he was as calm, his movements as unhurried, as before. His great hands went out and enveloped King's, and the latter felt the steel bracelets snap about his wrists.

"So," said Jacob Myers simply.

King's eyes blazed with something more than the anger of defeat.

"How did that hombre get here, sheriff?" he demanded hotly, nodding toward the window from which Harmon had just disappeared.

"The real Mr. Harmon? I brought him here, Mr. King, at the same time that I brought along the rest of your friends."

He stepped away from before the open door as he spoke, and, glancing out, the

young leader received a second startling surprise. Sitting their horses a hundred feet away, their hands tied behind them, their faces cast sullenly downward, were Ransy, Marshall, Manuel and Slippery Saunders. At either side of them were two young men, quite unknown to King, with deputies' badges upon their breasts. Too stunned for the moment to speak, King turned mutely upon Jacob Myers for an explanation.

But the latter was paying no attention to him. His mild blue eyes had glimpsed the wreckage of his jail, and he was shaking his ponderous head regretfully. He noticed the two boards which still remained in place, and said quietly:

"I see that you found the diamonds after all, Mr. King."

That brought the leader to himself.

"Curse the di'monds," he retorted savagely. "I found 'em, all right, but a lot o' good they'll do me now! I'm willin' to hand it to yuh, Myers. Yuh beat me at my own game, an' yuh beat me fair an' square. But what I'm cravin' to know is how yuh done it. I don't savvy where I blundered."

The mild, china-blue eyes of Jacob Myers looked for a moment into those black, impassioned ones before him, then lifted slowly to the bandit leader's hat.

"You should not have worn that yucca flower, Mr. King. You remember; your friend—and I, also—told you that it is unlucky."

A few hours before Billy King might have laughed at that remark, but he had learned by now that Jacob Myers was not a man to be laughed at. He raised

his manacled hands, removed his hat, and gazed at the wilting blossom blankly.

"Unlucky? In what way, sheriff? It was that same yucca flower that really started me on the way to them di'monds."

The other nodded, his features breaking into the first smile that the bandit leader had ever seen there.

"But it also brought you to this end. I am not superstitious, Mr. King, and when I told you that the yucca is unlucky I meant in this way. It is a rare flower in this State, and this year a five-dollar fine has been declared for every one that is picked. As an officer of the State penitentiary, you should have known that. The fact that you did not was the first thing to make me suspicious of you.

"Another point about the yucca is that it grows only in a few localities. In this county there is only one place where it grows, and that is in Yucca Canyon. The fact that you rode into Deadrock with such a fresh blossom in your hat told me at once that you must have come from Yucca Canyon. When you stated that you had come from Ophir Sink, and that you had been nowhere else since coming down from Magdalena, I was convinced that you were lying.

"And when you lied about Yucca Canyon I knew that you must have something to conceal there. So when I left you here I rode out with two deputies to investigate. Forewarned as we were, we had no trouble getting the drop on your accomplices and then the real Ben Harmon acquainted us with the rest."



BIRDS OF THE WEST AND NORTH AMERICA

The Bald Eagle

IT is only fitting and right that in treating of birds of the West and North America, the first member of the feathered tribe to be discussed is the white-headed or bald eagle. For this noble bird has been adopted as the emblem of our beloved republic. But the bald eagle is entitled, for another reason, to the honor we are according him, as he is the most beautiful and handsomest bird in North America.

The bald eagle is common to both continents, and is also found on rare occasions in high northern latitudes, as well as near the borders of the torrid zone. He is apt to choose as his habitat the vicinity of the sea, or the shores and cliffs of lakes and large rivers. While fish is the favorite diet of the eagle, when unable to obtain his chosen food, he will regale himself on a lamb or young pig; and there have been instances when an eagle has invaded the dooryard of some lonely ranch and flown away with a child clutched in his claws. Not long ago in the pages of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE a tragic instance of this kind was narrated.

Poised on a high limb of some gigantic tree that commands a wide view of the shore, the eagle observes the motions of other birds as they pursue game below him. He notes a fish hawk settling over some prospective victim in the river beneath. Then does the eagle's eye kindle and, balancing himself with half-opened wings, he watches the result of the fish hawk's plunge. As the fish hawk emerges with its prey, the eagle spreads his wings and gives chase. The fish hawk, seeing himself so unevenly matched, drops his fish; and the eagle, poising for a moment as if to take more certain aim,

descends quickly and grasps the fish before it reaches the water.

The fact that the bald eagle is considered among his fellows as a bird of bad moral character, one who does not get his living honestly, has prompted some naturalists to wish that he had not been chosen as the representative of our country.

Nests of the bald eagle are generally built on a very large and high tree, often in a swamp. They are formed of large sticks, sods, earthy rubbish, hay, cornstalks, and moss. In due time the nest contains two eggs about the size of those laid by a goose. They are bluish in color.

Young eagles are covered with a whitish or cream color down, and have light-blue eyes. This cream color changes gradually to a bluish gray. The eyes by degrees become dark, hazel-brown. When fully grown, the bald eagle is wholly covered with light or dark-brown feathers, but after the third year, white makes its appearance in the head and tail. At the end of the fourth year the eagle has reached his full growth and coloring, and his eyes have changed to a bright straw color.

The bald eagle is three feet long, and measures from tip to tip of the wing about seven feet. The breadth of its wing is two feet on the greater quill and sixteen inches on the lesser. The legs are half covered with feathers below the tarsal joint, and the soles of the feet are rough and warty.

Strangely enough, the male eagle is generally three inches shorter than his mate. Also, the white on his head and tail is duller. As is common with birds of prey, the male is less formidable and daring than the female.



An Oregon Trail Blazer

Astold to Wm.E.North by Dunham Wright



ANY stirring tales of frontier days in the Northwest are told by Dunham Wright, an eighty-five-year-old pioneer, who makes his home at Medical Springs, Oregon. One of his favorite reminiscences describes his wanderings through the wilderness country of Oregon and Idaho sixty-five years ago. This is the tale, which is pretty much as the old-timer relates it:

We came across the plains in 1862, traveling over the Southern Pass from Denver and over the Old Oregon Trail to ten miles above old Fort Hall, on the Snake River. We crossed the Snake River on a little ferry which carried but one wagon at a time, and then formed a company of three hundred wagons to go to Florence, Idaho. It was necessary to make a road from the Snake River to Lost River over fifty miles or more of desert.

Following the massacre of 1852, the Indians had decreed that no immigrant trains should go north of the Snake

River. The redskins put on their war paint and were ready to attack us if a favorable opportunity presented, but we organized our working crew for the road and put a guard with them to ward off Indian attacks. We also had guards on either side of the train, as well as in the rear.

We pushed onward to the foot of a great mountain between Boise and Fort Lemhi; then we came through Camas Prairie and crossed Wood River where Hailey, Idaho, now is. We then proceeded through the little Camas Prairie and intersected the original Oregon Trail at the exact spot where the great massacre was perpetrated in 1852.

The Old Oregon Trail had not been traveled for ten years. It was some fifty yards in width and covered with weeds and grasses. We stopped at the massacre grounds for about forty-five minutes. A grim sight was before us. There in the rye grass were irons and debris lying in a circular position, just as the corral had been formed when the Indians rushed upon the train many years before. Bones lay everywhere; those of humans and animals alike were

scattered in the grass. I saw as many as twenty human skulls in one place.

Following the Old Oregon Trail to the Boise River at about the place where Middleton, Idaho, is now situated, the company of pathfinders split up, seventy-five wagons under the leadership of Tim Goodel crossing the river at that point, while the rest kept on the Old Oregon Trail to the mouth of the Boise River. Mr. Wright gives this graphic word picture of the crossing:

In crossing the Boise River, friendly Indians were hired to assist in finding a riffle where the water would be shallow enough for wagons to cross. The red men were paid fifty cents per wagon to pilot us across the riffles. Lariats were tied on the horns of the lead oxen, and each wagon was secured to the one ahead. Thus the ford was made.

Two wagons, with four yoke of oxen, attempted to cross without a guide. They drifted into deep water and floated down the river, milling and turning round and round. Finally the wagon beds floated off and drifted to one shore. The running gears and oxen reached the opposite bank. Everything in the wagons was completely soaked.

Mr. Wright proceeds to relate how the pathfinders made a road to the middle fork of the Weiser River:

Here the mountains that confronted us were so rough that the train became completely lost. We were there ten days, attempting to find a way out. We learned that this country was known as the "Seven Devils," and agreed that it was properly christened, except that more devils should have been mentioned. Finally, scouts of the party found Brownlee's Ferry on the Snake River. There they told Mr. Brownlee of the plight of the immigrant train lost in the wilderness, and he agreed to ferry the wagons across the river free of charge, if we would build a road

from the Weiser River to his ferry. We did this.

At this point in the journey, young Dunham Wright and seven others broke away from the main train, taking with them three wagons. The adventures of this small expedition in the wilds of Idaho are thus told by the veteran pioneer:

On the first day out, the mountains were so rough that we left one wagon and doubled teams on the others, making roads, cutting trees and rolling stones to clear the way for the wagons to go down the mountains. The descents were so steep that great pine trees had to be dragged behind in order to keep the wagons from going down endwise on the trains.

Finally, in the very last days of August, 1862, we came upon a great mountain overlooking what now is Long Valley, Idaho. Snow banks, hard-crustured with ice, were encountered. We then realized that we had come to a jumping-off place. One man in our party had a small kit of carpenter's tools. The wagons were cut to pieces, and the wood from them was used to make pack saddles for the oxen. Wagon canvas was used for cinches on the saddles, and the lass ropes sewed to tie our possessions on the saddles, and these saddles on the backs of the animals.

It took ten days to make these saddles and to teach the old oxen to act as pack horses. We then proceeded on our journey down the mountain.

Going up Long Valley to Payette Lakes, we saw fresh signs of Indians. We took the Indian trail to the Little Salmon River, but soon noticed that the redskins had peeled large pine trees and logs upon which they had painted pictures of men. They had left arrows sticking into these figures. This symbolized a war trail made by Indians on the warpath. We did not choose to follow this route, but spent about a month

attempting to find another way out—without success.

Finally, with our provisions all but exhausted, there was nothing to do but take the Indian trail or die of starvation. So we followed the river down to the main Salmon, and on the bar we found two Frenchmen who were mining with a rocker. They told us of eight or ten miners below on the river where John Day and Slate Creeks emptied. They lent us a canoe to transport our goods across the stream, and we swam the cattle over. Then we again fixed our pack saddles and started down the river. We arrived at the mining camp the Frenchmen had described and were immediately given employment at six dollars a day. We spent several weeks building cabins for the miners and constructing chimneys on the cabins already

there. We also made ourselves a cabin, and received a job of sawing out lumber for sluice boxes.

One morning while we were eating breakfast, about seventy-five well-armed men with pack and riding animals circled about the cabin. They looked wild and woolly, but proved to be friends—a party under the leadership of the noted Jeff Stanford, of the early days in Boise Valley. They were bound for the newly discovered Boise Basin placer mines, and, hearing of our trip through the wilderness, they engaged us to join their party as guides.

Dunham Wright is the sole survivor of the group of eight who broke away from the main expedition for this perilous trip through the wilderness infested with hostile Indians.



TUSCON RODEO A SUCCESS

THE midwinter rodeo held at Tucson, Arizona, known as the Fiesta de los Vaqueros, was declared by experts the best show of the sort ever staged in the picturesque Southwestern town. The rodeo lasted three days and was attended by crowds that taxed the capacity of the stands at the Santa Catalina field, where the events were contested. Some of the best rodeo talent in the West competed or did exhibition work, including Bonnie Gray, the woman trick rider, "Shorty" Kelso, formerly champion bulldogger, Pearl Gist, woman trick roper, Donald Cummings, also a trick roper, and Fox Hastings, a woman bulldogger.

The events were marked by clean-cut work, only one accident being recorded. This was the breaking of an ankle by Joaquin Ortega, a cow-puncher of the Osa Ranch, in the wild-horse race.

Some of the winners of the final events were: Bulldogging, Lee Robinson; steer tying, Bud Parker and "Breezy" Cox; calf tying, Lee Robinson; wild-steer race, Jack Jefferies; wild-horse race, Glenn Smith.

During the rodeo season, "Wolfville," described as the "Rodeo Cowboy Jamboree," offered visitors a reproduction of an old-time cow camp, including a cowboy dance hall, and other attractions generally associated with the cow towns of the early West.



A Minute to Think

by Ray Humphreys

Author of "Crazy on Birds," etc.



It was a bright, beautiful morning in Gunsight, but as far as Old "Pappy" Stewart, senior driver for the Q-B Stage Lines, was concerned the sun was not shining, the birds were not singing, and the alpine flowers were not blooming. Old Pappy, his hands thrust deep into his trouser pockets, stood morosely in the center of a little group of stage employees in the doorway of the big Q-B barn.

"High jinks to-day, Pappy!" said "Rabbit" Tarvin.

"Yuh kin do it, Grandpop!" exclaimed "Pud" Johnson.

"Got yuhr goggles, Pappy?" asked Joe McMeel.

The remarks were all lost on Pappy, who paid no heed to them if he heard them at all. It was very doubtful if he did hear them. His old, faded blue eyes were fixed coldly on a brand new, shiny red and yellow automobile bus that stood in all its glory in the stage yard. The motor was purring, catlike,

and Pappy never had liked cats! There might have been tears in Pappy's eyes, but there surely was a pair of heavy driving gauntlets under his left arm, and the whip he had carried for years was gone.

"Pappy, to think yuh'd come to this!" wailed Rabbit Tarvin.

"After all these years!" supplied Pud Johnson.

"An' yuh bein' half mule, anyway!" added Joe McMeel, grinning.

Still Old Pappy Stewart made no reply. He was half mule at that, if love for the six sleek black mules he had driven for years meant anything. The officials of the Q-B Stage Lines had lately realized that Pappy was almost *all* mule when it came to stubbornness, for when they had decided to replace the two regular six-mule stages from Gunsight to Central City, with heavy motor busses, Old Pappy had balked quickly and thoroughly.

"What about my mules—Nigger an' Blackie an' Night an' Darky an' Tar Baby an' Satan?" he had demanded.

"Yuh ought to be highly complimented that we think enough of an ol' mule skinner like yuh to make yuh a bus driver!" remarked Bill Boyne, general manager of the stage lines.

"*What about my mules—Nigger an' Blackie an'—*"

"They'll be taken care of," said Boyne.

"Pension?" asked Pappy, sourly.

"No, not exactly," said Boyne, "we're going to put them on that auxiliary route, Nevadaville to Chicago Gulch!"

"I'll go with 'em!" said Pappy grimly.

"No, yuh won't," said Boyne, and then proceeded to point out that "Whiskers" Hayes had the Nevada-ville—Chicago Gulch route by right of long service, just as Pappy had the seniority on the important Gunsight to Central City line. But it took Boyne a long time to argue reason into the obstinate Pappy, and it was only after the general manager had promised to see that Whiskers treated the six black mules with extravagant kindness that Pappy agreed to "think over" the proposition of becoming pilot of one of the new twenty-passenger busses.

"It's a promotion, Pappy!" explained Boyne, for the hundredth time. Boyne liked Pappy and had great faith in the old man's ability and stability. Pappy was never sick. Pappy was never "oiled up" on mountain dew, or any other sort of liquid hilarity. Pappy was never late. Pappy had never lost a pouch of mail, a mule, a passenger, or a minute of schedule—and further, and most important of all, Pappy had the whole-souled love of every man, woman, child, and dog in Gunsight and Central City, and along the many miles of mountain roads that separated the two Colorado towns.

"I guess Pappy will take the job," said Boyne, finally, to his young assistant, Jim Duffy. Duffy shook his head. He was new on the Q-B lines. He had

an idea that to be efficient he must hate all the old men in the company's employ. So he hated Pappy cordially, but on no other grounds except his age.

"I wish he'd refuse," said the assistant general manager, "he *may* have a good record, as yuh say, with six lazy ol' mules, but he may get in a hole with a powerful motor bus an'—"

Boyne had smiled indulgently at Duffy.

"I'll do all th' worryin' about that, Duffy," said Boyne, "but ef yuh value that aristocratic nose o' yuhrs in its present unspoiled beauty, don't ever say in his hearing that Pappy drove six *lazy* mules. He wouldn't like it worth a red cent. And besides, it isn't true. Pappy had the friskiest hitch on the route—six black devils that *we* would find hard to handle!"

"Oh—well!" Duffy let the subject lapse.

So Pappy began to take lessons in bus driving from an instructor sent to Gunsight by the motor company that had sold the motors to the Q-B lines. The county commissioners, at the beckoning of progress, had thoughtfully put a crew of ten men and two four-horse scrapers to work on the road; straightening out some of the kinks, widening some of the narrows, and shaving off some of the many bumps. And Old Pappy, taking his first lessons in motor driving, assisted by uprooting a few saplings on the sharp turns, tearing out banks that should have been torn out anyway, and generally revising the route with his heavy auto bus.

Then came the day when Pappy said good-by to his mules. He actually kissed Nigger and Blackie on their satin noses. They were his leaders. He said they were the smartest mules in Colorado. The Q-B barn boss, an old army stable sergeant, swore they were the meanest mules in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico or Utah! Pappy put his arms around the necks

of Night and Darcy, his swing team, and whispered a lingering adios in their waving ears. Pappy had actually cried in his farewell to Satan and Tar Baby, his wheelers. The stable boss declared that Satan and Tar Baby had cried with the old man, but the stable boss didn't cry. He was very happy. A motor bus wasn't equipped with iron-shod heels that shot out of dark stalls and caught one unawares in the seat of the pants.

"Waal, Pappy, climb in an' blow yuhr horn!" suggested Rabbit Tarvin, maliciously, the morning of Pappy's first regular run with the new bus. "I'm dyin' to see ef yuh're goin' to feed *that* thing a lump o' sugar before yuh start!"

"I'll feed yuh a lump o' trouble," roared Pappy, awakening from his day dream. "Waal, I'm a-goin'—yuh birds kin laugh all yuh want to an' I'm givin' yuh permission, knowin' as I do that yuh'll laugh anyhow after I am off! I got only one passenger down this mawnin', anyhow, they tells me, an' I should worry how I bounce him. He'll have plenty o' room to bounce all he wants ter!"

"He must be a nut, that passenger!" suggested Rabbit.

"Or aimin' on suicide," put in Pud Johnson.

"Or an airy-plane stunt man goin' in fer something actually dangerous," said Joe McMeel. Then Joe stared in astonishment.

"Ready, Pappy?" asked assistant manager Jim Duffy, emerging from the barn office, "if yuh are, let's go!"

"Yuh!" faltered Pappy in awe, "yuh my passenger?"

"Yes," said Duffy, and there was something very unpleasant in the way Duffy said it. Tarvin and Johnson and McMeel, the barn helpers, put their tongues in their cheeks, winked at each other, and faded into the recesses of the stable. Pappy climbed into the bus.

Duffy followed. The heavy door banged. The horn gave a contemptuous snort, above the grinding of the meshing gears. The big red and yellow bus glided out of the Q-B yard, on to the Gunsight—Central City pike. Tarvin looked at Johnson and Johnson looked at McMeel.

"Waal——" began McMeel, but he left the rest unsaid.

Two weeks of very efficient tutoring by the motor company man had left its mark on Pappy Stewart. He swung the sharp corners in Gunsight as smartly as any bus driver could. He stopped smoothly in front of the Gunsight post office while Tom Egan, the postmaster, slung in a gaunt mail sack. Tom shook hands effusively with Pappy, wishing him success and happiness in his new rôle of "skinner" to a "travelin' house an' barn," as Tom put it. Tom waved airily at the one passenger, assistant manager Jim Duffy. That wave might have meant almost anything, but to Duffy, seated stiffly in the middle of the bus, it meant simply, "Waal, yuh *may* go through with a whole skin!"

The bus dipped out of Gunsight. The road crew, working near town, hastily gave the big rumbler plenty of room. The men and teams went into the ditch with alarming disregard for life and limb. This was not lost on assistant manager Jim Duffy. He scowled at the bent back of the old driver.

"Strange, those men would act like that," said Duffy.

"Oh—they know me," remarked Pappy complacently. Pappy thought he heard a groan from Duffy, but he wasn't sure.

"Yuh all right back thar?" asked Pappy, professionally.

"So far," admitted Duffy, grimly, "but see that yuh take it mighty easy! I wasn't keen on coming, but Boyne got a crazy idea and sent me. Remember,

Pappy, no speeding; this road is dangerous enough, and yuh have valuable—er—United States mail aboard.”

“Yes, sir,” said Pappy, absently.

Pappy’s thoughts were far, far away just then. His eyes followed the flashing ribbon of road over the top of his burnished silver radiator, but his eyes were blurred. He hadn’t slept well the night before, thinking of poor Nigger and Blackie and the rest. He had tossed and worried—not because he feared the motor bus, but because he was lonesome for the six black mules. He had figured out, right down to the dot, how many times he had driven that six-mule hitch down this very road. Something over two thousand times in the six years he had piloted them. Before that he had driven a hitch of grays for several years, and before that he had piloted a mixed team of grays and browns.

“Pore ol’ Nigger,” he said, unhappily, “wonder ef Whiskers Graham will remember my orders to always feed him a lump o’ sugar.”

“What?” asked Duffy.

“An’ Blackie,” went on Pappy, sadly, “*thar* was a mule fer yuh—never would shy, not even from a rattler; that’s the kind o’ a lead mule yuh gotta have on a road like this.”

“Say,” muttered Duffy, uncomfortably.

“An’ Night an’ Darky,” exclaimed Pappy, swinging a curve and grazing a giant pine stump by a margin of inches, “the best gol-danged swing team in Colorado—fast on their feet, nimble, plenty o’ bone, puffect faith in the leaders, which is lots—”

“Keep yuhr mind on the road!” interrupted Duffy, angrily.

“Yes, sir,” said Pappy, squinting ahead and veering abruptly to avoid a chuck hole. “Now yuh take Tar Baby an’ Satan—them mules were hu-mins, by gosh! I remember the night a trace broke on

Floyd Hill as we was comin’ up with a heavy load o’ church folks from a picnic—lawsy me, *that* had me talkin’ to myself fer a second!—but ol’ Satan, he jus’ leaned back in the collar, knowin’ too much strain would snap another trace, an’ so I got down.”

“Hey!” roared Duffy, ducking mechanically.

“What” asked Pappy, over his shoulder, “what’s wrong?”

“Nothing—now!” gasped Duffy, “I thought we was goin’ to slide into that ten-ton rock back *thar*—that’s all. Take it easy, old man, will yuh? I say, take it easy—we’re on a pretty steep grade, I’d say—pretty steep an’ dangerous.”

Pappy said nothing. He knew well enough that he was on a steep grade. He had come down this very grade five or six thousand times at least, and he had come up, whole, every time he had gone down. Now, however, he rested a precautionary foot on the brake pedal. A cottontail sallied out into the road and Pappy dodged it with a swaying bus. Pappy thought again of old Nigger and Blackie and Night and the others; and, watching his passenger through the little rear vision mirror, Pappy waited until Duffy was busy out a side window, measuring the distance between the bus and the brink of the canyon. Then Pappy poked a finger at each eye and brushed away the tears.

“I mustn’t do my grievin’ out loud fer that cuss to hear me an’ report me fer it,” decided Pappy to himself, “but I kain’t help feelin’ purty dog gone blue on this trip—my fust reg’lar trip without the mules. Nigger was such a pet. How he would beg fer sugar! Ef ol’ Whiskers Graham doesn’t give it to him, why Nigger will like as not kick Whiskers inter the middle o’ next January, fust chance he gits! Pore ol’ Nigger—a good mule!”

The big bus went down the hill toward Shaffer’s Crossing at a merry clip. Shaffer’s Crossing was at the

bottom of a ravine, where the Gunsight—Central City road dipped down and crossed the Nevadaville—Chicago Gulch road. The latter road was rutty and twisting. It existed merely for the sake of the two dozen mines up Chicago Gulch which drew their supplies from Nevadaville on the west slope of the Continental divide. It was on this road that Pappy's six mules were now working. Pappy scanned the narrow crossing and eased on the brake.

"Don't slow up now!" ordered assistant manager Duffy from his rear seat. "Yuh never can make that hill on the other side if yuh do! Give her the gas, step on her, let her go! Yuh been speedin' all along an' now when yuh oughter speed yuh're burnin' out brake linings—let her go!"

"The crossin'," said Pappy gently.

"Ah, to heck with the crossin'!" roared Duffy. "I kin see that it's clear from whar I set an' yuh're fifteen feet ahead o' me. The crossin's clear—anyway, it ain't a railroad crossin' an' that mine road ain't got no motors on it—give her the throttle, open her up, spin yuh'r wheels! I don't want to git half way up that hill yonder an' stall an' start backin' down an' slide off the cliff mebbe. I say, let her go—step on the gas, Santa Claus, I tell yuh!"

"Yes, sir," said Pappy meekly. Duffy was assistant manager, and orders were orders. Anyway, the crossing seemed to be quite clear—what Pappy could see of it. Pappy remembered the time, however, when two ore wagons had met there, killing eleven of the twelve mules involved and one of the hapless drivers. But that was before Duffy's time.

"Speed her up!" snapped Duffy.

Pappy stepped on the gas, mainly to humor Duffy. The big bus was traveling fast enough on a sharp down grade, anyway. The crossing was now half a city block away, scenery was whizzing past on all sides at an alarming

rate. Duffy, however, had his eyes fixed on the opposite hill. It was deceiving, that hill. It looked almost straight up and down. Duffy doubted the ability of the heavy bus to make it, although he remembered that Boyne had told him the bus could make it on high easily. So Duffy watched the hill. Pappy, shifting his chewing tobacco from cheek to cheek, watched the crossing and sped on.

"Whoo-oo-ee-ee!" sounded the bus horn.

The crossing was now two hundred and fifty feet away. The bus was fairly hurtling through the air at Duffy's commands—"give it to her—let her out—that hill is steep over thar!" Old Pappy ceased to shift his tobacco. The crossing was now a scant hundred and fifty feet away. A leaping shadow was the first intimation of the impending disaster. Pappy's faded eyes lit up with a hideous light. His hands froze on the steering wheel. A cry died unuttered in his throat. The next second the heads of two sleek black mules flashed into sight, going down grade into Chicago Gulch. A half second, and the heads of the second team of the hitch came into view. The leaders were Nigger and Blackie, the second team was Night and Darky, then came the wheelers, Satan and Tar Baby, and the wagon—

"Yuh got a minute to think!" shrieked Jim Duffy, scrambling to his feet as he saw the coming crash, "a half minute—"

"Ugh!" grunted Pappy, going down hard on the brake pedal; but the bus was traveling too fast for any sudden stop. The six sleek mules and the big freight wagon, with a horrified old Whiskers Graham perched on its seat, seemed to leap at the radiator of the speeding bus.

"Go through 'em—go through 'em!" screamed Duffy, flinging himself on the floor of the swaying bus.

"My mules—Nigger an' Blackie an' Night——" began Old Pappy, but he didn't finish. He threw all his strength into his left arm. The big bus veered, tottered drunkenly; then lurched straight off the road, skimmed the tops of some bearberry bushes that lined the highway, and plunged, nose down, into a tangled thicket of young aspens. There was a tremendous crash, the splintering of glass, the odor of burning rubber, and one scream—from Duffy. Old Pappy, bent over the twisted steering wheel, had mumbled again "Nigger," and that was all.

Meanwhile old Whiskers Graham had sat spellbound on the high perch of his freighter, unaware that his six black mules had stopped. Graham had expected to be hurtled into eternity so fast that he would beat his feverish prayers to heaven. When he saw the flashing red-and-yellow bus swerve and go into the ditch he decided that the driver, whoever he was, had lost control just in time to save him and the outfit of mules he had inherited from Pappy. Slowly climbing down off his big wagon, which set squarely in the middle of the crossroads, Whiskers slid down into the aspen thicket—or what was left of it after the bus had crashed.

"Whew" he wheezed, dazed, "this is awful!"

Going around the bus, which lay on its side, Graham found a window from which all glass had vanished. He went in that way. He recognized Duffy, dragged him out, and laid him on a grassy plot along the little creek. Duffy was breathing. He had fainted. Then Graham went back and dragged out the driver. He whistled when he recognized the battered face of Pappy Stewart, senior driver on the big route. Pappy wasn't breathing so well. He was cut and bruised and bleeding. Graham laid him alongside of Duffy and went back to his wagon for a pail. Eventually, with plenty of icy creek

water, he brought Duffy back to consciousness, and then revived Old Pappy. Duffy swore horribly as he came to; Pappy merely smiled mirthlessly and was silent.

"Gents," said Whiskers Graham, a bit unsteadily, "you've had a blamed narrow squeak, I'd say, ef anyone should ask me. I thought yuh were both kilt instantly—that big car went off the road like a comet, I tell ye, I couldn't move."

Duffy was rubbing his head with both hands, but at that he suddenly thought of something very important.

"Yuh ol' fool," he cried at Whiskers, angrily, "what's the idear o' runnin' a mule team across a crossin' like that? It would have served yuh right ef yuh'd been killed."

"I wasn't runnin' no mules," whimpered Graham, unhappily; "they was runnin' me. I ain't used to that hitch—they're——"

Duffy swung on Pappy.

"Those were yuhr ol' mules!" he stormed. "Coddled, pampered, suffocated with all kindness an' no discipline all their lives, thanks to yuh. An' yuh, yuh ol' idjut, why didn't yuh run right through that wagon outfit, as I told yuh? What's one ol' mule driver or a few mules compared to an eight thousand dollar bus?"

Pappy groaned.

"Mister Duffy," he said, "as yuh say, those were my ol' mules—Nigger an' Blackie an' Night an' Darcy an' Tar—say, Graham, ef yuh think this is funny talkin' about killin' my mules."

Old Whiskers Graham was doubled up with laughter.

"What's one ol' mule driver or a few mules compared to an eight thousand dollar bus, eh?" roared Whiskers Graham, pointing a shaky finger at assistant manager Jim Duffy. "Waal, I'll tell yuh, Mr. Duffy, I jus' wish yuh had tried to run through *my* outfit—yuh'd dang soon would o' found out how

much *we* amounted to! I got sixteen boxes o' grade A dynamite in that ol' wagon, Mr. Duffy—more'n enough to blow your eight thousand dollar bus an' half a dozen assistant general managers higher than any wild *goose* ever flew before. It's a good thing Pappy remembered this was Tuesday an' dynamite haulin' day fer the mines, or yuh'd be pickin' out yuhr harp—or pitchfork—right now."

Duffy's face went even grayer than it had been.

"Dynamite, yuh say?" he gasped, and then he turned to Old Pappy who had never thought of dynamite until he

heard Graham mention it. "Waal, sir, *that* does change matters! I hand it to yuh, Pappy, yuh had one minute to think—an' yuh thought right! It was an unavoidable accident, I'm here to say! We kin fix up the bus somehow, I guess, but ef we had hit——"

"Excuse me just a minute," mumbled Old Pappy, scrambling to his feet, "I got some friends I wanta talk to up in the road—Nigger an' Blackie an' Night an' Darcy an' Tar Baby an' Satan!"

And even then assistant manager Duffy didn't guess that it was love, and not dynamite, that had swung Pappy into the ditch.

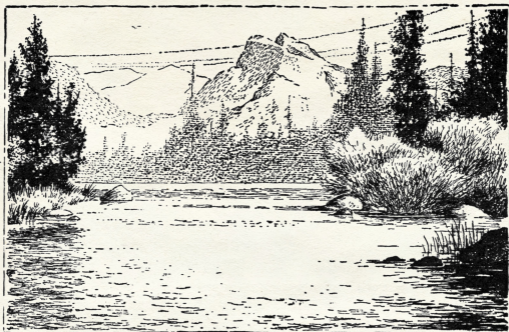


MALEMUTE HEROISM

TALES of almost unbelievable sagacity and courage are related of the huskies or Malemute dogs that serve the men of the frozen wastes of the north as companions and beasts of burden. In romance, these splendid animals have been shown in many thrilling escapades, but these are hardly less heroic than many of the exploits that are recorded from time to time as actual happenings. The feat of Balto and his fellow huskies who took serum to Nome over fields of ice and snow in the face of a raging arctic blizzard is only one of many, though it is probably the outstanding achievement of the breed in recent years.

Another instance of Malemute intrepidity was revealed a few weeks ago by an Indian known as Ginnis Solomon, who lives on the little-known Black River, in northern Alaska, about one hundred miles northeast of Circle City. One morning, there came to Solomon's wilderness cabin two Malemute dogs, which he recognized as belonging to one Roy Felter, a trapper who had a camp in that locality. The dogs' feet were cut and bleeding and gave evidence of a long journey over a hard stretch of country covered with jagged ice and frozen snow. Each dog carried a note from his master, but the messages had become wet and had faded so as to be indecipherable.

Believing that the trapper must be ill, to send his dogs in this way, Solomon set out for the other man's camp. When he reached it, however, he found its occupant dead. There were marks in the snow indicating that Felter had started out to journey to Solomon's place for aid, but he had evidently been overcome by his weakness and had returned to his cabin to die, first dispatching his faithful Malemutes with messages which they loyally delivered. Thus another splendid feat on the part of these sturdy dogs is placed on record as proving the sterling qualities of the breed as the friends of man in the frozen country of the Far North.



Pioneer Towns of the West (Fresno, California) by A.V. Strope

Author of "Bemidji, Minnesota," etc.



NEAR the geographical center of California, in the great San Joaquin Valley, there stands a stately city. Bounding its eastern horizon

the Sierra Nevada Mountains tower toward the sky, while in the West the Coast Range rises to shut off the fogs of the Pacific. North of the city the San Joaquin River winds down through canyons; the King's River flows across the valley to the South. Such is the setting for Fresno, in the "Garden of the Sun."

Prior to 1835 only Indians and occasional trappers knew this locality. In that year, Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga with a company of Mexican soldiers crossed the plain in pursuit of some Indians who had raided the settlements along the coast. Spanish names were bestowed upon several of the resting

places along the route taken by the officer and his men. Fresno is the Spanish equivalent for white oak.

With the rush of prospectors to California in 1849, several mining camps sprang up near the head waters of the San Joaquin River. For a long time gold dust was the medium of exchange in these settlements. In 1856 when Fresno County was created, one of the early camps—later called Millerton—became the county seat. It remained the governing center of that part of California until 1874, when the Central Pacific Railroad built its tracks through the wilderness surrounding what is now Fresno.

Later, after the waters of the King's River had been turned into canals traversing the arid flat lands of the region, and the country had begun to produce the fruit for which it is

famous, the value of lots in Fresno soared. Previous to that time, the county had been given over mainly to cattle. Horses, steers, mules, and sheep still graze in large numbers on ranches in the county and contribute materially to the wealth of the city.

But for many years the industries of Fresno have been chiefly concerned with the packing, canning, and shipment of fruit. At the present time Fresno ranks fourth among California industrial cities. About three hundred and fifty manufacturing plants are located here; and here two coöperative marketing associations with world-wide connections have their headquarters. The Sun-Maid Raisin Growers and the California Peach and Fig Growers deal in the fruits that are so largely responsible for Fresno's great prosperity.

In 1885, when the inhabitants were but three thousand, four hundred and fifty in number, they incorporated their community as a city. To-day more than seventy-eight thousand souls live in this metropolis. Their public officials have served them well, and under the commission form of government Fresno has been made a delightful place in which to live. Business buildings many stories high rise above the beautiful park trees, while in the residential districts cozy houses, artistically built and fronting on lawns and paved streets, offer suggestions of comfort and well-being to the beholder. Fifty-five miles of paved streets traverse the 8.25 square miles covered by the town; gas and electric light and power are at the command of residents; forty-eight miles of street railway insure quick local transportation.

Two transcontinental railroads—the Southern Pacific and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe—eight branches, and two independent lines serve the city. Moreover, Fresno is one of the largest stage-travel centers in Cali-

fornia. About three thousand passengers are carried daily by these motor omnibuses. Three daily newspapers, two "legitimate" theaters, eight motion picture houses, and one vaudeville theater provide information and entertainment. Several weekly newspapers also are published in Fresno.

Within the city proper are five public parks. Roeding Park, one hundred and fifty-seven acres, is famous for the variety of its trees and shrubs. A baseball diamond, several tennis courts, a bandstand from which concerts are given during the summer months, a deer park, and an aviary are other features of this very attractive recreational center. The Fresno County fair grounds, just outside the city limits, include a one-mile board speedway where automobile races of championship quality are held each year. And not far distant the mountains and streams of the high Sierras offer outdoor activity of the best type. Trout in the mountain streams, salmon and striped and black bass in the San Joaquin River within a few miles of Fresno furnish battle and good sport to the ardent angler.

Add to these joys the delight of a sunny climate, and you will agree that the dweller in Fresno has much to be thankful for. While the days in summer are warm, the nights are usually cool, and, as most of the rain falls during the winter months, there is but little humidity.

But if the people of the city desire the cool quiet of mountain heights, they can obtain it, and magnificent scenery as well, within a short distance of their homes. Over the excellent California roads they may go eastward but a little way from the valley lands that are only two hundred and ninety-three feet above sea level, to the heights of the Sequoia National Park or of the General Grant National Park, where the hottest days seem cool in the shade of the giant trees.



He Got Justice

By **Herbert Farris**

Author of "With His Own Smoke," etc.



THE digger stood up straight, leaned on his shovel, and wiped his smudged perspiring forehead with a grimy handkerchief. From the shade of a spruce tree he looked for a moment out across the undulating waters of the Pacific, gently rising and falling in the rays of the setting sun. It was a beautiful sight, but Janzig had no eye for beauty. His gaze fell, rested on the eighteen-foot dory beached well above the wash of the tide; then followed up the slope of the gravel to the tent, perched below him on a level carpet of green.

"I'm a fool," Janzig muttered irritably. "I'll bet that dory is right on a line with the tent. It's got to be moved, if it is."

He took the long-handled shovel and aimed it out toward the sea as if it were a rifle. Sure enough, a line drawn from where he stood, crossing the exact center of the tent's ridgepole, also bisected the dory. Janzig looked

up at the huge boulder towering high above him. For several days he had been engaged in the task of undermining the boulder, and a great mound of earth and gravel bore testimony to his industry. He threw the shovel from him with an oath.

"No more work on you," he said, addressing the boulder, "until I've moved that boat to where it's safe." Muttering to himself, he clambered down the narrow, troughlike gorge, which was a perfect directing channel for the boulder when it should be sufficiently loosened to take its plunge upon the tent below. "To-morrow mornin'," he said, "I'll take the boat an' go fishin' for a while. Then when I come ashore, I'll beach it a coupla hundred feet from where it's at now."

Before entering, Janzig removed all trace of his toil from face and hands at the tiny creek which trickled from a gorge back of the tent. When he had finished washing, he gazed up the sharp incline down which he had just climbed, and once more, as he had done

many times before, carefully scrutinized the boulder. It was enormous; he estimated that it was at least four, possibly five times, the size of the tent. Having again assured himself that no sign of his recent work was visible from the tent, he approached the camp, whistling a loud announcement of his coming. His partner, "Jimmie" Hale, who was cooking their evening meal, met him at the tent flaps.

"Howdy, Jimmie," said Janzig, quickly avoiding the frank eyes of his young partner. "Supper ready yet?"

"Sure. I've been keeping it hot for an hour."

There was no trace of bitterness in Jimmie Hale's tone, but Janzig pretended to be aggrieved. He slumped down by the grub box, and silently filled his plate from the bean pot.

"So you've been keepin' supper hot for an hour," he said mournfully. "Well, I got in as soon as I could, an' a man wouldn't think it's so much trouble to keep the bean pot warm; just stick in a piece of wood once in a while. Still, you understand, I ain't findin' fault with you. I don't blame you for gettin' sore at me."

Jimmie Hale laughed. "Why, I'm not sore, Janzig. As you say, it's no trouble to keep the fire going." He looked across the grub box, but Janzig's eyes were on his plate. "We've been partners for a year, and still I don't understand you," Hale went on. "Sometimes, Janzig, I think you're an old fraud. Come on, tell the truth—you don't really think I acted sore, do you?"

"I won't dispute you—if you say you ain't, that ends it."

"Look here, Janzig," said Hale earnestly, "you make me feel uncomfortable. Why man, I'd be the most ungrateful cuss in Alaska, if I allowed myself to get sore at you! After all you've done for me!"

Janzig ventured a glance at his part-

ner. "You admit then that I've been worth something on this trip," he said, his eyes shifting to his plate again before Hale could meet them. "You admit I've done my part?"

"What a question," said Hale, a trifle impatiently; "certainly I admit that you've done your part. I'm no trapper. If it hadn't been for your knowledge, we wouldn't have done any good on this trip, and I give you full credit for all you've done."

"Glad to hear you admit it," said Janzig humbly. "I'm thirty-eight, an' you're only twenty-three; lots of times a young man thinks he knows it all—he don't want to admit that an older man with more experience is worth lots more when it comes to a show-down."

"What are you driving at? Do you still contend that I shouldn't have a thousand dollars more than you, when we sell the furs?"

"I ain't contendin' anything," said Janzig meekly. "But right's right, an' wrongs nobody. All I want's justice, an' in this case I aim to get what's comin' to me."

"But listen, man! I bought our complete outfit—paid a little over a thousand dollars for it—you didn't put in a cent. Now, when we sell our pelts, say for ten thousand, it seems only fair that I should first have my thousand dollars back; then we split the balance. Isn't that fair?"

"You mean if we sell for ten, we only split nine. That's fair, all right—for you."

"For both of us. I started with a thousand more than you did. I ought to have a thousand more than you when we quit. You know that surely, don't you?"

"I know this much. When we sell, if we get ten thousand, you'll walk off with fifty-nine hundred in your jeans, and leave me with only forty-five hundred—provided you have your way."

"Janzig, that was our agreement. It was thoroughly understood that I was to get back the price of our outfit before we divided anything. When we met, I had a little more than a thousand, and you were broke. You——"

"Go on," Janzig interrupted. "Rub it in. But I can tell you this much. I ain't the only good man that's been broke."

"You're misunderstanding me purposely, Janzig. I didn't mind your being broke, any more than you minded my having no experience at trapping. You're unreasonable when you want me to make you a gift of half the money I put into our outfit." Hale paused; he wondered if by any chance he could be talking too severely to the meek little man across the grub box. After all, Janzig had always done his full share of the work. He was peculiar, of course, but so were most men who had lived too much alone. He felt suddenly sympathetic. "Tell you what I'll do, Janzig," he proposed. "Let's quit arguing about this. When we get across to the mainland, let's sell our furs and leave the matter of dividing the money to arbitration. That'll be a fair way out. We'll ask three disinterested trappers to decide; you can tell your story, and I'll tell mine."

"That wouldn't be fair," said Janzig. "You're educated, an' I ain't—you can talk lots better'n I can. I wouldn't get justice that way."

"Then I'll play you a game of cards—I'll even *cut* the cards with you!"

"I've trapped all my life—I ain't a gambler. I'd just as well make you a present of the money. Nope, I aim to get what's comin' to me."

Hale shrugged and said nothing more. Janzig filled his pipe, lighted it, and sat moodily upon his bunk. He stealthily watched Hale, who, with sleeves rolled to the elbow, was now

washing the dishes. Hale was a young fool. Rather than divide fair and square, like a man, he wanted to hog it. So Janzig thought, as he shot surreptitious glances at his young partner.

"We can pull out of here in three or four days," Janzig said at last. "I was lookin' at the ocean to-day, an' she's quieted down a lot. Any day now I look for the wind to swing around."

"I wish it *would* swing," said Hale sharply. "I'd rather buck a head wind than to stay on here. I'm sick of it!" "Yes," he agreed, "you'll certainly be through in a few days—for good an' all."

"It'll be your turn in three days. I'll be through then."

Janzig's mind was on the boulder. "Yes," he agreed, "you'll be through in a few days—for good an' all."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh," said Janzig, on his guard once more, "I mean we'll be pullin' out of here in a few days, an' with a fair wind we'll make it to the mainland in twelve hours. So there won't be any more cookin' to do—at least no more *partnership* cookin'."

After breakfast the following morning Janzig took the dory and fished for a short time. When he rowed ashore, he beached the boat where it would be well out of the way of the boulder when it should later hurtle down the gorge and through the tent. At noon he told Hale, who was becoming impatient at their prolonged stay on the island, that they would surely leave in two or three days.

"We don't dare risk makin' a start till the weather's settled," he said, "but it won't be long now. We've got our lives an' ten thousan' dollars' worth of pelts at stake. It's a whole lot better to be safe than sorry."

"I see nothing wrong with the weather," Hale averred thoughtfully.

"I'm willing to take a chance on pulling out to-morrow."

Janzig shook his head. "Not to-morrow," he said stubbornly. "Maybe the day after, but it's got to look right to me before I budge an inch! Take it easy," he added as he observed that Hale was becoming irritated; "take it easy—flop on your bunk, an' read one of them books you brought along. Me, I'm goin' to take a walk down the beach a ways."

Hale curbed his temper, while Janzig ambled off down the beach. For a half mile he walked slowly along the water's edge; then, when he was beyond view of the tent, he struck off through the timber, doubling back to reach the boulder upon the mountain side. Peering from behind a spruce, he assured himself that Hale was still within the tent; up and down the shore line as far as the eye could reach there was no sign of life. Janzig took up his shovel and set to work removing the earth and gravel from beneath the boulder. He worked steadily for an hour; then paused to look up at the mass of rock.

"As soon as she starts to wobble the least bit," he told himself, "I'm goin' to quit work. I *think* he's in the tent right now, but I don't know for sure. I'll wait till I see the smoke driftin' from the tent; then I'll *know* he's inside cookin' supper. That'll be the time to turn 'er loose."

Janzig went on with his work. A week before he had planned to get possession of the partnership furs by shooting Hale. But Janzig was too cowardly to carry out the plan. He was sufficiently cold-blooded to use his rifle, but he lacked the nerve. Hale carried a revolver, and was quick with it; Janzig feared that he himself might be killed, and had craftily altered his plan. The boulder he was now undermining would do the work efficiently, and there would be no risk.

At five o'clock, smoke was curling up from the tent below. Janzig observed it and knew that Hale was there, unsuspectingly preparing the evening meal. The time was ripe, but Janzig was unable to put his plan into execution. In spite of his industry the boulder did not even wobble. Janzig redoubled his efforts and worked steadily until six o'clock, but still the huge rock remained firm. Janzig was disappointed; another day's work would be necessary. With an oath, he threw his shovel aside, and descended to the tent.

The partners talked but little while they ate; Janzig was moody, and Hale plainly angry that another clear day had slipped by. Hale hurriedly finished eating and, to Janzig's surprise, made up a light pack—a day's supply of food rolled in a blanket. He was on the point of leaving the tent, having given no explanation for his strange conduct, when Janzig asked curiously:

"Where you goin' with grub an' a blanket?" He understood, or thought he did, the moment he asked the question. "You goin' after them traps?"

"Yes," Hale replied. "You've been telling me right along that we couldn't leave the island until you packed over that small cache of pelts and traps, so when to-morrow comes you'll have no excuse. I'll be back here by noon." Hale looked sternly at his partner. "I don't want a row with you Janzig," he went on, "but I want you to get me straight. You've been stalling around here for the last four days, because you claim that you're afraid of a storm. I'm tired of it; so far as I can see, the weather is just about perfect, and we've been wasting our time. Get this now. I'm going to leave this island when I get back from this trip—you can come along with me, or you can spend the summer here. Think it over."

Janzig did think it over. But first he shuffled to the tent flaps and watched his young partner out of sight. No

wonder Janzig was astonished. It was the first time that Hale had asserted himself or stood on his rights. Janzig returned to his bunk, lighted his pipe and smoked thoughtfully. Now that Hale had taken the bit in his teeth, the labor of undermining the boulder was lost. Janzig was sure that he could no longer fool the boy. Hale would insist on leaving the island on the following day; he had said but little; yet his determined expression had convinced Janzig that he would brook no further delay.

"I didn't want to do it," said Janzig, reaching for his rifle, "but he's got nobody but himself to blame." It was strange reasoning, but Janzig did not catch the grim humor of his speech; he had meant to murder Hale by means of the boulder, and now that that was impossible, he intended to kill him with a rifle! And Hale, according to Janzig's peculiar logic, had "nobody but himself to blame." Janzig oiled his rifle and loaded it carefully. "He's drove me to it," he continued; "wants to cheat me out of my rightful share of the pelts, does he? Well, we'll see if he does or not!"

Late that evening the wind came up, so gradually Janzig did not notice it until the flaps of the tent snapped gently in the breeze. He stepped outside, and saw that black clouds had formed above the island. It would rain, he told himself, and Hale would not be so eager to leave. Janzig chuckled at a distant thunder clap, and returned to the comfort of his bunk and pipe.

"It's a fine piece of canvas," he said presently, as he listened to the pelting of the rain on the tent; "she don't leak a drop, an' I'll be as snug as a bug in a rug here to-night. An' rains this time of year," he went on gloatingly, "are mighty cold an' miserable. Bein' so wise an' smart like he is, I hope he gets chilled clean to the bone. Says to me that I can come along with him to-mor-

row when he aims to leave the island, or I can spend the summer here!" The recollection of the boy's words irritated Janzig. His voice rose high above the patter of the rain on the tent and high above the roar of the wind in the spruce. "Spend the summer here, can I! Or I can come with him! Spend the summer——"

Janzig's voice had suddenly died down to a contented whine. He had reiterated Hale's words until finally a happy thought had suggested itself to him. It was such a simple thing that Janzig wondered why he had not thought of it before.

"He talks about leavin' *me* here on the island this summer," Janzig muttered. "Well, so long as the notion's such a good one, what's the matter with *him* stayin' on here this summer—yes, an' next winter, too!"

This last was by way of being a grim joke. Janzig knew that Hale could not live through the summer, to say nothing of the following winter. With no food of any description—and Janzig planned to leave none—Hale would soon perish. Janzig rubbed his hands gleefully; so far as he was concerned, the thing was settled now. In the morning he would load the boat with their complete outfit, and quit the island.

Night fell, and the cold rain was still pelting the tent. Janzig fed the fire from a plentiful stock of spruce, and smoked in comfort. From time to time he thought of Hale and wondered how the boy was making out.

"I hope he's chilled clean through to the bone," he said once when replenishing the fire. "It'll serve him good an' right!" He yawned and turned down the blankets on his bunk. "It's sure fine to be in the dry; wonder how Hale's likin' the cold an' the wet by this time!"

Lulled by the pattering of the rain on the tent, Janzig slept soundly. He could not know that the work he had

begun was being carried on while he slept, but such was the case. A tiny trickle of water, diverted from its course by the earth mound he had built, was now undermining the boulder, and doing it very efficiently. At intervals during the night, hours after the rain was over, small masses of gravel and earth fell away from the big rock and slithered into the gulch. Finally, just as the gray dawn was breaking, the boulder itself moved slightly; there was a grinding sound as it grated on the gravel beneath it, and it seemed that it must certainly go. But it was not to be; the movement of the boulder was suddenly checked, and the great rock was still, but balanced more precariously than ever before.

Janzig arose early, breakfasted and went busily to work. He had feared that the storm might continue and thus interfere with his plans, but he saw with much satisfaction that there was no danger of this. The sky was clear, and the weather was what Janzig called "settled." He whistled as he went about the work of loading the boat. Occasionally he paused to gloat over an unusually fine pelt before stowing it away, but at last the valuable cargo was snugly loaded beneath a heavy tarpaulin. Janzig now turned his attention to the supplies in the tent. He had carried three loads from tent to boat, when he suddenly became alarmed; he felt that he was being spied upon. He looked at his watch; then returned it to his pocket with a nervous laugh.

"It ain't but ten o'clock," he said with a shrug, "an' Jimmie won't be back till twelve anyhow. But in case he does come streakin' it back long before he's got any business to, it won't hurt to be all ready to give him a welcome home."

With these words, Janzig took the rifle he had so carefully cleaned and loaded, and stood it upright against a spruce about thirty feet from the tent. He felt much reassured now. Hale

would approach the tent by way of the beach. Janzig was ready for him. He entered the tent for another load, and this time when he came forth, he carried his blanket roll. He still had an uneasy feeling that he was being watched, but tried to fight it off by telling himself that he was wrought up.

"Ain't a chance of him comin' back before I get away," he said aloud. "But suppose he did?" Janzig glanced at the rifle; whether he was at the boat or the tent, it would take but a minute to reach the weapon. Muttering to himself, Janzig bent his back under the blanket roll and started for the boat. An instant later, his knees went weak at a shout behind him. Subconsciously Janzig had felt that he was being watched, but his common sense had told him that there was not a human being within miles. Now, at the sound of the voice, he became temporarily paralyzed. The voice was cool and peremptory.

"Drop it! Drop it—quick!"

Nervous and unstrung, Janzig allowed the blanket roll to drop to the beach. His first thought was that Hale had returned unexpectedly to catch him in the act of theft, and, worse still, the cold-blooded abandonment of his partner to almost certain starvation. But the voice was not Hale's. Even before he raised his trembling hands and turned his frightened face upon the man who had called to him, Janzig realized that the voice was that of another. Now that Janzig was at his mercy, the stranger stepped from behind the bole of a great spruce. Janzig recognized him instantly. "Sloppy Jake" Hellmott was known to most old-timers on the coast of Alaska. He had the general reputation of being a thief, but he was not considered to be a desperate character. In spite of the ugly-looking revolver Hellmott flourished, Janzig felt that he was in no particular danger; the fellow was not a killer.

"Why, Jake," said Janzig, who had

instantly recovered his composure, "you're makin' a mistake, ain't you?"

The speech angered Hellmott. His thick upper lip lifted in a manner not unlike that of a dog. His white uneven teeth, bared in a snarl, contrasted strongly with the black of a week's growth of beard, and Janzig paused, fascinated.

"Maybe I'm makin' a mistake," Hellmott snapped, "but see that *you* don't make none! Keep them hands up!"

"What do you want?" Janzig was frightened at the other's attitude, but he tried not to show it. "Go easy with that gun, Jake," he added lightly; "it might go off an' hurt somebody."

"It sure might," said Hellmott in a tone that frightened Janzig. "I'd just about as soon put a hole through you as not—if you try to get funny!"

Janzig's heart sank. "But what've I done to you, Jake?" he asked in a small voice. "You surely wouldn't shoot a man down in cold blood, would you? What is it you want anyhow?"

"Look here," said Hellmott cuttingly, "you ain't kiddin' nobody! You know what I'm after. I been watchin' you from behind that tree, an'—you got a mighty good catch, Janzig, but you've done lost 'em, see? Them pelts are goin' to be mine, but I'm goin' to give you a chance to save your own skin. Just you be a good dog, an' do as I say!"

It seemed to Janzig that the blood had suddenly frozen in his veins. He knew that Hellmott intended to leave him to his fate on the island, and the thought sickened him.

"Jake," he whined, "you say you're goin' to give me a chance to save my skin, but you don't mean it. You're goin' to leave me here to starve—that's what you aim to do!"

Hellmott took a rope from his pocket. "Listen," he said; "here's what I'm goin' to do to you. I'm goin' to tie you up till I can pull out of here. I'll

fix it so's you can work loose in a half hour or so after I get away in your boat, see?"

"That'll do me no good," Janzig whimpered. "Even if I get loose, I'll just starve to death here on this island."

"You're a fool," Hellmott said scornfully. "You can get off the island! How do you suppose *I* got here! I didn't fly, *did* I? Sure not; I come in a boat, an' you can leave the same way. My boat's beached not a quarter mile from here." Janzig's face lighted up; try as he would, he could not conceal his elation. "Nothin' like that," Hellmott went on grimly. "Don't get the notion that I'm fool enough to let you take my boat and follow me to the mainland right quick. Nothin' like that. My boat leaks, see? That's why I pulled in here. I've got plenty pitch an' oakum in the boat, an' it'll take you about a day to make 'er seaworthy; then on top of that, I'll break the oars, see? It'll take you some time longer to hew yourself a pair out of a coupla little trees. You can foller after me, but I'm here to tell you that you'll get in at least three-four days later'n me! Come on, now; turn around, an' put your hands behind you—that's the i-dee!"

Janzig obediently turned and slowly lowered his hands until they touched behind his back. He stood perfectly still, listening to Hellmott's footsteps grinding on the stony beach. Janzig felt his wealth of pelts slipping from him. He became desperate, and at the touch of the rope at his wrists, he pivoted on his heel and swung his clenched fist at Hellmott. But Hellmott was on the alert. With an oath, he raised his revolver and brought it down on Janzig's head. The blow went home, and Janzig fell like an axed steer.

With a triumphant snarl, Hellmott dragged Janzig's unconscious form into the tent. He worked swiftly, but Jan-

zig recovered consciousness before the work of trussing was finished. Hellmott menaced him with the revolver.

"Lay still," he growled, breathing hard from the exertion and excitement; "if you don't, I'll finish you next time!"

There was no more fight in Janzig; he had had enough. A minute later he lay helpless on the spruce-bough carpet of the tent, listening to Hellmott's footsteps as they crunched on the beach. Hellmott, he was sure, had gone to put his plan into execution. When he had destroyed the oars, he would return to loosen his bonds that were biting into Janzig's wrists. Shrewdly Janzig thought of a possible way out. When Hellmott came back, he would engage him in conversation; would try to hold him until Hale should return. It was a slim chance, but it was the only one left.

"If Jimmie gets back in time," Janzig muttered, "I can still get away with them pelts." He was even yet intent on beating Hale out of his share of their wealth. "I can find a way to get Jimmie—if he only comes back in time to get this Jake Hellmott!"

Hellmott walked unhurriedly up the beach. Arrived at his boat he took an ax and demolished the oars. This done, he lifted the tarpaulin cover and stood for some time studying his meager outfit. What food there was, he decided to leave for Janzig; he had watched Janzig load his own boat, and knew that there were ample stores for him to reach the mainland. He would, he decided, take his own bedding, and some odd bits of clothing.

Following the rain of the night before, the air was humid and the sun seemed insufferably hot to Hellmott. When he had deposited his bed roll in the boat belonging to Hale and Janzig, he walked to the rear of the tent. The little stream of water, which had been carrying off some of the muck from

Janzig's work of undermining the boulder, was running clear now; and Hellmott lay down at the creek's edge, and thrust his face deep into the cooling water. Janzig, who had heard him pass the tent, called out to him.

"Say, Jake," he begged obsequiously, "come an' loosen up these ropes, won't you? They're cuttin' nearly into the bone." Hellmott, who was still drinking, ignored the request. "Come on, Jake," Janzig cried. "You said you would."

Hellmott stood up. "I'd ought to leave you here, tied up the way you are," he said reflectively; it was as if he were reasoning the matter aloud rather than addressing Janzig. "But I ain't never had murder on my hands yet, an' I guess there's no call to begin now. The boat needs calkin', an' the oars are all broke up—it'll take you at least three-four days to get off the island—I'll have them pelts sold an' I'll be gone long before you get to the mainland. I'll do what I said I would. I'll loosen them——"

Hellmott's slow speech was interrupted by a great crash on the hill above and back of the tent. He could not know that a ton or more of earth and gravel, cut by the action of the tiny stream which flowed down the gulch, had given way. The last support of the boulder which Janzig had undermined had dropped from underneath it. Gazing aloft, Hellmott saw the boulder leap out as if it were a live thing and plunge fully fifty feet down into the tiny gulch with a thud that fairly shook the earth. Before the slow-witted Hellmott could clearly understand his danger, Janzig grasped the full import of the dread sound.

"Help!" he shouted in horror. "Jake! Help!"

With a tremendous roar, the mighty boulder tore down the narrow confines of the gulch with the speed of an express train. Small trees in its path

checked it not at all; the great mass of rock snapped them off like so many matches. Hellmott, who had stood transfixed at the sight, was stirred to action by the scream from the tent. With a yelp of terror, like that of a frightened dog, he leaped to safety; and an instant later the boulder rushed by, plastering him with mud and water from the very spot on which he had stood.

It seemed to Hellmott that an hour passed before he could clearly comprehend what had taken place. It had been a breath-taking spectacle, and now he could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes. Yet there was the huge boulder, at rest now, half in and half out of the water, with the tide lazily lapping at its sides. And there, too, was the wreck of what had been the tent, and—Janzig.

Hellmott could not force himself to go near the demolished tent. For a long time he stood like one fascinated, unable to tear himself from the spot; then at last a morbid curiosity took hold of him, and he laboriously clambered up the hill to the point where the boulder had stood. What he found there only mystified him. A shovel leaning against a spruce tree, a fresh-dug mound of earth and gravel, caused him to wag his head in bewilderment.

"Maybe," he speculated, as he slowly retraced his steps, "he was prospectin', but it don't seem likely. A man surely wouldn't be lookin' for gold in a place like that!"

Giving the remains of the tent a wide berth, Hellmott went to the boat, and, with a powerful shove, sent it grating down the beach into the water. It was now noon, and he was hungry; but he was anxious to get away from the island. Nothing could induce him to remain another minute after what had happened. A cold lunch on the boat was much to be preferred to a hot meal cooked in the vicinity of that flat-

tened tent. He strained at the oars, and slowly the heavily loaded boat got under way.

As he pulled away from the island, Hellmott's eyes were fixed on the boulder half submerged in the water; instinctively he was avoiding even a glance at the white tent flattened upon the beach. Once his lips moved slightly as he told himself that he was lucky that Janzig was out of the way. He had nothing whatever to fear now; whereas, had Janzig followed him to the mainland, some trouble might have come from it. Engrossed with this thought, and with his eyes intently fixed on the boulder, Hellmott was completely thunderstruck at a hail from the beach. So astonished was he, that he lost an oar overboard. In spite of the fact that he was looking at a leveled rifle at a distance of fifty yards, he felt a sense of relief that the man on the beach was a stranger and not Janzig.

"Get that oar, and swing back to the beach!" ordered Jimmie Hale, who had dropped his pack and seized the rifle that Janzig had leaned against a spruce tree some three hours before. "Hustle!"

Hellmott clumsily retrieved the lost oar, and obediently headed the boat for shore. Long before the dory reached the beach, Hale was firing questions at Hellmott.

"Where were you going with that boat?" he called. "And what have you done to my partner?" Then before Hellmott could answer: "you've killed him!"

"It's a lie," Hellmott said dully. He beached the boat. "I ain't killed nobody," he went on, glaring at Hale. With a wave of his arm, he indicated the tent and the boulder. "There's what done it. He never knowed what hit him!"

Hale understood. "No," he said thoughtfully, "he never knew what hit him. Poor Janzig."

"But he knowed what was *goin'* to hit him!" Hellmott's eyes suddenly opened wide. "I savvy the whole thing now—that shovel, an' fresh dirt, an' the way he yelped for help when that boulder first broke loose—*that* showed! He was wise long before *I* was! A fine pardner he was! Why, when I slipped up on him, wasn't he all ready to leave the island—an' leave you, too! It don't figure no other way—the trap he set for you was really sprung on him!"

Following Hellmott up the gulch, Hale saw the mound of fresh earth and gravel. He was forced to believe at last; the evidence was conclusive.

"Now I understand why he held off about leaving the island," Hale said thoughtfully, "and the walks he took each day; he was working here at that boulder. And all he wanted," he went on grimly, "was justice." Hale looked down at the tent. "He always said that he would get what was coming to him—well, he certainly got it."



DOG HERO SAVED FROM IGNOBLE FATE

TWO years ago, the world rang with the heroic exploit of Balto, the dog who saved Nome. He and his driver, Gunnar Kassen, were the idols of the country. There was talk of monuments being erected in their honor. Nothing was too good for them. Film engagements followed their famous journey across the frozen arctic wastes in the dead of winter to carry diphtheria serum to the stricken city of Nome.

Of late, however, the noble Balto, through no fault of his own, has fallen upon evil days. He has just been a victim of the commercialization that characterizes the doings of a certain class of showman. Gunnar Kassen brought him south to fulfill a film contract, but there was a disagreement with the film company, and Kassen had to sell his heroic team of dogs. Thereafter, Balto and his brave companion huskies made various appearances in theaters. Then they fell a little lower in the theatrical scale and were exhibited in side shows. They finally were relegated to a cheap stuffy side street "museum" in Los Angeles. Fortunately this shabby treatment of the famous dog team was not allowed to continue, and Balto and his companions were recently purchased from their owner, Sam Houston, for fifteen hundred dollars, by the Balto Committee, of Cleveland, Ohio. Hereafter, their address will be in care of the Cleveland Zoo, where they will be assured of good treatment and suitable living quarters and the admiration that is their due.



Winners of Western Millions

The Cantankerous Copper Kings

By **Edward H. Smith**

Author of "George Hearst, Miner, Legislature, America," etc.

A little learning is a dangerous thing—
Dink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.



MARCUS DALY of Ireland and Montana followed to the letter the last clause of this Popeian didactic—which he had never heard—and let not one cursed drop of learing invade his free soul. On this account, no doubt, he died possessed of twenty million dollars and many friends. W. A. Clark, school teacher, miner and United States Senator, did have a little learning. He died worth fifty million dollars but with hardly a friend on earth except his closest kin. What moral there may be in these engaging facts the reader may draw for himself.

William Andrews Clark, like his implacable enemy, was Irish in origin. He claimed descent from the Kings of Ulster. But he was very far from king-

ship when he was born, December 8, 1839, on a none too prosperous farm near Connellsville, Pa. Concerning his parents there is practically no record. His father was apparently one of those who till the soil without thought or question. Soon after his son's birth he harnessed the covered wagon and joined the hegira sunsetwards to take up a homestead in Iowa.

Young Clark grew up, as he later declared, with the handle of the plow in his back. The dull, blistering routine of farm work in the pre-scientific era was his early lot. Small in height and slim of build, he was obviously not fitted for it. Yet there must have been tough fiber in his five-foot-seven, for he contrived to acquire some education and even read law in the intervals between chores.

As soon as ever he could muster the qualifications of a school teacher—not exacting in those days—he left home

and got a job in Clarksdale, Missouri. Hammering rudiments into the rustic young did not postulate great erudition, as I have intimated. One thing, however, the country pedagogue did need as a rule, and that was sufficient muscular prowess to curb the more unruly of the louts in his class. There was spirit in this stripling that brought him through several years of this ordeal. Indeed, for the first three decades of his thorny beginnings he bore hardship for hardship with the biggest and lustiest of the pioneers. Neither heat nor cold nor fatigue ever daunted him. His first sizable stake, as it happened, he achieved through a feat of endurance that even Kit Carson would not have despised. What Clark lacked in size and sinew he made up in wits and, above all, endurance and determination beyond quenching.

Patently a rural dominie's job in Missouri could not hold a lad of this mettle for long. The chances of escape seemed none too bright. The country was sullen with a fit of hard times, the inevitable aftermath of the panic of 1857. The California boom had fizzled out, Riley and McLaughlin had not yet stumbled on the Comstock lode. From a totally unexpected source came the first whisperings of relief in 1858. Gold was discovered in the northwestern part of what was then Kansas—there was no Colorado as yet. In the plains watered by the tributaries of the South Platte a homeseeker had found traces of the precious metal. During the following year other strikes were made in the mountains, not far from the intersection of the Platte valley and the overland wagon route. The rush began. Denver was founded, then Black Hawk, Golden, Central City. All over the region new towns sprang up overnight. Back in Missouri young Clark saved his nickels more grimly than ever and in 1862 he, too, joined the stampede.

His money took him as far as Cen-

tral City in the district now known as South Park. His first job was as windlass man at wages of two dollars and a half a day. For this noble sum he stood eighty-four hours a week, interminably turning a crank. A western mine superintendent in that age would have burst a blood vessel at the suggestion of an eight-hour day and a six-day week. Two decades were to run before "Clark luck" became famous. He was, however, learning something about rock and the ores it sometimes contains.

The monotony of the grind toughened his muscles without in the least softening his implacable resolution. But it also filled him with the restlessness that the newcomer breathes in with the mountain air. When news came of gold being scraped from the surface in Idaho, Clark trekked in 1863. The trip by prairie schooner took sixty-five days, over trackless passes and through country infested by hostile Nez Percés, Cœur d'Olènes and Bannocks. It was in the domain of the last-named, at the picturesque camp of Horse Prairie, that he made his first thousand dollars, sluicing gold. By the time this happened he was no longer a tenderfoot, for he had been west three years. A stake of one thousand was not much to show for all that work. He saw a surer if less romantic way of making money. He bought a mule team and wagon and went into the freighting business.

Now he no longer stood the gambler's chance of making a big strike overnight. But he had an occupation from which the profits were steady and not inconsiderable. Over the mountains from Salt Lake City to the mining camps he carted supplies for other people until he had accumulated enough to go into the even more lucrative venture of becoming a dealer himself. He bought provisions either at the Utah capital or Walla Walla, Washington, and sold them at a stiff advance to the diggers. "Baking Powder Billy" they called him

all over Idaho and Montana. Of course there were no such States at that time but the names are used for convenience in describing the locale. He took a government contract for carrying the mails between Missouri and Walla Walla.

Whatever faults his enemies in later years charged against William Andrews Clark, lack of courage never was one of them. Of all occupations he had chosen the most hazardous and arduous. Compared to a freighter's job in the Intermountain West during the sixties, coal-mining was safe and easy. Roads existed not at all. The wagon trails were hard to find and easy to lose. There was constant danger from snow slides, avalanches, broken axles and washouts. The Indians, under the dishonorable and stupid treatment meted out to them, were nearly always in a ferment and the lone teamster was their first prey.

So, if the profits were high, they were earned. Clark was doing the canny thing that such adventurers as D. O. Mills and Collis P. Huntington had learned before him. He was making money not out of the mines but out of the miners. And so doing he achieved one coup that would have excited the approval of even Collis P. himself.

In the winter of 1868 the Montana camps, including that of Last Chance Gulch, were facing a predicament that only a miner or sailor or soldier could thoroughly appreciate—a tobacco famine. The river steamer, *Prairie Belle*, making her last trip before the ice set in, struck a snag in the Missouri and sank with her precious load of provisions, including the nicotine supply. Imagine a town full of huskies without their chewin'! Baking Powder Billy did more than imagine it. He harnessed up his mules and by forced marches reached Salt Lake City. He loaded up his wagon with nothing but tobacco. The return trip was touch and go. Snow was beginning to fall, the

trails were full of pitfalls. Only a good mule team and the hardiest of drivers could have stood the gaff. But Clark pushed through to Last Chance Gulch just in time to avoid a snow slide that would have either engulfed him or cut him off, marooned, if he had been an hour later. And he had what every trader dreams of, a corner on something that men had to have. He charged four dollars a pound for his wagonful of plug and makin's—a profit of some thousand per cent.—and sold out in one day. He not only made ten thousand dollars on that one venture, he made his victims like him. He was the most popular man in the camp.

Most of the proceeds he reinvested. But he set aside a few hundreds for a trip back home. He went to Connellsville, Pennsylvania, and, in 1869, married Kate Stauffer, daughter of a former neighbor. Whether it was the consummation of a juvenile romance or not we do not know. The records are silent about the first Mrs. Clark, who stayed out of the glaring searchlight that was always playing around the head of her spectacular spouse after he acquired his millions. She lived until 1893 and bore him two sons and two daughters.

Clark was now able to abandon his rigorous peregrinations. With his bride he settled in Deer Lodge and opened a general merchandise store. Like most canny traders, he did considerable private banking on the side. He was not in Deer Lodge long before an older banker, Robert W. Donnell, observed his shrewd habits and took him into partnership, with Charles and S. E. Larabee. They opened a branch in Butte, which the gold and silver output of Silver Bow County was already making an important center. Clark was placed in charge. The new post revived his dormant interest in mining. He realized the need for technical knowledge. Few men would have interrupted their

business careers at this juncture and stage of prosperity to go back to school. It is characteristic of Clark that he did this very thing. Leaving one of the partners to look after his job, he hurried East and took a course in metallurgy, geology and assaying at Columbia University.

Returning West in 1873, he lost no time in applying what he had learned. He acquired control of the Butte Reduction Works and put himself in a position to see into the secrets of the most important mines in the district. A tuberculous prospector named Larkin was trying to develop a property called the Mayflower. He sent some ore to Clark's plant. The latter immediately perceived its value. Larkin was ailing, the work underground was helping on his consumption apace. Clark bought the mine from him for fifty thousand dollars. Eventually it brought him in three million dollars.

Lending money at five per cent a month, knowing where to lend and the exact moment at which a mortgagor's improvidence and lack of skill rendered him unable to continue development on the proper scale, brought property after property into the now facile hands of Baking Powder Billy. In this way he obtained the Colusa-Parrott, the Mountain Chief and the Gambetta. Silver and gold deposits originally, they all became big copper producers.

Though only in his thirties, he was climbing fast. He was already an important personage in the territory when his mortal enemy appeared in Silver Bow County. His name was Marcus Daly and he was a short, stocky Irishman of about Clark's age. This man was to be the bane of Clark's existence, an adversary whose hostility ended only with his death. At the same time, the big discovery that he made helped considerably to enrich his antagonist, as will be made clear later.

Daly was born in Balily Jamesduff,

County Cavan, in 1840. His early history is not unlike that of James G. Fair, John W. Mackay and George Hearst. He was brought to America at the age of thirteen, and for two years sold newspapers in Brooklyn. The gold fever struck him younger than the others. When only fifteen he shipped as cabin boy aboard a vessel bound for San Francisco. At the Golden Gate he followed the example of many of his elders and jumped ship. Legend has it that he was digging potatoes for a dollar a day in Oakland. At any rate, he made his way to the California placer fields and, with indifferent luck, spent the next twenty years piling up little money but considerable flair for ore. Opportunities came to him even later than they did to Fair and Mackay, but in ability to smell the metal in the ground he was almost in a class with them and Hearst. Throughout two decades he gravitated from camp to camp, from California to Nevada and from Nevada to Utah. His experience secured him the post of superintendent, in which capacity he served the Walker Brothers, who owned the famous Emma mine in Big Cottonwood Canyon, just off the Salt Lake Valley. They sent him to Montana to investigate a silver property called the Alice.

Daly's method was characteristic. He put up at the Continental Hotel and passed a few days ostensibly looking for work. When his first bill was due he informed his landlady that he had no job and no money. If she wanted to be paid she had better find him work. It was quite usual for landladies to function as employment agents in such cases. She got him on the payroll at the Lexington. Daly returned after a couple of days. The Lexington was too wet and his health was bad. So the anxious owner of the hotel tried again. Finally she heard of a vacancy in the Alice, which, of course, was what Daly had been waiting for. After a week under-

ground he sent in a favorable report to the Walkers, who bought the mine and put Daly in charge.

He soon became recognized in Montana, as he had been in Nevada and Utah, as a darn good miner. When his opportunity came he jumped on it like a wildcat and crowded his luck for all it was worth. It arrived in the person of George Hearst, who, in 1882, went to Montana to seek a property in which to invest and J. B. Haggin's and Lloyd Trevis's profits from the great Ontario at Park City which he had found and developed. Hearst had known Daly in Utah and appreciated his capacity. They spoke the same language.

Now Daly, from his point of vantage as superintendent of the Alice, had long since realized that there was a bargain to be picked up cheap in the Anaconda. He told Heart about it. There are conflicting accounts of the way in which they acquired possession. According to a hostile writer whom Clark in later years hired to attack Daly, the latter got a job as superintendent, shut down the pumps and let the mine be flooded, declaring to the owners that the situation was hopeless. Whereupon the owners lost interest and sold out.

A picturesque yarn, without doubt, but I cannot vouch for it. In the first place its source is not above suspicion. In the second place, how could the superintendent of the Alice have authority to shut down the pumps in the Anaconda?

Be that as it may, he and Hearst bought the Anaconda for thirty-five thousand dollars and the owners thought they had unloaded a dead one. Haggin and Trevis sent experts from the coast to examine the property. These judges condemned it as worthless. Hearst and Daly insisted they were right. The San Franciscans remembered what Hearst had done for them with the Ontario and decided to

back his judgment against the field. So Daly went ahead with the development work.

For a while it looked as though the college-bred engineers had been correct. The gold and silver values in the Anaconda were nothing to shout about. But one day, on the three-hundred-foot level Daly saw a trickle of water coming out of the rock that had a curious, greenish hue. He took samples to the surface. They were almost pure copper. He did further explorative drilling. All samples showed the same values. He bored in every direction, with identical results.

Marcus Daly had made the discovery of the century in the history of cupreous mining. The town of Butte was virtually a small mountain of copper. The county rang with the news, then the whole country. From a position of quite modest importance for its gold and silver output the camp emerged almost over-night as a copper producer of fabulous wealth. Daly had not only hit upon his own fortune but that of every mineowner in the region, including W. A. Clark. Since the day in 1883 when he made his discovery, the property which he and his partners bought for thirty-five thousand dollars has provided its owners with almost two hundred million dollars in profits. They amounted to more than one hundred and eighty-one million in 1924. The partners erected a huge smelter some twenty-four miles from Butte and around it they built an entire town. They acquired timber land, sawmills, coal deposits, oil wells.

Clark, meanwhile, had not rested content with his Montana holdings. Having read a scientific work on the geology of Arizona, he made an expedition into that territory. Not far from Phoenix he was struck with the similarity to the rock formations in and around Butte. Inspecting more closely, he came upon outcroppings that were

unmistakably like those in his home camp. He took samples and tested them himself. His observations had been correct. He sought the owner and asked whether the claims were for sale. The latter saw in the dapper stranger another freak tenderfoot and decided to have his joke. When Clark inquired the price of the claims, the locator replied:

"One hundred and fifty thousand dollars!"

"Done," replied the Montanan. "Here's a check for fifty thousand dollars and I'll send you the balance next week."

The owner gasped and thought he had encountered a leprechaun. But the check was good, as was its successor. Then he believed the gods had sent him a sucker of the greenest. The claims—which became the United Verde mine—have never earned less than two million dollars a year, and in some years the dividends have amounted to seventeen million dollars and eighteen million dollars. Nobody knows how rich the mine really is. Clark kept the corporation close and it is still owned by the family. Around this wealth factory grew the town of Jerome, Arizona.

While Clark lived he insisted upon the utmost secrecy concerning its workings and contents, and the policy is maintained by his heirs.

By this stroke Clark became far and away the richest man in Montana—rich enough to indulge the political ambitions that had been lurking in him for years. Hitherto his sole essay as a public man had not been brilliant. In 1877 Chief Joseph, of the Nez Percé Indians, after a skillful retreat of a thousand miles from Idaho where he had been defeated by General Miles, had invaded the territory of Montana. The inhabitants were plunged into a panic. Governor Potts ordered the organization of a military force and, at the instance of Charles S. Warren, placed

W. A. Clark in command. Our hero, knowing nothing of warfare, in turn named Warren chief of staff, and he had even less *savoir faire* in such a crisis. There ensued a futile pursuit of the desperate braves through Deer Lodge Valley to the pass of the Bitter Root Mountains. The gallant protectors of the territory never even came within seeing distance of the Indians, but they swept that valley clear of every morsel of food and every ounce of fodder. It was said that they left a trail as barren as Sheridan had in the Shendoah Valley. For months afterwards the warrants came in, to be paid out of the territorial treasury. The Nez Percés were surrounded by a small force of regulars under the command of General John Gibbons. Clark never relished the title of "Major" which flatterers tried to pin on him after this adventure.

His fortune made and assured, he began to cast longing eyes towards the United States Senate, then the goal of every man who became spectacularly rich. But he was reckoning without Daly.

There are conflicting accounts regarding the origin of this notorious feud. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, for instance, Clark provoked it by ridiculing Daly. This is improbable, because he was a serious man not given to that sort of spiteful pastime. It was far more likely that Daly ridiculed him. In the first place Clark defied the public opinion of the West by being always immaculately dressed. He never appeared on the streets of Butte save in a silk hat and frock coat. In the second place, his phenomenal success must have exasperated old and seasoned miners who despised text books and those who read them. It was naturally galling to huskies who had sweated and labored around the diggings for years to see a man of Clark's slight build and small experience underground jump in and

snaffle up a fortune in such a short space of time.

According to another story, Clark wrote a letter to the Walkers in Salt Lake City criticizing Daly's management of the Alice. This sounds far-fetched. The former was not an underground man and Daly was. Clark was an office man and realized that Daly knew more than he about the practical details of getting the ore out. Moreover, in all business affairs they always refrained from attacking each other although they lived in an era and a region where litigation and even pitched battles over the ownership of mines were notorious.

Here is the version that has all the marks of probability: Daly, needing water to develop the Anaconda, built a flume and bought seven-eighths of the water power of Warm Springs Creek. Clark had purchased the other one-eighth. When Daly learned who this other owner was and found that he needed the remaining share, he sent an emissary to buy it. He was told the price was twenty-five thousand dollars, which he declared exorbitant. But the need grew more pressing, so he sent his check for the twenty-five thousand, only to be informed that the price was now fifty thousand dollars. It mounted in this ratio until he finally had to pay one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars.

It was a costly transaction for Clark. From that moment Daly was "laying for him." He was too shrewd, as I have said, to attack him financially. He knew the owner of the United Verde was far too powerful to be assailed on such ground. Besides, he did not want to imperil his own and his partners' interests. But he could and did block Clark's political ambitions.

This is no place in which to recount the details of that long and scandalous duel. It involved the ruin of many a political career, the enrichment of many

an obscure politician. It kept Clark out of the Senate for many a long year. He had presided with distinction over the constitutional conventions of 1887 and 1889, but when he wanted to go to Congress as delegate from the Territory, Daly obstructed him. After Montana was admitted to the Union the same thing happened in the senatorial election. In 1896 Clark retaliated by defeating Daly's attempt to transfer the State capitol from Helena to Anaconda, the town he owned.

Three years later the Legislature elected Clark to the Senate of the United States. The Daly forces howled "Bribery!" There was an investigation by the Committee on Privileges and Elections. Clark saw that a decision against him was inevitable and resigned. An effort to secure his seat through an appointment by the Lieutenant-Governor to the vacancy his resignation had created was also foiled.

A mediocre man would have called it quits and confined himself to collecting *objets d'art*. But if you think Clark was a mediocre man I have failed to convey a true portrait of that resolute character. One month after his resignation under fire, he was beginning a new attack, this time under the advisement of F. Augustus Heinze, the brilliant young engineer and adventurer who was engaged in an amazing, intrepid fight to wrest a fortune out of the Butte mines in the teeth of Daly and Standard Oil, which controlled the Amalgamated Copper Company. Heinze had qualifications for political popularity which Clark conspicuously lacked.

Daly, meanwhile, was dying. For years he was suffering from Bright's disease, which carried him off on November 12, 1900. He left twenty million dollars—to say nothing of a racing-stable, a large ranch situated near Anaconda, and other precious knick-knacks.

His death removed the biggest ob-

stacle in Clark's path to the Senate. Daly's body was hardly laid at rest before his antagonist was elected once more, against only perfunctory opposition. And the ambition, once attained, evidently proved to be of little worth in Clark's eyes. He served one term and then retired from politics. He wanted to become a railroad king, and started to build the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake Line—the "Clark road." Here he found himself in conflict with the schemes of E. H. Harriman. The road he planned had to parallel the Oregon Short Line from Salt Lake to Caliente, Nevada, and thence go through the Meadow Valley Wash. Eventually there was a compromise. Clark bought that branch of the Short Line and constructed his road through Nevada as far as Barstow, California. It cost him sixteen millions and became a part of the Harriman system.

His first wife having died, he contracted a second marriage. A Canadian doctor named La Chapelle had settled in Montana and died there, leaving his only daughter, Anna, in Clark's tutelage. The Senator married her on May 25, 1901. His interests from this time on were social and artistic. He built himself a house at 962 Fifth Avenue, New York, that became famous the country over for its luxury. It took seven years to build and the lowest estimate of its cost was three million dollars. Among its extravagances were Turkish baths, a huge pipe-organ, a picture gallery, twenty-six servants' rooms, and what not. He went in for pictures and, after he had spent a sizable fortune on "buckeyes," learned something about the game and acquired a number of really valuable paintings. He fostered a taste for genealogy and traced his descent to Haremon Clark, Chieftain of the Clan Calla in the fourth century. He even had himself photo-

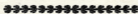
graphed in the Gaelic costume of the clan.

He died of pneumonia in his New York house on March 2, 1925, at the age of eighty-six. The appraisal of his estate, which we may be sure was not made higher than necessary, showed it to be worth forty-seven million, seven hundred and sixty-three thousand, five hundred and eight dollars. He had had, as you will observe, at least a quarter of a century of unassailed enjoyment of his huge fortune and the honors and ornaments it could buy.

As for his antagonist, one of the tales concerning Marcus Daly relates that an old friend had occasion to apply to his bank for a loan of three thousand dollars. Daly refused to sanction it. He went to the man, who had already heard of his action and felt correspondingly bitter.

"Look you here, Mike," he said, "I couldn't O. K. your loan—it would have been bad banking. But here's my check for the dough. Never mind the note, pay me when you can."

Around Clark, on the other hand, have grown many legends attempting to prove parsimony. Considering the man's character and achievements, they do not ring true and must be dismissed as apocryphal. He was accused of bribery on the most prodigious scale. It must be remembered, on the other hand, that in his day the United States Senate was nicknamed the Millionaires' Club. Neither Sharon, Stanford, nor Hearst of California, nor Jones nor Stewart of Nevada would have gone to Washington if they had not been successful, rich men. They were not rich men's sons but plutocrats by virtue of superlative qualities of ability, shrewdness and courage. And of this last, none of them had more than the daintily groomed, immaculate, almost undersized William Andrews Clark.





A Desert Lesson

By Frank Triem

Author of "In Chains," etc.



It was approximately ten o'clock, and the Hedge Valley Saloon was doing a land-office business. There had been a small strike up in the mountains a few weeks before; insignificant as it was, it had brought miners flocking from all parts of the country. The air of the little saloon was thick with smoke, through which the hanging kerosene lamps poured a dull-yellow illumination on the heads of the men. A babble of voices was on the air. Two dozen or so roughly clad individuals were lined up before the bar, and the little tables given over to games were crowded.

Four men sat at one in a far corner of the room. Two of them, powerful, if none too intelligent-looking specimens, were obviously miners down from the mountains; a third was a young fellow, hardly more than a boy, and the fourth was a swart son of old Mexico. They looked no different from the other revelers; but with startling suddenness

there came an interruption which drew on them the attention of every one in the saloon.

The young man, an undernourished-looking youth, with a weak face now flushed from whisky, sprang erect. His lips were trembling; his eyes were hot and angry, and his small hands were clenched into fists.

Across the table from him the Mexican had risen to his feet. The saloon was suddenly ominously quiet as the boy raised one shaking hand in a gesture of scorn.

"You sneak!" he cried. "Trying to work in a hold-out on us——"

His voice quavered away into silence; but next instant the somber-faced little man across from him screamed an imprecation. His hand made a flashing move, and a sliver of something shiny was visible in the light of the overhead lamps. The hand went back——

Then one of the onlookers acted. He was an old but heavily built man with gray eyes and square, stern jaw. With

surprising swiftness he sprang toward the man with the knife. The upraised hand was seized; there came a muffled snap, and the Mexican cried in sudden agony as the blade fell to the floor.

The dark-faced one who had been thus disarmed whirled, all his passion directed against the intruder. Before he could strike or draw another weapon the old man's fist shot out. A tremendous crack sounded and the knife-wielder catapulted over backward and lay motionless, bleeding a little at the mouth.

The old giant eyed his companions closely, but no one made a hostile move. The unconscious man had a bad reputation; and it was the general impression that he had only got a small portion of what he deserved. The victor saw that public sympathy was with him and the boy he had saved from almost certain death.

He bent his keen regard on the youth. The latter still stood where he had at the start of the fracas. He seemed to be in a daze, and he quivered a trifle. His face was ghastly white, but in spite of its obvious weakness the eyes were frank and clean. Next moment the rescuer crossed and placed a hand, which although the size of a shovel, was none the less gentle, on his arm.

"C'mon, son," he commanded quietly. "This ain't no place fer us. Let's go outside an' have a pow-wow. I'm wondering——"

Silently the throng of rough-clad men parted to let them through, and without another word the two made their way across to the swinging doors. As they passed out, the babble of voices inside was renewed. The old giant smiled a grim smile that was entirely devoid of mirth; turning, he led his companion down the street to the general store. Save for a dim light that burned far back, the building was dark; and the benches on its broad porch were deserted. The two seated themselves

and the big man began slowly to fill his pipe.

"I'm Tim Madson," he announced with such suddenness that his companion jumped. "I'm a miner—just down out of the hills; but that don't matter none right now. What's yore name, an' what was you doing in that den of iniquity?"

"My name's Jimmy Harker," answered the younger man in a subdued voice. He was obviously still frightened at his narrow escape. "I was there because—because there ain't any particular place fer me to be, I reckon."

Then, in response to the inquiries of his companion, the young fellow told his story. He had lived all his life on the desert, he explained; had been a ward of an uncle until at the death of the latter he found himself penniless and without relatives. Although he had had friends, the boy hadn't cared to "sponge off them," as he put it; so he had simply drifted.

It was a plain story, told without apology or hesitation; and after it was ended Old Tim Madson sat motionless and silent a long time, watching the moon swing up out of the trees on the opposite rim of the valley.

Somewhere far away, two vociferous dogs were yapping challenges; from the direction of the distant saloon sounded a bellow of laughter.

Again Old Tim Madson broke the silence with explosive suddenness:

"Son, you're weak, an' very young!" he said. "But I reckon we all got our faults—leastways, I know I got mine. I've been looking fer a pard, lately, an' I think you need somebody to look after you—somebody what knows the ropes. What say we make it a party?"

Jimmy Harker gulped audibly and tried to mumble words of gratitude. Madson dropped one enormous hand on the boy's shoulder in a fatherly gesture.

"It's O. K., then," he growled. "I

reckon we'll go out to my shack an' bed down fer the night."

This, then, was the beginning of their strange partnership. They were as nearly of opposite types as two men could be; for Harker was young and rather weak, while Old Madson was strong as the hills he had lived his life in. But they seemed to counteract each other remarkably well and both felt the happier for the partnership.

They idled about town another two days, getting better acquainted with each other. Tim Madson learned that the boy was very superstitious; in fact, it was almost a mania with him. He turned chalky white when accidentally he glimpsed the moon over his left shoulder, and at another time the sight of a black cat nearly gave him a fit. But after all this wasn't a bad fault, Madson told himself whimsically. He was tolerant of the boy's idiosyncrasies. Harker more than made up for them by his boundless generosity.

Madson pondered the matter at some length; and at last he decided what it was Jimmy Harker most needed. Responsibility—that was it! Responsibility and hard work would steady him; he had drifted with the current until now, and it was time for him to learn to row against it.

The third morning after their meeting, Old Tim Madson broached the subject that was uppermost in his mind. He and Jimmy Harker were sitting out in front of their little cabin on the edge of town, smoking, in the clear morning sunlight. Now Madson tapped the charred wad from the bottom of his pipe bowl and broke the long silence.

"I reckon you an' me'll be heading into the mountains one of these days," he said casually. "I feel like a little prospecting trip would do me a world of good. Been loafing more'n a week, now, but that can't keep up. So I guess we'll outfit to-morrow an'——"

"Say," interrupted Jim eagerly,

"why not take a whack at the desert? I know it like a book—lived out there most of my life—and I think I can show you some pretty fair leads. It'd be a change fer you, having always lived in the mountains; and to tell the truth I—I'd like to get back there!"

His voice and manner were wistful; Tim Madson glanced keenly at him, then away. He had often heard of the spell of the desert. Obviously it was buried deep in the heart of Jim Harker. He himself had known something of the sort; but it was the magic of high country, of sky-blue lakes high among the clouds, and of wild, solitary ravines beyond timber line, that lured him.

They argued the matter at some length, and in the end Old Tim Madson agreed to his partner's suggestion. With the eagerness of a couple of schoolboys on a forbidden fishing excursion, they got Madson's two pack horses from a little valley half a mile or so away and outfitted. Evening found them camped two or three miles below town. They were on their way.

Their journey out of the mountains and down into the desert was accomplished in a leisurely manner and without incident. As they left the hills behind them Jimmy Harker gradually took command of the expedition. He fairly worshiped the ground Old Madson walked on; like all weak natures, he was attracted to one who possessed the strength he lacked. Only in the matter of his abnormal superstition was Old Tim unable to influence the boy. Once Harker ran back two hundred yards when he saw that he and his companion had passed on either side of a saguaro cactus, and returned so that they had both passed on the same side.

They reached the great desert after about a week's travel, and gradually the hills melted away behind them. It was hot, blistering hot; Old Tim had never before experienced anything like it. He longed unspeakably for the high moun-

tains, but Jimmy Harker seemed happy. The older man decided that he could stand the heat and aridity a while at least.

And then, once again, Jimmy glimpsed the moon over his left shoulder. He was promptly filled with gloomy forebodings; he prophesied all sorts of dire calamities, and Madson's gentle ridicule failed to drive the mood from him.

"Something awful's going to happen," he said. "Don't try to tell me otherwise, 'cause I know it is!"

For a time it seemed as if this prophecy was destined to prove false. No particular incident occurred to mar their expedition; but neither did they find any trace of color. A week passed; provisions were running low, and still no gold.

And then came the morning when one of the two horses—the better one—was struck by a rattler. For almost three hours the men labored to save the animal; but at last, realizing the futility of their attempt, Old Tim sent a bullet through the poor beast's head.

Though grieved at the loss of his horse, Madson was inclined to take a philosophical view of the affair. After all, he argued, every one was bound to have a certain amount of hard luck; and their provisions were now so diminished the remaining horse could easily carry everything.

Jimmy Harker's weak face clouded with dread, and he eyed his benefactor askance.

"Don't fool yourself—this is only the start!" said he. "I knew when I saw the moon over my left shoulder——"

"Rot!" snorted Old Tim contemptuously. "You've got yourself into a reg'lar whoop-te-doodle, and all over nothin'. That moon-over-your-shoulder stuff is all bunk!"

The two eyed each other, open belligerency in Madson's gray eyes and a vague fear in those of Harker. For

the first time a shadow had come between them, and that night both men were unusually silent.

In the days that followed, Jimmy Harker's dire prophecies were amply justified. One calamity after another befell them; springs that they had depended on were found to be dry, and they suffered from thirst. The provisions were running dangerously low, nor were they close to any point where they could secure another outfit. It seemed as if misfortune had singled them out for special consideration.

Then, one afternoon, toward sunset, came the crowning calamity. Tim Madson had been clambering among some rocks in search of water while Jimmy Harker sat on a large boulder, staring moodily at the lone horse with its meager pack. After ten minutes or so he heard the old man stumbling toward him from behind. He turned his head; next instant, with a cry, Madson had plunged from a rock and landed in a tangle of sage. Even at this distance of some twenty yards, young Harker could very plainly hear that sickening snap.

Stumblingly he ran to where the old giant lay. Madson's face was white and he stared up at the boy out of fathomless eyes. Beads of sweat stood on his forehead.

"Broke, son!" he said, through set teeth.

There followed a time neither man cared afterward to remember. Somehow Jimmy Harker managed to haul his benefactor out of the brush and into the open. A glance told him that Madson had fainted. The sun was sinking; as Harker stared despairingly at it he remembered a deserted adobe cabin about half a mile back.

In a daze the young fellow removed the packs from the horse. A drink of water revived Madson; and somehow he managed to mount. Through the amber twilight that followed sunset

Jimmy led the horse back to the deserted cabin.

At the rear of the structure was a small spring of very bad water. Harker eased his companion down off the horse and after a great struggle succeeded in getting him into the shack. The old bunk was littered with rubbish, but Jimmy had no time to clear it out. Spreading a blanket over the mess, he somehow got Madson inside.

The old giant had again fainted. Jimmy Harker moved outside and stood staring unseeingly toward where an evening star was swinging above the horizon. His thoughts were in a turmoil; but gradually he decided on a course of action. First of all, he told himself, he must take the horse and go back for the provisions. And after that—he shuddered.

"I warned him!" he mumbled, over and over. "I told him we'd run into bad luck, but he wouldn't listen. Now he——"

With merciless precision the weak man's imagination painted the future. They had barely enough food to last a week; water not fit for human consumption; and it would be months before the broken leg would knit. They were far from help, and it was extremely unlikely that any one would come this way.

A still voice deep within him suggested a way out.

"You take the eats and canteens of water and the horse, and beat it!" said the voice. "If you stay you'll both die. But maybe you can reach town—send back help——"

He came to the place where he had piled the provisions, and dismounted. Slowly he repacked the horse. When the task was finished, Jimmy Harker stood a long minute staring, first back at the distant cabin and then off into the desert ahead. He was fighting the greatest battle of his life. He lost. Two minutes later, with a dry sob, he was in motion. Every step carried him

farther from Tim Madson and the cabin.

The last light of day was gone from the desert, and the stars were glowing like a million luminous eyes. A cool breeze helped to clear the blur of emotions from his mind, so that presently he was able to realize just how he stood. He was deserting the man who had saved his life; he, who was directly responsible for the old man's present predicament, was now deliberately abandoning him in his hour of need! It wasn't a pleasant thought, and instantly his weak self took up the defense. It was all Old Madson's fault, said this still voice; and Harker wasn't doing anything underhanded in thus saving himself. No, it was all right——

Then the youth's thoughts were abruptly recalled to the present. He had been plodding listlessly along toward where the moon would presently rise; and now there came a sudden, burning pain in one foot. He glanced down, then swiftly about him. He saw that he had strayed into a patch of cholla cactus—those desert devils that men and animals quickly learn to hate. One of the thorns had worked through a hole in his shoe and was imbedded in his foot.

Every step was an agony, but he dared not stop here. On he plunged, with the horse close at his heels, until he had passed beyond the borders of the cholla patch. Then he seated himself and quickly removed his shoe. The thorn had sunk too deep to be grasped with his finger nails, and he had no knife. Slowly he replaced the shoe.

For a time the pain was almost unbearable, but after Harker had tramped another mile or two it steadied to a throbbing ache. He didn't particularly mind that, however. The sting of his own weakness and cowardice was far greater; and it didn't abate with the passing miles. He tried to imagine what Old Tim Madson was doing now; he pictured him lying there in the black-

ness, calling for him and wondering why he didn't come. Once he even halted and half turned, as if to return; but next instant he was again going on.

"There's a jinx on him," Harker mumbled. "Bad luck—I warned him—but, anyway, I ought to have got out from under the curse now!"

Hours later he camped. Removing the packs from the horse, he hobbled the animal so that there could be no chance of its straying. Afterward he spread out his blankets and reached for the canteen.

"A drink, and then sleep——" he mumbled.

But there was to be a hitch in this program. He couldn't find the khaki-covered container; in sudden desperation he pawed all through the pile of provisions. It wasn't there, no two ways about that. He had lost it——

Or had he? Suddenly he remembered that when Tim Madson broke his leg and fainted, he had revived the old man with a drink. He had set the canteen down some twenty feet from the pile of supplies. That was where it would be lying now, he realized.

His throat was dry and raw and the foot in which the thorn was imbedded ached dully. He was too tired to care about these details, however. Flinging himself down on his blankets, Jimmy Harker was soon asleep.

His hours of unconsciousness were filled with queer dreams. At times he was chained by one foot to the middle of a titanic and red-hot stove; at others, that same foot was imbedded in molten lava. Again he thought he was held down by shadowy, evil things while one of them jabbed fiery needles into the tortured extremity.

He awoke from one of these nightmares with a cry of pain on his lips. The sky was pale in the east; it would soon be morning, he realized. As the realities of his predicament asserted themselves, he sat up with an unnamed

dread gnawing at him. That foot about which he had dreamed——

Harker stared at the shoe and noted that it was curiously bulged out, as if the foot inside had swelled.

He tried to move the limb, and a moan of pain was wrenched from him. The cholla thorn had done its work well, and the foot had swelled enormously. Harker knew it would be many days before it would bear his weight.

With a choking cry the weak youth turned his head. A whisper of sound had come from out the gloom beside him; but it was only the horse moving about.

The young man sat for a long time staring at the animal. He knew that his salvation rested solely on the beast; left to himself, he couldn't walk two hundred yards. He would have to abandon most of the provisions, bringing only what he could carry.

Harker at last managed to get himself to his feet. The pressure on the injured member caused him untold agonies, but for a short time he had to endure it. Half fainting, the young man sorted out from the provisions the stuff he would most need and made it into a small pack. Then he moved slowly across to the horse and managed to pull himself up on the animal's back.

Then they started eastward toward the gray dawn.

Harker was half delirious, but uppermost in his mind was the thought that bad luck had followed him. First the thorn, then the loss of the canteen——what, he wondered, would happen next?

They traveled steadily until long after sunrise. About ten o'clock the young man saw, a few hundred yards to his left, a clump of rocks surrounded by a fringe of green trees. He knew what that meant——water! Turning the horse that way, he urged the animal to a run.

At the margin of the green underbrush he halted his mount and slid to the ground. Next moment he was claw-

ing his way through the thick growth. In the center was a little open space; and here, sure enough, was a spring.

The water was vile beyond belief, he discovered, but his parched and aching throat demanded moisture at any price. So he gulped the sickening stuff, then turned and slowly pushed back through the brush.

His horse stood where he had left it; and Harker began to limp toward the animal. Next instant he halted, a cry of fear on his lips; for the beast had uttered a fractious snort and backed away from him. The youth's eyes widened with terror—if the animal should desert him—

He moved forward with greater caution, holding out one hand reassuringly. Now he was ten feet away, now seven. With another snort, the beast whirled and again retreated. Suddenly Jimmy Harker's overwrought nerve snapped. With a smothered scream he sprang toward the animal.

It was a mad act; for it added the finishing touch to the horse's revolt. There sounded the beat of hoofs, and a stifling cloud of dust enveloped Harker. When it cleared, the animal was fifty yards away and still running.

In a daze Jimmy Harker watched until the beast had completely vanished; then realizing his desperate plight, he collapsed. Dimly he heard his own voice raised in babbling entreaties and felt insanity creeping upon him. But Nature intervened between him and that approaching specter. Even as a wild, maniacal laugh rose to his lips, a black cloud gathered about him; the desert grew misty, unreal; and next instant he toppled over in a dead faint.

Back at the cabin, Old Tim Madson opened his eyes to a sudden sense of isolation and helplessness. His leg burned and throbbed unmercifully; blackness pressed down on him like a living, tangible thing.

He lay motionless a long time, trying to remember what had happened. Slowly the details of his mishap returned to him. He had slipped among the rocks, had fallen and broken a leg; after that had come a nightmare time during which his young pard had brought him to this cabin. Then he had heard Harker mount and guessed he had gone back for the provisions. But that was long ago, he told himself with sudden conviction; the boy should have returned hours before this. What had become of him?

Gritting his teeth in an effort to bear the throb of his injured leg, the old man considered the possibilities. Either of two things could have happened: Jim Harker might have been hurt, or—he had deserted him!

That thought hurt like a knife stab. It was extremely unlikely that Harker had been injured; the young fellow was well-versed in the ways of the desert. Had he then abandoned his stricken partner?

Half an hour passed; the slice of yellow moonlight that came through the open door widened, and still there was no sound of returning footsteps. By this time Tim Madson knew that Harker was not coming back.

Calmly the injured miner considered his predicament. He was entirely without food, and he had heard Harker say that the water in the little spring back of the cabin was hardly fit to drink. His leg was broken—

Or was it? For the first time he made a close examination. He managed somehow to sit up, and with skillful fingers prodded at the knee. Slowly Madson realized that no bone was broken; instead, the knee was out of joint.

There was only one remedy for that, Madson told himself grimly. His gray eyes were steely now, and his jaws clenched. At the lower end of the bunk was a foot board of rough-cut branches

set perhaps five or six inches apart; grinding his teeth to keep from crying out, Madson manipulated the injured leg until he had wedged his foot between two of these bars.

Then he pulled on the dislocated joint. A cold mist started out on Madson's face, and his lips parted in an exclamation of pain. He felt as if he were going to faint, but he increased that racking pull. His heart was pounding smotheringly, the blackness thickened about him. More, more——

At the last instant of consciousness he heard a dull snap. The leg was back in joint. Overcome by his tremendous effort, the big man fainted.

When he came to, the pain had abated considerably, and for the first time he felt a glow of hope. With the leg in joint, he told himself, he would soon be able to walk. The thing to do now was to lie here and take it easy until the swelling had subsided.

"I ought to be in shape to get going by morning!" he reflected. "I better try to sleep——"

He dozed fitfully through the long hours of blackness; and with the first gray light of dawn awoke to realize that the pain had decreased greatly. With almost a smile on his grim old face, the miner swung his legs over the side of the bunk and stood up.

Instantly he knew he had made a mistake. He felt an unbearable agony darting up and down the injured leg; despite his utmost efforts, an exclamation was wrenched from him. Seating himself on the edge of the bunk, Madson stared dully at the open door.

With the realization that it would be days before he could walk, came a feeling of defeat. All his fight had been for nothing, he knew; he would lie here and starve to death.

Or would he? Slowly a flush rose to his cheeks and his eyes began to sparkle. Circumstances had conspired against him, he realized. Things

couldn't be any worse. "And at last, Tim Madson got mad. He was enraged beyond measure at the desert, at the chain of misfortunes that had landed him here, and most of all at the treacherous individual who had deserted him. Tim snarled an imprecation.

"I'll whip him—I'll whip him and his accursed desert together!" he rumbled. "Now, let's see——"

Thoughtfully the old miner eyed the bunk upon which he sat, then he drew forth his pocketknife and got to work. Presently he had constructed two rude but effective crutches. With the aid of these he got to his feet and hopped across to the door.

Gray dawn was in the east; all the world was hushed, waiting. In spite of himself, Madson felt the beauty and charm of this wild land infolding him in its insidious arms. But somewhere out there in the mesquite and sage slept the man who had deserted him.

An angry flush once more mounted to his cheeks, and Tim Madson was in motion. He hopped around the outside of the cabin and up to the little spring. The stagnant water was repulsive beyond description; but he forced himself to drink. After that he located the tracks left by Jimmy Harker—and set out on his mission of vengeance.

That first hour of pain-racked progress convinced him that he was not going to have an easy time of it. The sky in the east grew lighter, and presently the sun swung above the horizon. It was hot. Sweat poured from him, and the injured knee began to throb unmercifully.

He reached the spot where Harker had repacked the outfit, and paused long enough to stare at the rock from which he had fallen. He was about to resume his way when something lying in the sand twenty paces distant caught his attention. The canteen!

He hobbled across and picked it up. A grim smile touched the corners of

the old man's lips as he realized what had happened. This, he told himself, gave him a fighting chance.

He drank sparingly during the next hour, and felt his strength returning. The leg, however, grew steadily worse until at last he knew he could not go much farther.

It was then that Fate dealt him another high card. Halting to catch his breath, his keen glance perceived something moving toward him from far ahead. Instantly he knew that it was a horse; and as it came closer he saw that it was *the* horse.

He stood quite still while the animal approached, a multitude of speculations and surmises rioting through his brain. When the horse was within fifty feet it halted, snorted, and stood watching him. Madson saw that the beast was fatigued; he had evidently had a hard time of it. But, worst of all, he was wild.

The miner started to hobble forward, but the beast snorted and made as if to run. Tim Madson was motionless, at that, staring unwinkingly at the horse. At last he deliberately removed his wide-brimmed hat and set it upon the ground. Still as a graven image, he poised himself six feet away.

The horse eyed him dubiously, then looked at the hat. Madson was playing his best card; he remembered that the animal had always been tremendously inquisitive. There was just a chance that he could lure the beast within reach.

In the ensuing ten minutes a game was played there in the vast emptiness of the desert; a game in which life was the stakes and death the reward of failure. The horse came forward a few steps at a time; backed away; made as if to run—but never quite did. Closer and yet closer he came; now he was ten paces distant, now five.

Then, with a yell of triumph, Tim Madson hurled himself forward. The

horse uttered an agonized snort and jerked back—too late. The big miner had fastened both hands firmly in his mane and forelock. Old Tim was jerked from his feet, but retained his hold; and an instant later, in response to his gentle voice and kindly hands, the animal was his.

He hauled himself to the beast's back, turned his mount, and headed at a walk along the trail. There was no longer any doubt in his mind concerning the outcome of his quest; he would find Jimmy Harker—and—then—

But there was yet another surprise in store for the old man. All that morning he rode steadily forward, halting occasionally to rest the horse and study his surroundings. It was about noon when Madson came to what had obviously been a camp of the man he sought; and found, lying in a tangled heap on the ground, fully half of the provisions.

Tim Madson stopped his mount and sat staring thoughtfully down. Something had happened to young Harker. He began to wonder just what it could be. But whatever it was, he would need these supplies. Dismounting, the old miner hastily made them into a small pack which he slung over the horn of the saddle.

Again Old Tim was riding. The sun poured down its hottest rays, but he rode steadily, if slowly, on. Noon came and passed; the sun was slanting down into the west.

Toward evening, the trail reached its end. Off to his left he saw a clump of underbrush greener than usual; and this he knew meant water. An instant later his keen old eyes picked out a huddled form lying at the margin of the underbrush. It required no closer inspection to tell him that this was—or had been—Jimmy Harker.

He rode up to the green fringe of growth and slid painfully from the horse's back. The animal stood with

drooping head, too tired even to switch its tail at the flies that buzzed about it. Old Tim Madson knelt beside the body of his pard and began an examination.

He quickly realized that the boy wasn't dead. Exhausted, and terrified out of his wits, Jim had sunk into a sort of coma. One shoe had been removed, and as Madson saw the condition of the foot he knew what had happened back along the trail.

In the next half hour he made camp within the shelter of the stunted trees and underbrush, hobbled the horse, and then removed with a penknife the wicked cholla thorn from Harker's foot. After that he waited to see what would happen.

Half an hour passed; and then, as the sun dropped into the west and was gone, Jimmy Harker moaned and opened his eyes. Tim Madson sat at his side and stared cynically down. He saw a bewildered look come into his

companion's weak face; bewilderment, followed by a horrible shame. Harker turned his head away.

There was a minute of tense silence. Then, slowly, Old Tim delivered his ultimatum.

"I been trying to decide what to do with you before we ended our partnership, Jimmy," he said. "An' I've finally decided I couldn't do nothing that'd punish you worse than the desert already has. I reckon you've learned your lesson."

Jimmy Harker was eying him incredulously.

"You mean—you forgive me?"

Madson nodded, and the shadow of a grin tugged at the corners of his strong mouth.

"That's just what I mean. Y' see, in a way you saved both of us. Because when you hiked out an' left me, it made me hopping mad—and I hopped! That's why we're both here now."



PRESERVING THE LONGHORNS

THE longhorn is too valuable a figure of the West to be permitted to become extinct, as its utility as a beef animal ceases. Efforts are being made to build up a herd of longhorn cattle, which will serve as a nucleus for future herds to be established in different reserved areas in national parks and forests, following the plan used in the case of the buffalo.

Appropriation has been made by the government for the purchase and maintenance of a herd of longhorns in the Wichita National Forest in Oklahoma. This forest lies in the heart of the range of the old southern herds of plains buffalo and is a part of the former Indian Territory. The region was also a grazing ground for large numbers of longhorn cattle in the days when the livestock industry of the Southwest was in its infancy.

The herd which is to be kept in the Wichita Forest is being selected by expert cattlemen who are familiar with the good points of this breed and know the regions where specimens are likely to be found. There are still some longhorns in Texas, although the breed is getting scarcer and scarcer as time goes on, and the present move is for the purpose of checking the process of extinction which would surely be the fate of this famous beef animal unless such a measure were adopted to preserve the species.



Dogs of the Discard

by Chart Pitt



HE chickadees were twittering their morning song when Bill Terry came out to feed the dogs. A storm had come and gone in the night, and the northland was flaunting the glory of the new-born snows. The rising sun inched its way above the forests, and the white landscape glittered like a treasure chest. Diamonds blazed from every weed, and opals, rubies and amethysts strewed their lush splendor over the untrampled snows.

The old man stood there in the dog pen with his long-legged, homely wolfhounds around him. He looked down into the valley, where the little settlement of Painted Rock sprawled its ragged shape among the clustering bull pines. Wisps of blue wood smoke floated like gauzy tendrils above the white roofs. It was a pretty spot the inhabitants had chosen for their town. But no thrill of pride was there for the man who watched from the hillside.

Bill Terry had spent many years among the unmapped solitudes of the upper north. He had run his trap line in the dwindling forests of the arctic slope—and panned gold from a hundred nameless creeks where the black water crawled away toward the frozen sea.

A year ago he had come to Painted Rock, an old man who was hungry for human companionship. Painted Rock had left him where she found him: a stranger outside her gates.

One moment the old man stood there on the hillside, looking down at the little settlement that had denied him the hand of fellowship, and the world seemed very hard and cold and far away.

Then the yap of wolf dogs floated in on the quiet air. The old man turned his head at the sound. A team of huskies were coming down the opposite slope—and over there, topping the hill, was another outfit.

They were getting their teams warmed up for something. Then Bill remembered what it was.

They had been waiting all week for this snow, so they could stage the regular try-out race. Everybody was taking part, for the winning team would represent Painted Rock at the big dog derby at Gold City.

Something stirred in the old man's blood at the thought of it. Painted Rock might be a tight-hearted, unfriendly little burg. But a dog race was a dog race—something that was the same the world over.

Bill Terry's hands trembled with eagerness as he harnessed his team. This was the day when every dog man would know the meaning of brotherhood. There was no such thing as caste or clique when the racing sleds went out across the northern snows.

The big Dog Derby meant much to Painted Rock. For three years straight, Lem Gaunt's string of black wolf dogs had won second prize at Gold City—and the last time Lem had been only a half a sled length behind "Tex" Carson's imported Malemutes from Porcupine Creek.

For years these two divisional points on the Gold City trail had been active rivals. They had fought each other for the spoils of the fur trade, and for a dominant place in the affairs of the middle settlements. Now the Dog Derby had narrowed itself down to a race between the two towns.

It was a matter of civic pride, and even Bill Terry, who had been denied a place in the affairs of Painted Rock, found himself sharing the general hope—that this year the storekeeper's dogs would show their heels to the Derby King from Porcupine Creek.

With a snap of the whip, the old man went riding down the hillside; a hairy-faced man from the outlands—driving his ungainly, whiskered hounds to the try-out race.

A dozen outfits were strung out along the starting grounds when he arrived. Others were milling around trying to

jockey their teams into better position. Bill Terry came driving up with his long-legged wolf chasers and crowded in among them.

Some one broke into a derisive laugh. The crowd took it up, and for a moment Bill Terry was the target for their thoughtless banter.

"What you doing here—with them things?" Lem Gaunt came over to where Terry stood in line.

"I thought you was getting ready for the try-out?" Bill stammered. "Of course, my dogs ain't in very good shape. I haven't been exercising them in the way I ought, and they are starting to get fat."

"Fat?" the storekeeper snorted. "If you call them things fat, I'd hate to see a skeleton."

"It's natural for them to be lean—that's part of the breed," the old man explained. "This race will be a good thing for them to *reduce* on."

"You'll have to do your reducing somewhere else," Gaunt motioned for him to remove his dogs from the starting grounds. "This race is for wolf dogs—not for any long-legged skeletons like them."

"Ah, let the old man have a chance!" one of the racers spoke up. "Perhaps them things of his really *can* run."

"What about the gang down at Porcupine?" Lem challenged. "They have been poking fun at us for three years now. But just wait till they hear about us trying to win the Derby with a string of whiskered Bolshevik hounds!"

A murmur of approval came from the crowd. The people who had gathered to see the race edged closer to the starting grounds. The storekeeper had scored a telling point with them.

"Of course, if you want Porcupine to call us a *hound-dog town*?" Lem paused for dramatic effect. "Go ahead and let the whiskered angels run—it's all the same to me."

The chairman of the try-out commit-

tee motioned for Bill to withdraw his team. Without a word of protest he went riding out of Painted Rock—humiliated and scorned. He heard the yap of the dogs as the teams swept away for the race, but he did not look back.

There came a day when Bill Terry saw the mail team come in from the south. After supper he went down to the store to see if his fur list had come. Lem Gaunt bought fur, but the old man had decided to do his marketing on the outside.

He elbowed his way into the store. Painted Rock was there *en masse*. Men, women and children crowded each other, and milled around for a chance to get up forward.

On the counter was a big packing case, with its lid hanging by one corner. The storekeeper stood beside it. In one hand he held a hammer, and in the other a sheet of paper which he was reading. Then he looked up and a smile wrinkled his fat face.

"This is one time we put something over on Porcupine. They will feel like biting themselves when they hear about this."

"Hurry up, Lem, we want to hear how the blamed thing works," a trapper urged.

"Can't you see I'm hurrying already?" The storekeeper turned back to his sheet. "If them fool manufacturers wouldn't use all them newfangled words, a fellow might know what they was talking about."

The door opened, and a draft of cold air cut in from the outside.

"Here is the mail man," somebody announced from the rear of the room. "Perhaps he knows how to set up a radio."

"Nothing doing," the newcomer flung back. "They talked me into setting up their outfit at Porcupine last night—and I didn't get to bed till two o'clock this morning."

A strained silence settled over the

store at Painted Rock. Bill Terry edged his way toward the door, and went tramping up the hill toward his cabin. He had forgotten all about his fur list. Once more the bustling little settlement down the trail had put one over on Painted Rock—and somehow he felt that their victory was his victory too.

He tried to hum a tune as he stamped through the fluffy snow. But down deep in the bottom of his soul was something that did not feel like singing. It was the lonely emptiness of those who stand on the outside.

The winter tightened its grip upon the northern wilderness. Fur hunters went riding away to their distant trap lines, and Painted Rock became a settlement of women, children, and a sprinkling of old men.

Bill Terry put out his mink traps in the valley above the town. Each day he saw a string of black wolf dogs go skimming along the trail where Lem Gaunt was keeping his outfit in training for the Gold City Derby. The old man watched them with narrowed eyes. But only the whiskered hounds ever guessed at the loneliness that lay in his heart.

In the gray darkness of a winter night Bill Terry went tramping off through the frosty starshine toward Painted Rock. An icy wind was whimpering over the snows, and a weird aurora was waving above the rim of the dark forests. An owl hooted back of the town, and from far down the creek another bird replied. Off in the swamp a solitary wolf howled his lonely cry.

Something stirred in the old man's blood at the sound. It was the storm glass of the snow lands—a warning that blizzards were sweeping down across the northern wilderness.

Bill Terry whistled a few bars from the latest fox trot—a tune he had heard last night on the radio. Hard packed

was the trail that led down the hill to the settlement. Painted Rock had not softened her heart toward him—neither had Bill tried to shorten the gap that divided them.

Every night he had sat in the corner of the store, listened to the voices that came across the miles, and heard unseen orchestras playing their haunting tunes. He would sit there a stranger among them; and when the last note had died in the throat of the big black horn, he would go out and climb back up the hill to the cabin—and next evening he would do it all over again!

The old man came shuffling up out of the night and turned in at the store. Outside the icy winds drifted through the darkness and the stabbing cold. But within the big building there was the glitter of lamplight, and the red glow of flames from the big stone fireplace.

But even at that it was too cold for comfort. The windows were an inch thick with hoar frost; and around the door chunks of snow lay unmelted upon the floor.

Bill Terry went over to his seat in the corner, and sat there on a packing box, tapping his feet together to keep them warm.

Lem Gaunt was behind the counter with a set of head phones clamped to his ears, tuning in for the evening concert. For a moment there was no sound except the low drone of the wind, and the far thunder of spruce trees bursting under the pressure of the frost.

Then like a cry of panic through the night, words leaped from the black mouth of the horn:

"Painted Rock—Painted Rock—Attention! Porcupine Creek and stations on the Gold City Trail. Attention! Attention!"

The voice died in a crackle of interfering air waves. Men and women sat there staring at the big, black horn, waiting for it to come again. Something had sent the blood from their

white faces, and their strained breathing was audible in the deathlike hush that had fallen over the room.

Icy winds rode down the night. Like ghostly voices they whispered about the eaves of the building—then died in the emptiness of the winter snows. The flames fluttered about the logs in the fireplace, and the aerials crackled and hummed in the grip of the deepening cold.

Then it was calling again—that same wild cry of distress—out of the somewhere, the nowhere, of the arctic night.

"Attention! Attention! Painted Rock—and Porcupine. Blizzard River—and Muskeg Lake. Be ready! Be ready! Be ready—with—"

Once more the unknown voice was choked and lost in the stutter of the strumming aerials.

Bill Terry rose softly to his feet. He looked into the blanched faces of women—women who yesterday passed him on the street without a nod. But to-night there was a tie that bound them all together—the proud folk of Painted Rock and the man who lived on the outside.

Out of the air of the frost-scourged night some one was calling to them. It was a cry of panic and fear, and for them there was nothing to do but wait—and listen.

Then over the crackling sputter of the wires it came again:

"Attention! Attention! Derby teams on the Gold City trail—attention! Red flags at Gold City—attention Derby teams!"

There was a sputter in the horn—a voice broke and was lost.

"My God! The smallpox again?" an old man cried as he tottered toward the machine.

Some one drew him back. The voice was speaking again.

"Vaccine leaving with Derby teams! Be ready with relays—on the Gold City Trail!"

The voice softened and was lost in some outside interference. Lem Gaunt fumbled with the dial, trying to get in the clear again—and then lost it altogether.

"Who is it?" a woman asked. "Somebody at Gold City?"

"They haven't got any broadcasting station there," said the storekeeper as he reached for a pencil. "They sent the news out by wireless, and they are broadcasting word back to us along the trail."

"When do you think they will get here?" Bill Terry approached the storekeeper.

"Ought to make it in three days if they are running it with the Derby dogs." Gaunt looked up from where he had been figuring on the end of a packing case. "That is, if the weather don't take a turn for the worse."

"There is a storm brewing," and the old snow rat shook his head. "Of course it may hold off till they get through with it, if they hurry."

"That is what Derby dogs are made for, to hurry," Lem said over his shoulder, as he went back and started to tune in again.

Bill Terry looked at him closer. There was something new in his voice. No longer was he the narrow-minded bully who had thrown an old man out of the try-out race. To-night he felt the responsibility which fate had thrust upon him as one of the relay-riders in a Derby of death.

Dragging seconds passed while the storekeeper tinkered with his radio. The little group stood there in the old store and waited, while empty air waves hummed and crackled in the black mouth of the horn.

Then Lem's fat fingers twisted the disk a bit farther, and a burst of music came from the machine. It was a light-footed fox trot from some unknown orchestra, playing in the cozy comfort of some broadcasting station

far away from that lonely land of the spruce and the snow.

Bill Terry opened the door and stepped out into the icy starshine. It was no time for music, when the red flags were flapping and the winter plague was out in search of prey.

The frozen trail squeaked its protest as the old man stamped away through the darkness. Out across the night he could hear the ice winds blowing, broadcasting their lonely message over the drifted snows.

It was a drear and desolate snowscape that lay there beneath the winter stars. But a new voice was singing in the old man's heart as he climbed the hill. Yesterday he had been an outcast, one who rebelled at the lonely isolation of his lot. He had hated Painted Rock, and the shadow of that hate lay like a stain upon his life. But to-night he had stood among them when death was on the wind, and even Lem Gaunt had met it like a man.

He paused at the dog pen and the sleepy animals came stretching themselves from their beds, eager for a touch of the caressing hand. A weary sigh came from the old man's lips as he stroked the unlovely hounds.

Somewhere out in the night-bound snows a dog team was sweeping across the snows toward them—carrying its precious freight to the stricken town. Somewhere along the trail a strong-limbed man was running behind his sled, racing death beneath the frost-flaming stars. It was a Derby of glory they were running to-night, and only the young and the strong might race.

It was the day they were expecting the Derby runner from Porcupine Creek. The promised storm had broken in the night. It was a white and lonely world, where driving snow rode down the wind and barrier drifts were each hour growing deeper across the trail.

After dinner Bill Terry harnessed up

his hounds and drove down to the settlement. It was weather when storm-bound travelers would be seeking the shelter of some improvised trail camp. But this was no ordinary traveler who was fighting his way through from Porcupine Creek. It was "Tex" Carson, the Derby King, who was making the record run of his life—and something told the old man that he would come.

Lem Gaunt's outfit was standing in the lean-to shed behind the store, with the big, black Derby dogs lying in the harness, waiting to play their part in the desperate relay race that was to come.

Bill drove in and tied up his hounds in the far corner. Then he went into the store to wait for the coming of the relay runner.

He found Lem Gaunt standing by the window, staring out into the driving snow.

"What you think about it, old-timer?" the storekeeper asked as he turned toward him. "Reckon it's going to get any worse?"

Bill Terry nodded.

"She is going to be a bad one before the day is over."

"It's time they were here." Lem glanced at his watch. "But I don't think Carson will try to make it through in this storm."

Bill turned and looked closer at the Derby runner. His face was white and drawn, and his nervous fingers were scraping at the hoar frost that clung to the window.

The afternoon wore away, and the gloom of the twilight crept in through the flying snow. Still there was no sign of Tex Carson. It was a full-fledged blizzard now that was shrieking around the log building, and every minute it was getting worse.

"I might as well go and unharness my dogs," Gaunt said as he lighted his lantern.

The old snow rat made no answer as

he followed him out into the storm. For there had been a note of relief in the storekeeper's voice.

He stood there watching, while the black Derby team was unhitched and fixed up for the night. Then he turned to Lem.

"Better let me have some of that fish of yours. My hounds haven't had their supper yet, and I guess I'll stick around for a while."

"No use waiting any longer for him," Gaunt said roughly. "He has gone into camp somewhere along the trail."

They returned to the store, where a few stragglers from the nearer cabins had gathered. Lem fixed up his supper in the back room. Bill bought a sack of hard-tack and a chunk of smoked fish, and carried it over to his favorite corner.

An hour passed. It was radio time, but Gaunt never even looked toward the silent machine. He walked back and forth across the room, and every now and then paused to squint out through the frosty panes.

Then he slumped down in a chair beside the fire, and sat staring at the twisting flames.

Louder rose the voice of the storm outside. Blizzard winds shrieked about the old building, and it shivered like an animal under the lash. The storekeeper got up and threw fresh wood upon the fire, still the increasing cold crept in through the thick log walls.

Then something crashed against the door and a man came stumbling into the room.

"My God—it's Tex Carson!" the storekeeper cried.

The Derby King turned at the sound of his voice and extended a package toward him. Then he reeled sidewise and fell to the floor.

The next minute he was tumbling to his knees.

"Is your dogs ready? We can't lose a minute. It's awful going," the Derby

runner blurted the words through his swollen and frost-burned lips.

"No use of starting out till the storm lets up," Gaunt said as he came and helped the runner to a chair. "Perhaps we can make it through in the morning."

"Morning!" The Derby King bounded to his feet as a flood of indignation fired his stricken body. "They are dying over in Gold City *now*—and you talk about waiting till morning!"

"There will be somebody dying on the trail—if they start out in this blizzard." Lem backed away from the irate man from Porcupine Creek.

"Give me your team then, if you are afraid to go!" cried Tex staggering toward him. "I'll take it on to Hunter's Road House myself—it's a shorter relay than the one we just run."

"Don't you ever think it," Lem snarled back. "You'd jump at the chance to cripple up my dogs—just before the Derby."

"What about *my* dogs?" Tex Carson pointed toward the door, where a swath of lamplight lay across the snows and a string of blooded Malemutes lay spent and gasping in their harness.

"That's your lookout," the storekeeper retorted as he turned back toward his fire.

Bill Terry took a step forward, and laid a hand on the relay runner's arm.

"I've got my team all harnessed and, if you want me to, we'll—we'll try to make it through."

"No, you don't," the storekeeper whirled upon him. "Don't you touch that package—he has got to turn it over to me!"

The Derby King fumbled beneath his parka, and the next minute a big, black gun was in his hand.

"Not another step, Lem Gaunt," he said, his voice hard as tempered steel. "Your life looks awful small to me compared to the lives of them folks over at Gold City."

One moment Carson faced the cowering storekeeper, and there was the glint of murder in his eye. Then he turned and placed the package in Bill Terry's waiting arms.

"Conrad will meet you at the road house. Try and make it through, old-timer."

"We'll try," Bill said simply as he stamped out into the storm.

As he turned the corner he heard the voice of the Derby King, as he began to unharness his stricken team.

"God! but it's good to meet a man, after running up against a cur like Lem Gaunt."

Bill Terry paused for a moment within the shelter of the shed while he helped himself to a supply of dog food from the storekeeper's box.

Then at a word, the long-legged wolfhounds were off, fighting their mad way through the blizzard, an old man's voice urging them from behind.

Driving winds shrieked about him as he floundered along behind the lurching sled. Like clutching hands they reached out of the darkness and tore at his clothing; like icy teeth they cut him to the bone as they passed.

Bill Terry hid his face in the hood of his lynx-skin parka, and, clinging to the sled for guidance, he followed through the night. But the deadly blizzard dust choked his nostrils, and at times he struggled to get his breath behind the sheltering fur.

An hour passed, and he had left the open uplands behind him, and was in the shelter of the swamp. The long-legged hounds quickened their pace, and went tearing through the inky blackness.

A thrill of pride was in Bill Terry's blood as he ran along behind. It was pride for the stubborn wolfhounds that even the blizzard could not subdue; pride for fighting Tex Carson and his game little Malemutes who had made it through to Painted Rock.

But something caught at the man's throat at the thought of that stricken team he had seen lying in the swath of lamplight in front of Lem Gaunt's door. It had been a relay of glory they had run; and so, too, must he run, to the end. Dogs might die—but the Derby of mercy must never pause.

Spruce swamps spread their sheltering stretches across the path. Wind-swept ridges came and went. Still the creaking sled lurched onward. Bill Terry floundered along through the drifts, a human atom lost in the blizzard's hell with only the cunning nose of a wolfhound to show the way.

Hours of agony dribbled past. A vague and ghostly light crept in through the flying snow—and another day had come to the land of the stabbing cold.

In the shelter of a wayside thicket Bill Terry paused to feed his dogs. When they once more set out through the storm, the old man was chewing a strip he had torn from one of the sundried fish he had commandeered to feed his team.

Bill Terry's watch was hanging beside his bunk, back in the cabin at Painted Rock, and there was no trace of sun to measure the dragging hours in that world of flying snow. By the yard stick of his hunger he logged the miles as they passed, and he forced his staggering body onward through the drifts.

A telltale shadow crept in through the blizzard's pall. The day had run its narrow span and was nearly gone. But it meant nothing to Bill Terry as he tramped his endless march behind the dog sled.

An alien sound crept in through the bedlam of the storm, and Bill raised his head. But a minute later he was hiding his face from the slashing snow, and even the memory of that sound had faded from his mind.

Then the lead dog sounded his deep-mouthed challenge, and Bill shook him-

self out of the stupor. They were nearing the road house, and he must hold out till they got there.

The old man clutched at the sled for support, and half walking, half dragging, made his way through the great drifts.

Then he saw a flash of lamplight through the darkness, and a blurred shape came running toward him.

"Conrad hasn't got here yet—we wasn't expecting you till some time tomorrow," then the voice broke in a gasp. "My God! I thought it was Gaunt with the relay team."

"It's the relay," Bill muttered through his ice-caked beard, as he dragged himself into the road house, the precious package under his arm. "You got to get a team and take this thing on to Gold City—we can't wait."

"Get a team!" the road-house man stammered. "We haven't got anything here—nothing but one lame dog. We can't do a thing till Conrad comes."

Bill Terry slumped down by the fireplace. Some one brought him a cup of steaming coffee. He drank it at a gulp, and the haze lifted from his brain.

"Get them hounds of mine fixed up, and rig me out with a bite to eat," said Bill as he struggled to his feet again. "If Conrad isn't here by the time I get thawed out, I got to go on."

"Go on!" the man blurted. "Why, fellow, you're crazy; you wouldn't have lasted another mile as it was."

"You fix up them dogs like I told you," Bill-cried, shaking his stubborn old head. "And hurry up with that supper. I got to be going."

A scant half hour later Bill Terry, ignoring the protests of the road-house folks, stepped out into the storm, ready for the last desperate venture.

"Better wait an hour anyway," the old landlord made his last appeal. "Conrad was coming in to-night, so as to have his team all ready when you got here. He is liable to blow in any

minute now. I'd hate to have anything happen to you."

"The other fellows took their chances to get it across their relays, and I ain't any better than they was," Bill maintained. "If I fall down now, I'll spoil all the work they have done along the trail."

"But Conrad will have a fresh team and he could make it quicker than you could!" the man persisted.

"Well, I'll go ahead and break the trail for him, and if he shows up to-night—send him on after me," Bill called back to him as he straightened out his team. "If I don't make it through, he'll find us somewheres on the way."

He heard them calling good luck to him as he staggered away behind the sled. Then the words were whipped away in the storm swirl and he was alone again.

Into the night and the cold he went. The haze of sleep and the stupor of exhaustion mingled their drugs in his veins. No longer was it a human brain that guided the Derby of death on its last desperate relay.

Automatically, he kept up his stumbling run behind the sled, following the whiskered hounds wherever they chose to lead.

Somewhere in the black inferno of that night, Bill Terry tripped and fell, and his numbed fingers lost their grip upon the sled.

In a flash, he understood what had happened. A minute more and the team would be gone, and he would be helpless.

Something snapped within the beaten body of the old snow rat, and loosened some atom of reserve energy which nature had been saving for the last effort.

He flung himself forward; his clutching fingers found the sled. Dragging himself aboard, he crawled under the bearskin robes—and merciful nature blotted out all memory of his suffering.

Bill Terry awoke with the half-conscious impression that something was clawing at him. He rolled over, and crawled from beneath the bearskins.

It was daylight again, and the storm was still raging. The team had stopped in a thicket, and the lead dog was trying to remind him that it was time for breakfast.

The old man stumbled about upon his cramped and stiffened legs, parceling out the fish to the faithful hounds.

Those few hours of rest beneath the bearskins had filled him with a new strength; but every muscle in his body was as sore as though he had been hammered with a club.

He realized that he had goaded himself beyond the point of human endurance. But there was no time to stop. What little rest he had found beneath the robes had saved his life for the time being—but that never could happen again.

It was a slim chance that the dogs would hold out to make it into Gold City as it was. They could not possibly pull another extra pound.

But there was no thrill in the old man's blood as he set out upon the last leg of his journey. No longer was he a relay runner carrying the freight of mercy into the wilderness. That belonged to the yesterday, when codes and creeds were a part of his life. Now there was nothing but a dogged determination to carry on, even as the wolf-hounds were carrying on.

The slow-moving dawn brightened into the fuller light of day. But it meant nothing to Bill Terry now. He had fallen back into the daze of the storm blight, an unthinking machine that reeled ever onward behind the sled.

He kept plodding on because there was nothing else to do. Life held nothing now except that painful crawl across the winter snows. His mental horizon had narrowed to that little

speck of blizzard hell in which he toiled. Agony slashed through the deepening stupor—cutting at a soul that was too far gone to resist.

Night settled down over that land of the flying snow, but Bill Terry never knew of its coming. His narrow world held neither time nor place, just toil and suffering.

Then strange sounds came to him over the shriek of the wind, and fantastic forms invaded the seclusion of his little torture chamber.

He saw a swarm of fireflies dancing among the flying snows; vague monsters clutched at him out of the blizzard's gloom. He thrust them aside, but still they surrounded him. He felt the snap of his frozen mittens as his grip was torn loose from the sled. Then something seemed to pick him up bodily and carry him off through space.

When Bill Terry opened his eyes the glare of lamplight was about him. He saw the vague shapes of men who moved hither and thither, their voices rang like a babble in his ears. Some one bent and rubbed a soothing lotion on his frost-blistered face.

They were making a lot of bother over him, but his numbed brain could not make out why. Then through the babble and confusion came the softened whimper of a sled dog.

The old snow rat clawed himself up on one elbow, and stared half blindly about him.

There on the floor lay a team of dogs still harnessed to a sled.

For a moment he stared at the mo-

tionless, snow-coated animals. It was a queer place for a dog team—in a building like that.

Then something snapped in his brain and he tried to drag himself forward.

They were his wolfhounds—and something had happened to them!

But even in that moment, the memory filtered in upon him.

This was Gold City—he had made it through—to the end! Once more a hound whimpered, but Bill Terry made no attempt to reach him. Men would look after dogs that had run the relay of the plague.

He saw white-faced women kneeling there before the crowd, bathing the trail-torn feet of his pets, and sobbing over them as they worked.

"You just about run that team of yours to death," a man said in a husky voice as Bill was carried to an improvised bed in the corner.

"So did Tex Carson do the same thing on the Porcupine Relay." Something forced Bill to remind them of the part which other men and other teams had played in that desperate venture.

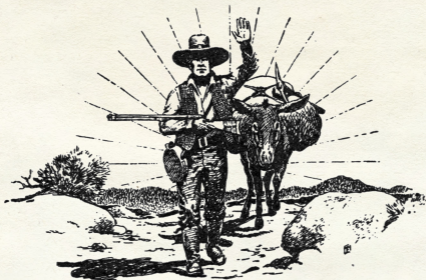
"*The Porcupine relay!*" the man gasped. "You didn't bring that in—all the way from Painted Rock?"

Terry nodded his head as he slumped back among the bearskins, and something was singing a song of brotherhood within his soul.

He had become a brother to such men as fighting Tex Carson—and his despised hounds had played the master rôle in that grilling relay of the plague.

AN OLD CALIFORNIA LANDMARK

ABOUT six miles southeast of Calistoga, California, there is an old mill which has many historic associations and is highly regarded by local residents, especially those belonging to the organization of Native Sons of the Golden West. The property was turned over to this society some time ago by its owners on condition that the Native Sons should keep the mill buildings and the old water wheel in repair as a memorial to the pioneers who caused its erection. The mill was built in 1846 and is one of the oldest landmarks of the Golden State.



Miner's Potlatch

BY J. A. Thompson

WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE desires this department to be of real assistance to all who are interested in the practical side of mining. Questions pertaining to field conditions, mining equipment, mining territories, mining laws, prospecting and general geology will be answered.

Address all communications to J. A. Thompson, mining expert, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THE transportation problem of the prospector is governed largely by his purse and the character of the region which he is exploring. Numerous queries have come to the Potlatch on the subject. The treatment of the question here must necessarily be general, as each specific case has a distinct set of factors to consider in arriving at the solution of its problem.

Disregarding for the present the airplane, which is being used successfully in some sections of northern Canada as a means of making quick trips to isolated sections, the prospector may travel by foot, by light automobile, by motor cycle, or with burros, mules, or

horses. Many men who do casual prospecting for short stretches of time throughout the mining sections of the West still go afoot, and manage to cover considerable territory. But for those who can afford it, a light automobile is very serviceable in many parts of the western States where passable roads exist. A small auto will hold two men very comfortably as well as their supplies, which should at all times include plenty of extra gas and oil containers. The substitution of a light trucklike body for the ordinary passenger one will provide more room for supplies. Chains for sandy country should be taken, and plenty of "spares" of course. The automobile

prospector must always guard against getting too far away from a gas supply.

If a motor cycle and sidecar is to be used, it will generally be found that the supplies so fill the sidecar that that method of transportation is only satisfactory for one-man outfits.

Before differentiating between the various pack animals, some remarks applicable to all pack animals are in order. In the first place, don't forget that animals are susceptible to diseases and ailments. Give them all the care and attention possible. In steep, hilly or mountainous country, loads should be adjusted with the animal facing downhill rather than uphill. Each animal should have its own saddle-blanket.

The burro, despite his many trying traits, is perhaps the favorite pack animal of the prospector. The endurance of the sturdy little creature and his ability to find his own feed and exist on a small amount of water, make him extremely useful to the prospector, especially in the desert and semidesert regions of the West. In dry territory, with green feed and occasional rains a burro will get along fairly well with very little water; their average under those conditions being estimated as one and a half gallons a day each. With drier feed and warmer weather, their average daily water consumption is about twice as much. When turned loose, they should be hobbled and belled. Even so, the animals are such wanderers that they should be rounded up at least once a day. In hot weather they can be depended upon to come back to camp for water, but this rule does not always apply when the weather is cooler and the feed greener. The load for the average burro is generally figured at one hundred and fifty pounds, and fifteen miles the day's travel. Because of their sure-footedness, burros are very useful in mountainous country.

Mountain horses are also sure-footed

and will follow a trail without much supervision, but, because they must have plenty of water and green or dry feed, they are not very well adapted for a dry country. A horse can carry from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds on steep trails, and cover up to fifteen miles a day, which is on the whole as far as the average prospector cares to go in that time, when the chores attendant upon making and breaking camp are taken into consideration.

For general and heavy pack work under almost any condition the mule is usually considered the most satisfactory pack beast. He is extremely sure-footed. He possesses amazing endurance, and he can carry a load of from two hundred to three hundred pounds, sometimes more. His day's travel may be stretched to twenty-five miles if necessary, but his average is usually estimated at about two hundred and fifty pounds load, and from ten to fifteen miles a day over rough and hilly country. Mules work well in wagons also.

A Potlatch reader who simply signs himself "An old prospector," has written to this department and wants to know what the United States Bureau of Mines has done during the past year. His letter comes from San Francisco, California. Space is too limited to tell him everything the bureau has done. Here are some of the things: The bureau continued its safety campaign among the million miners of the United States, extending its scope so as to include the petroleum and natural gas industries. The bureau began actual production of shale oil at its experimental shale oil plant near Rulison, Colorado.

During the past year the United States Bureau of Mines conducted extensive studies for the utilization of huge deposits of low-grade iron ores in Minnesota, Alabama, and elsewhere.

In several States a survey was made by the bureau of leakage in natural gas transmission lines, and great savings were proved possible by testing and repairing the lines. In the Powell oil field in Texas an increased production of one million barrels of oil was obtained from wells repaired under the supervision of bureau engineers. The bureau continued its study of the causes of mine fires and explosions; it also studied ventilation conditions in metal mines throughout the country.

These are some of the things the bureau did, Mr. "Old Prospector." Oh, yes, the bureau was busy!

To B. M. J., Brooklyn, New York: According to the United States Geological Survey, it is estimated that the United States possesses fifty-two per cent of the coal supply of the world.

To M. H., Louisville, Kentucky: You are right. Part of the asbestos deposits of Gila County, Arizona—which are the largest in the United States—occur within a few miles of Globe, Arizona. The chief asbestos districts in the United States are only thirty to fifty miles farther North.

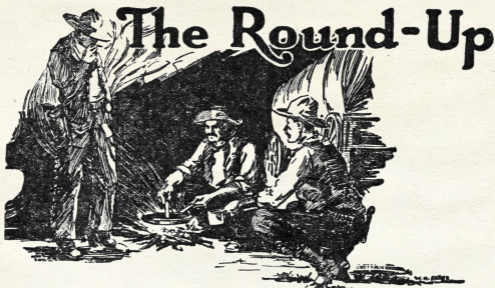
To P. D. A., Mexico City, Mexico: Your colleague is right. There is such a thing as "rusty gold." Rusty gold is simply free gold, covered with a thin surface coating of iron oxide or silica. This must be scraped off and the gold ground before it will amalgamate. A reef, the other thing you ask about, is simply a British term for a vein. For instance, an Australian would speak of a copper reef. In the United States it would be referred to as a copper vein.



AN ADVENTURE WITH MOUNTAIN LIONS

ONE of the most remarkable tales of encounters with mountain lions to come out of the wilderness regions of the West during the past few months is that which concerns the exploit of two trappers, Frank E. Brown and Paul R. Sterner, of Kimberly, Idaho, in Rock Creek Basin, about thirty miles south-east of Twin Falls. The two trappers were running a line of coyote and bear traps on Rock Creek in the vicinity of Skipper's Cabin, and had had some little trouble with mountain lions that made a practice of devouring animals that were in the traps.

While the trappers were visiting their lines one day, they came upon no less than six mountain lions feasting on the carcass of a deer which they had just killed. One of these lions was exceptionally large, measuring more than nine feet from tip to tip and—as was found afterward—weighing four hundred and fifty pounds. On seeing the lions, Brown immediately opened fire, aiming at the largest of the great cats. His shot inflicted only a slight wound, but it seemed to infuriate the beast, for it instantly gave a signal of attack and charged on the trapper. The two men immediately opened fire and brought down the largest of the lions and three others. The three smaller animals measured six and a half feet from tip to tip, and weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds each.



IT'S a large-sized ranch we've got; there are no boundaries, no wire fences. It is open range. Its extent is the world. Still, we've got two and a half million hands to help us with our round-ups, and believe us they are some hands, though not one of them is a "forty and found."

Yes, some of the members of our herd stray to the farthestmost quarters of the globe, and we have to round them up. We will give you a glimpse of a small portion of the herd which once was scattered far, but has now been brought home:

"I wish to thank you for inserting my ad in your magazine for Clarence Finely, ex-cow-puncher. I have heard from him and never expected to do so again." This statement is from Frank L. Davis, Avenue F. at 20th Street, College Point, New York.

"I beg to thank you for the advertisement which you put in your WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE. It asked the whereabouts of John W. Brannon who has been found through the efforts of your column. I wish to convey my thanks to you, and to assure you of the appreciation I feel toward your wonderful

magazine. I wish you every success. Mrs. Lena Brannon, General Delivery, North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada."

"I am writing you a few lines to thank you for finding my brother, Henry Thieleke, for me. I do not know how to express my joy at actually finding him. I will always speak highly of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and will recommend it wherever I go, and so will my brother. I thank you over and over again. Mrs. George Dotzel, 85 Holland Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania."

"I would like to thank you for your kindness in inserting my ad in your very popular magazine. I am very pleased to tell you that I have received a letter from my cousin, Mrs. William Hawker, of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I only sent you the ad in August, and I had an answer in less than four months. A friend of hers saw the ad and called her attention to it. I am pleased to get an answer so very quickly. I wish prosperity and success to your excellent magazine. Lucy M. Davis, Walnut Cottage, Wotton Underwood, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England."

"Regarding my advertisement in your Missing column, in the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE of a few months ago, I wish to inform you that I have received an answer and I want you to discontinue the ad. I thank you very much indeed for your kindness in this matter. Mrs. J. Cummingham, Hayfield, Manitoba, Canada."

"I am writing to thank you for the great service you have done me in locating my brother and mother whom I had not seen for twelve years. The other day I received a letter from J. P. Meyer, Brownwood, Texas, saying that he had seen the ad and located them for me. Thanks to your magazine, I have really got in touch with them. Marion Long, 1007½ Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, Washington."

"I wish to thank you most earnestly for the ad which you placed in your magazines, WESTERN and DETECTIVE STORY. It helped me to locate Miss Maud McMeans, in Cleveland, Ohio. She had been missing for several years, and has since been married and her name changed to Mrs. E. M. Smith, Cleveland, Ohio. With most sincere thanks, and best wishes. D. B. Altman, R. F. D. 1, Box 9B, Vandergrift, Pennsylvania."

"I will take this opportunity to thank you for your kindness and to tell you that I am a sure booster for the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, as I have always been. I am so grateful to you for the aid you gave me in finding my brother. I can hardly thank you enough, or as much as I would like to. I remain a sturdy reader and friend of the magazine, Walter Sloan."

"Many thanks for your kindness in publishing my ad in your magazines. I have found my long-lost father through your columns. No one will appreciate your kindness more than I do. Yours

with deep gratitude, Mrs. Alonzo Mason, Iola, Colorado."

"Some time ago I sent you a notice to be printed in regard to my son, H. A. Chick or Vernon Devoe. I am writing to ask you not to print it again, as he has been found. His wife, too, inserted an ad in your magazine, and I believe that it was this one which found him. We are all very grateful to your magazine. Mrs. Arthur D. Chick, Worcester, Massachusetts."

"I am writing to thank you for putting my ad in the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE. I have found my father in a sanitarium at Cresson, Pennsylvania. I am very grateful to you for your kindness. With heartfelt appreciation, Everette F. Wilson, 8334 Manistee Avenue, Chicago, Illinois."

"You published an ad for me in your WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and the results were positively wonderful. The publication with the ad in it came to me on a Monday, and the following Friday, I received a letter from a lady telling me of the person I was searching for. It has been the means of putting me in touch with my father whom I had never seen. The ad was for Jules Verne Allen. Words fail me in expressing my gratitude. Your missing department is a truly wonderful thing, and the world-wide circulation of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE is the whole cause of its success.

"I have so much faith in your department that I am giving your address to a very dear friend who has a brother whom she would like to locate. Again I thank you for your kindness in publishing my ad. If there is any possible way of boosting WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE more than ever here in my little town, I certainly will do it. I will never be able to repay you for this wonderful service. Ethel Schran, Rutland, North Dakota."

THE WEST

And What Do YOU Know About It?

Here is a chance to test, and, at the same time, increase your knowledge of the West. Take these questions now, one at a time, and write your answers down during the coming week. In the next issue, right here, at the bottom of the last page of the Round-up, you'll find all of the questions in this week's issue correctly answered. Compare your answers with the right ones and mark yourself accordingly. If you have read your WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE with care during the past years, you should have little trouble in getting mighty good marks on these questions, for nearly all of them are based on information given in articles and stories that have been printed in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

Then get your best-thinking Stetson on, your pencil out, and go to it.
More questions next week.

1. When a cowboy says that he knows as much about a thing as a hog does a side saddle, what is meant?.....
2. What's "tellin' a windy?".....
3. Give the two chief rivers in Kansas.....
4. When "hair is in the butter," what has happened?.....
5. What wind in the Northwest melts the snow and ice in a few hours?.....
6. Two States have the wild rose for their State flower,.....and.....
7. When a cowboy gets dressed up and "sits the bag," where is he going?.....
8. Why is a man "heifer branded" at some dances?.....
9. What great pioneer lived the last years of his life at Fulton, Missouri?.....
10. How is a green hand referred to on the ranch?.....

Answers to last week's questions. 1. An object of useless luxury. 2. Because it is dry. 3. Following you. 4. Doing your best. 5. California. 6. Information on the subject in question. 7. Because he then has plenty of money. 8. Corn. 9. When a man mysteriously disappears—is killed by his enemy and buried under a pile of rocks. 10. Boiled, biled, and bald-faced.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

THE DESERT PILOT

By Max Brand

Around the Reverend Reginald Oliver Ingram the author has woven an enthralling story, rich in vivid character sketches, deep knowledge of human nature, and the dry, terse wit of the West. The description of the hanging of Chuck Lane is a restrained and poignant piece of writing.

IN SEARCH OF A FATHER

By Howard E. Morgan

This unusual trail leads through danger, doubt, and difficulty to happiness and home.

HAPPY DAYS AHEAD

By Ray Humphreys

"Trimmin' the smart Alecks is no child's play," said the judicious Jodey—and learned that it was also something to make the judicious grieve.

AND OTHER STORIES

ORDER YOUR COPY NOW



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.

CALIFORNIA is a big State, but we're guessing that this hombre knows what he's talking about when he tells us that, taking his cabin as a base, one can swing an arc of about two hundred and seventy degrees and not touch a town or railroad—not even a logging camp. Yes, we guess he must be right when he says that his ranch is in the middle of the wildest spot in the State of California. This is what this Gangster has to say about himself:

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My partner and I live on a six-hundred-and-forty-acre ranch in a sparsely settled part of the country that is quite mountainous. The country is heavily wooded in spots, and quite barren in others, and our nearest neighbor is about ten miles away. The cattle of the several ranches roam at will over the mountains, and this is one part of the country where there are no fences. There are a number of line shacks spread throughout the mountains, some of them built fifty years ago, and some more recently. All are located about twenty or twenty-five miles from us, and there are cabins where one can be assured of food and shelter when one is forced to spend the night in the "back country."

Using our cabin as a base, you can swing

an arc of a circle covering about two hundred and seventy degrees and extending out one hundred and fifty miles and you will not hit a town or railroad of any sort or size. Not even a logging camp. It is the wildest spot in the State of California.

I've worked on but three ranches outside of our own—the Bar Two B, A Box O, and the Hatchet V, all located in the neighborhood of Salinas. I rode in the rodeo of 1922 at Salinas, but all I got was a busted arm, having been thrown from a "tough one." I've worked in a logging camp and mill, and maybe some time I'll take you-all for a trip from one end of California to the other. I've crossed the good old U. S. A. twice and have been in southern Canada. I've also been in Mexico, Panama Canal Zone, and Cuba. If any of The Gangsters want to know some of my experiences, let 'em write. I'll answer.

ROBERT E. CAMP.

209 Elm Street, San Mateo, California.

Don't let us forget, Gangsters, that this is the time to make plans for the summer and fall trips. The spring season is fast progressing.

DEAR MISS RIVERS AND GANG: My wife and I are planning a trip through the Northwest into Saskatchewan, Canada, and want to leave some time the last of May. We would like to get some information from The Gang as to the route to take, and also

the working conditions along the way. I'm a carpenter by trade, and thought I might pick up some work along the way. I'm planning on getting there for the wheat harvest. We'll appreciate every letter we get, whether it answers our questions or not. W. E. A.
Care of The Tree.

Here are a couple of breezy hombres.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Away out here in the West there are two plumb sociable correspondents who would appreciate being put on the mailing list. We've hobnobbed with a lot of folks, but after all is said and done, we've concluded that those of The Hollow Tree badge are the ones we'd rather mix with.

Now, Gang, if there are any who would like to know what we think of homesteading and its attributes, pro and con, just have them write to
K-F.

Box 506, Powell, Wyoming.

This Gangster lives in the Land of Black Gold.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: By reason of the rich oil fields, my district, Corsicana, Texas, is called the Land of Black Gold. I've been here for about four years. Was born in Galveston, Texas, and lived there for thirteen years. Went through the 1915 storm, and can tell all about it. I was in Dallas, Texas, going to school, when I heard about the big wages that were being paid in the oil fields. So to this field I came, but found out that it was all bunk about the big wages. I've lots of pictures of oil fires if any one cares to have them.

MARVIN L. CARLISLE.

Corsicana, Texas.

Will some one step up with advice?

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I've been a reader of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and your department for some time. I've been a newspaper reporter for several years in New York City and Newark, New Jersey.

Have noticed, from time to time, that letters in your department ask about going West, et cetera, on a ranch, and that is just what I'm going to ask. I'm a fair rider, and while no husky, am in fair physical shape. I need an outdoor life for a year or so, on a ranch, where I can get horses and plenty of exercise. Do you think any of your Gang can do this for me?

Would like to hear from any who would care to hear about the southwest coast of Florida, Hollywood, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale.

S. A. TOWNSEND.

Care of The Tree.



"I am a Gangster and have my little ol' pin on everything I wear," says Thelma Brown, of Lockney, Texas.

Are you wearing one, too?

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to The Hollow Tree Department, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you a badge. In ordering be sure to state whether you want the pin style or the button for the coat lapel.

Come right in, miss.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE CROWD: May I, a South Dakota prairie girl, join The Gang? I live where one can see nothing but the prairie for miles and miles. There isn't anything like a really good saddle horse for enjoyment, for with a good mount one can skim the prairie in the greatest fashion.

I'd like to hear from some one living in the Black Hills country, South Dakota, or from Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. Any other letters will, of course, be welcomed, too. I'd like very much to hear from some elderly couple or woman who would like to have a girl as companion and helper. I'm twenty-seven, and can lend a hand at outdoor work as well as housework.

MARGUERITTE.

Care of The Tree.

From the Capitol City.

DEAR GANG: I wonder if any of you have ever had a bad case of wanderlust such as I have. But I suppose you all want to drive dog teams in Alaska, ski down the Western hills, and track down big game. But as I'm a girl I don't suppose I'll ever get to do all of these things. I'm eighteen, and next summer I want very much to earn my way about these good old United States. Will some of the girls who have tried making their own

way give me some suggestions? In return I'll tell all I can about the Capitol City.

MARGARET LORING.

622 Jefferson Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

"Can you find space in your columns for a Canadian, over thirty, who is letter hungry?" asks J. A. McIntosh, 417 North Ervay Street, Dallas, Texas. He is a soldier, sailor, prospector, explorer, lecturer, and has led the life of an adventurer, more or less. He's selected Dallas as his home, and expects to remain there. You'll find that he'll always welcome another letter.

Navy man claims attention.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I'm a sailor, and I've been in the navy for five years. Have been in thirty-six of the States and have been in England, Scotland, Holland, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Egypt, Syria, Malta, Greece, Tunis, and Turkey. I'll be glad to give information on the above-mentioned places, but hope to receive correspondence mostly from those who wish to become pen pals. Here's hoping I receive many such letters.

EARNEST HEIDTKE.

U. S. S. *Coghlan*, 326, care of Postmaster, New York City.

Forest rangers, you are much in demand. Please come forward and lend a helping hand.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I hope it is possible, through the old Holla, to secure the proper information as to where applications are filed for work in the forest-ranger service. Up to the present time I've not been very successful in my attempts to get information regarding ranger service.

H. N. P.

Care of The Tree.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: It is my hope and ambition to spend this summer with a forest ranger. I wonder if some of the rangers of our national forests won't write and tell me whether they would be allowed to have a buddy who is interested in becoming a ranger some day.

R. A. KELLEY.

258 Whitney Street, Conneau, Ohio.

Gangster looking for a pard.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I'm a young fellow of

twenty-one who is looking to find a good pard who'd like to take a motor-camping trip of about twelve thousand miles with me.

CARL MATHEWS.

General Delivery, Kansas City, Missouri.

This Gangster wants to hear only from the Canadian Northwest.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: As I'm a resident of northern British Columbia and am keenly interested in all the Canadian Northwest, I hope that my appeal will draw some replies from this country. I would like correspondents from the Arctic Ocean to the boundary line. I will not undertake to answer letters from other Gangsters, as I know there would be more letters than I could possibly handle.

MISS A. D. CRUIKSHANK.

Public Library, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada.

Utah and Nevada, please step forward.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: My husband and I—we are only twenty-one—have hiked and ridden over most of these United States, and are going West again this summer. We've passed through Utah and Nevada, but have never stopped in either place. This time we plan on spending considerable time in both places, and perhaps we'll locate there. If Utah and Nevada Gangsters will advise us in what towns to stop, and where they think we'll like it best, we'll let our plans be guided by the most favorable information.

MYRTLE CORNISH.

250 West Clemung Place, Elmira, New York.

Missourian is fond of Colorado and Wyoming.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I've lived in several different States, but my preference is for the West. Six years were spent in Denver, Colorado, and some of my trips into the mountains are written indelibly upon my mind. I've also been in Wyoming, and I want to say that I wouldn't have missed the "Frontier Days" for all the world. I suppose, folks, that you'd call me a tomboy, but I'm proud of it. I hope that all the tomboys in the good old United States and Canada will write to me.

MILLIE MILLER.

1514 A North Sixteenth Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

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.

OUR readers do a lot of traveling and mighty little talking, it seems to us, and one at least of my correspondents agrees. W. S. E. is calling for a real old-time experience meeting. "So many of us are seeking our land of opportunity in this great West," writes this Oregonian, "and so many of us do not know where to look. If WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE readers would only turn writers, and tell the rest of us about the places they are familiar with, it might help us all to find where we belong."

This Westerner starts the ball rolling by sending in some interesting facts about his part of the country.

"Vernonia, Oregon, is a sawmill town," says he, "and any one who comes here during the summer months runs a good chance of permanent employment. Land can be bought for ten dollars down and ten dollars a month, and the lower grade of lumber can be had so cheaply that a home can be

easily obtained. Out near Tum Tum, Washington, on Long Lake, twenty-five miles from Spokane, stump land can be bought as low as eight dollars an acre. This land is easily cleared, as the trees are pine and the stumps can be burned out of the ground without the use of explosives. The farms are hilly, but benches are fertile. There are some partly developed farms for sale very cheap. Except for the main highway the roads are bad, and this and the long snowy winters are the chief drawbacks. Some work is being done in the woods near by to help out. Anglers will find good fishing in Long Lake!"

To anybody who wants to join this experience-meeting group and talk right out about his part of the West, a warm invitation is extended.

And here's an invitation for some of you hombres who are interested in homesteading. It comes from a fellow who has had much western experience.

"I've worked on cattle ranches, both in Washington and California, have homesteaded, been a mean horse rider and cow-puncher. At the present time I'm working in Frisco and my future object is to meet up with a real man to get back in the homestead country with me, where I want to start an Angora goat ranch. I'm sure such could be made a paying business. There's some good homestead land left right along beside my three hundred and twenty acres in northeast San Bernardino County, California. The soil will grow all kinds of forage crops and pink beans. There's plenty of grass and bushes for goat range and plenty of water, too. Goats are a good profitable little range animal. I once saw three hundred of them shaved and their crop brought over nine hundred dollars."

All letters sent to "California Joe" will be forwarded to his Frisco address.

Land projects interest all Westerners; whether they are homestead fans, or fans of some other sort. Mining land is the subject that interests J. M. H., of Detroit, Michigan, these days. "Just where are the mines in the Black Hills district located? What is mined there besides gold? Are up-to-date methods employed? Tell me what you know about that region."

The Black Hills are known the world over for their important mining interests. Since their first settlement in 1875, they have yielded more than two hundred and seven million dollars in gold, and of mineral products not less than thirty-five million dollars. One mine, the Homestake, situated at Lead City, is unique in being the world's greatest producer from low-grade ore. The chief gold mining district is in the northern hills in the immediate vicinity of Lead and Deadwood; but considerable mining has from time to time been done in the central and southern hills. Localities about

Custer, Hill City, and Keystone have furnished tin, tungsten, mica, spodumene and amblygonite. Tin is also found in the Bear Gulch district of the northern hills, and tungsten has been produced most abundantly near Lead. Hot Springs has furnished a large amount of building stone of excellent quality. Gypsum is abundant in many places, but the chief shipments have been made from plants situated near Rapid City.

If J. M. H. would like to interest himself in the mining industry, he will profit by a visit to the Black Hills section, where modern methods are used.

From the Black Hills of Dakota to the Canadian frontier is something of a jump, but our next letter, from Beauford Tunnell of Johnson City, Tennessee, asks about those gallant riders of the plains, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. "For some time I have had my thoughts on being a mounted policeman," Tunnell states, "and I want to know how to get in touch with them. For how long a term does one sign up? What are the qualifications? To whom does one make application?"

The term of engagement in the Royal Northwest Mounted Police is for three years' service. Applicants must be British subjects, intelligent, able-bodied men of thoroughly sound constitution, sober and steady, and must produce certificates of exemplary character from reliable persons. They must be able to read and write the English or French languages, be between the ages of eighteen and forty, and have some knowledge of the care and management of horses and be able to ride. The minimum height is five feet eight inches, the minimum chest thirty-five inches, and the maximum weight one hundred and seventy-five pounds. Members of the Force receive, in addition to their pay, free quarters, rations, uniforms and medical attention. In

1920 the Royal Northwest Mounted Police changed its name to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Application to join the Force must be made to the Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa.

This subject of the Mounted Police reminds one naturally enough of the rush to the Yukon back in the '90s, when these faithful enforcers of law kept order in the frontier camps that sprang up over night. Maybe George M. of Spokane had been reading some yarns about that exciting period of Western history when he decided to go to Alaska.

"Tell me the best way to go to Alaska from here, and some interesting trips to take when I get there. I am going there soon on a business trip and I want to see as much of the country as I can."

The best way for George M. to get to Alaska is via the famous Inside Passage, with only about twenty miles of open sea to weather. He can get on the boat at Seattle and land at Skagway. There are some stops en route that are mighty worth while. Among these are Alert Bay, where he will find some unique totem poles; Prince Rupert, the terminus of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad; Ketchikan, the first port in Alaska, famed for its

beautiful salmon stream; Wrangell, with more totem poles; Taku Glacier, a mile long and from two to three hundred feet high, and Juneau, the capital.

Of course George will want to ride on the Yukon River and get a glimpse of the Klondike country. No trip to Alaska would be complete unless it included a jaunt from White Horse to Dawson, that gold camp of romance and adventure that so many writers have yarned about. This trip is a sail of four hundred and sixty-one miles and takes about forty-eight hours. It's a thriller, too; for, to begin with, you're riding on one of the world's greatest rivers, and then it is farther northward than any river trip on this continent, if not in the world.

To get an idea of what the interior of Alaska looks like, George can board the train at Seward. The line he'll take is the Alaska Railroad, built and operated by the United States Government. A journey through magnificently wild mountain and coastal scenery will bring him within full view of Mount McKinley, the highest peak on the North American continent. The next stop we'd suggest is Fairbanks, the center of the famous gold fields, where you can see real placer mining in operation.

All in all, we rather envy George that Alaskan trip!



NEW LOOKOUT STATION FOR STANISLAUS FOREST

A NEW lookout station has been reported as nearing completion on one of the highest peaks in the American camp district near Sonora, California. The structure rises fifty-three feet above the ground in a towering pine on the mountain's crest, and from its observation room, it will be possible to detect the presence of forest fires and other disturbances in a wide area in Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties, outside the boundaries of the Stanislaus Forest. The expense of the new station is borne jointly by the State of California and the United States Forest Service. Previously there was another lookout station in the same locality but it was not so advantageously situated, and from it, the ranger on duty could see only a section of the national forest area.

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 to you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found."

It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

New readers, help these whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

PRYOR, H. W.—He has blue eyes, dark hair, and is five feet four or five inches tall, about forty years old. You were right when you said the West would bring me no luck. Please come to Pueblo, Colorado. P. F., care of this magazine.

PEWETT, Mrs. HAZEL.—Was working at the Goodrich Rubber factory at Akron, Ohio. Her friend, Thelma, who worked with her three years ago, would like to get in touch with her. Please write to Mrs. Thelma Martin, 129 4th Avenue, Huntington, West Virginia.

WOLOSKI.—Andrew Woloski was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. James C. Hurley from the Home for the Friendless, November 27, 1889. He was five years old then, and was given the name of Edward Hurley. Would like to know if I have any near relatives. Please write to Edward J. Hurley, General Delivery, Lansing, Michigan.

TUCKER, JULIA, and MOTHER, DAISY.—Tucker was Julia's maiden name. Her father's name was George and her mother's maiden name was Richardson. The last time I saw Daisy was in Peoria, Illinois, in 1908. Her home was in St. Louis, Missouri, then. Her niece and cousin, Violet, would like to hear from them or from some one that knows where I may write them. Please write to Mrs. Violet Hurley, 500 Leiber Place, care of Mrs. B. Goodrich, Lansing, Michigan.

NASON, EARL E.—Six feet tall, has black hair, ruddy complexion, large nose. World War veteran. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to Mrs. Earl Nason, in care of this magazine.

IRWIN, WILLIAM TATUM.—Usually called Bill. Last heard of in March, 1928, when he had just landed at Seattle, Washington, on his return from Honolulu, H. I. He is twenty years old, about five feet eight to ten inches tall, and has brown eyes and hair. Left home in August, 1922. Please address any information to his mother, Mrs. M. A. Irwin, 206 Stieren Street, Texarkana, Texas.

BOECKMANN.—My grandfather came from Germany when he was a young man, and I would like to get in touch with his people, who are still there. Ernest N. Boeckmann, Box 161, Kerrville, Texas.

SWARTZ, JACK O.—Negro. Five feet tall, medium build. Please send any information leading to his whereabouts to Mr. Bell E. Burns, 7218 Maple Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

HAARA, LEON FRANK.—Blue eyes, blond hair, nearly six feet tall, very quiet disposition. Disappeared from Wilmington, Delaware, July 11, 1924. Please write to Mrs. Leon F. Haara, 109 East Street, Delmar, Delaware.

CARROTS.—Mother ill and wants you. D. married five years. Don't know where K. is. Write or wire. Legs.

RAYE.—Your old pal and sweetheart is still waiting. Write or wire me at Muter's Bakery, Laredo, Texas. Jack.

OPPEGARD, OLAF.—Left home five years ago. Would love to hear from you. Arnold and I were married in 1923. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Hilda Ellingson, 103 Iron Street, Hibbing, Minnesota.

HYMAN, JULIUS, or ROBBINS, JOHN.—Has not been heard from since 1917. Thirty-nine years old, five feet eleven inches tall. Last heard of in Milan, Minnesota. His mother is worried over his absence. Write to Mrs. Eauline Hyman, Council Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey.

WHITMORE, FLORENCE.—Lived in Woodlawn, Birmingham, Alabama, about 1914 or 1915. Her sister had lung trouble. Any one who knows her whereabouts will confer a great favor by writing to her old friend, Virginia Edwards, 347 Halstead Street, Birmingham, Alabama.

PHILLIPS, CLARK.—Last heard of in Prescott, Arizona. About five feet ten inches in height, medium build, and light complexion. Tattooed anchor and star on right forearm, dagger and lady's head on left forearm. About twenty-two years of age and very athletic. Any information leading to his whereabouts would be very much appreciated by Miss Ella Spencer, Ross, Wyoming.

CAMPBELL, S. W. or F. W.—Second mate on ferry running between Oakland and San Francisco, California. Address—Please write to E. M. Dale, 515 Carroll Street, Boone, Iowa.

NORDSTROM, ED.—Last heard from in 1925 at Butte, Montana, where he worked in the mines. Believe he went to California from there. He is single, thirty-three years old, about six feet tall, weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds, medium complexion. He is Swedish and talks with a slight accent. Any one who knows his whereabouts or who has seen him please write to his mother, Mrs. C. G. N., in care of this magazine.

HOGAN, WILLIAM P.—Mysteriously disappeared from his home at 106 Green Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, in August, 1925. Was about fifteen years old, five feet four inches tall, and had light complexion with sandy hair and blue eyes. Please send any information in regard to him to Canby D. Parker, Carrs, Kentucky.

DELORGE, VIOLA.—She was born twenty-six years ago in St. Albans, Vermont, adopted at the age of four months by a family named Calepou, and moved to Canada. She has blue eyes and blue eyes. Her father is anxious to obtain any information about her. Please address Oliver E. Delorge, 1183 State Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

G. L. Los Angeles, is asked to correspond with Box 1127, Mill Valley, California, regarding Superstitious Mountains.

GOLDSBERRY, JOHN.—Sixty-one years old, about five feet eleven inches tall, inclined to stoop. Has blue eyes and black hair. Last seen in Detroit, Michigan, thirty-six years ago. His sister, Kate, would very much like to get in touch with him. Mrs. C. Morrison, 545 Huron Avenue, Port Huron, Michigan.

CANTRALL, VERNA.—Last seen at Hastings, Nebraska, about thirty-two years ago. She was about three years old then. When last heard from she was living with her father, Wyatt Cantrall, and his mother. Her mother and father would like to hear from her. Please address any information to Gertrude B. Caul, 1127 E. Main, Puyallup, Washington.

REYNARD, ALBERT.—Last seen in Portland, Oregon. About fifty-eight years old, light hair, blue eyes, and mustache. He is of medium height and slender. An old friend would like to hear from you. C. A. Harvey, 1163 16th Street, Clarkston, Washington.

ANDERSON, TED.—He is short. His home is in N. M. Won't you please write to your friend, Johnnie Mattingly, Kyans, Indiana?

CAMP, Mrs. FLORENCE, or ED.—Formerly from Kansas and Oklahoma. Last heard of in California. Hate lost their address. Please write to Mrs. G. F. Vaughn, Freshwater, California.

BILLY.—Have your letter from Greenup, Illinois, saying you would soon be with me. What went wrong? I have been worrying. Please write to me, or, better still, come home. Best love. Your wife, G.

HARMAN, HENRY.—Charley and Peg's son. Last heard from at Parkersburg, West Virginia. Will any one knowing the whereabouts of Henry or his kin please write to his niece, Mrs. R. Williamson, Kimbolton, Ohio.

CROWELL, HERBERT BRICE.—About twenty-eight or thirty years old. Will any one who knows his whereabouts or who has met him within the last six years please communicate with his sister, Vera Crowell, 314 Main Street, Ashtabula, Ohio?

GRAY, Mrs. IRENE.—Last heard of at 198 Forrest Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia, where she was staying with a Mrs. Barker. Please write to "Pedro," in care of this magazine.

MIKKELSON, LESTER ALLEN.—Last heard from at Odd Fellows Hall, Dell Rapids, South Dakota. He is now about twenty-three years old; has dark-brown hair and hazel eyes. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his sister and brother, Tillie and Walter Mikkelson, Labett, South Dakota.

SWIFT, Mr. and Mrs. L. N.—Last heard of in Perry Haute, Indiana. Any one knowing the whereabouts of these people please write to Mr. Otto Lewis, Tusculum, Missouri.

SAFFORD, DANIEL.—Twenty-four years old. Left home about the first of November, 1925. He has brown hair, deep gray eyes, middle finger on left hand bent double. Medium height. His name is tattooed on his arm. Any one knowing his whereabouts please notify his mother, Mrs. M. Safford, 441 Galloway Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

THOMAS, B. F.—Fifty-nine years old next April. Last heard from at Riverdale, California, in 1918. Is married and has one daughter, Florence. Any news about him would be greatly appreciated by his niece, Vivian Blausner and Evelyn Thomas, Duke Center, Pennsylvania.

DADDY.—We accept your terms. Write mother, care of Nandy, Irene.

LEWIS, DOVIE DAVIS.—Last heard from at Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1918. If any one knows where she is, tell her to write to "Mamma" to the same town where she wrote last.

MELTON, ADA ORA.—Last heard from in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Later moved to Kansas City and married. If you see this write to an old neighbor, Dormer (Ward) Crutchfield, Russellville, Arkansas.

FORBES, ALBERT JAY.—Formerly of Greeley, Colorado. Sister and daughter now married, very anxious to hear from you. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Cora Forbes Chevrolet, 3613 W. 94th Place, Chicago, Illinois.

ROBERTS, Mrs. R. W.—Formerly Florence D. Hilton. Was married to R. W. Roberts in Detroit, Michigan, in 1899. Was living in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, in 1909, where a daughter, Emily G., was born on May 29th of that year. In the same year the family moved to Detroit, where they lived on Sixth Street near Porter Street. In 1905, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts separated, and Emily was put in a home. Emily is very anxious to find her mother, whom she has not seen since 1905. Write to Emily G. Roberts, P. O. Box 416, Alliance, Ohio.

SMALTZ, ALBERT ARTHUR.—Last seen in Florence, South Carolina. Last heard from in Jacksonville four years ago. About forty years old now. He had a ruddy complexion, light-brown hair, brown eyes, and was about five feet eight or ten inches tall. Your wife is lonely and will welcome you back at any time. Write to G. F. S., in care of this magazine.

PEG.—Write to me at once. Have lost your address. Love as ever. B. J. Box 193, Sulsun, California.

J. L.—Was treated at Doctor Mayo's clinic for lung trouble about six or eight weeks ago, and was told had four or five months to live. Please communicate with a friend, who would like to have news. Mrs. L. Lamb, 537 Strawberry Street, St. James, Wilmot, Manitoba, Canada.

KERR, WILLIAM H.—About forty-nine or fifty years old. Last heard of about four years ago in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Works in railroad office as bookkeeper. Please address any information to S. K. McDonald, 7115 Georgia Road, Birmingham, Alabama, or Mrs. W. H. Kerr, 251 Hill Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

CANTLEBERRY, GRACE.—Last heard of in Seattle, Washington. Have tried to locate you for two years. Write to me at once. E. V. Kennedy, Box 658, Juneau, Alaska.

THOMAS, DOROTHY.—Last heard of at the following address in Chicago, Illinois, Mia Rita Apartments, Michigan Avenue; 1810 West North Avenue; 5140 Michigan Avenue. Any one knowing her whereabouts please write to Miss Rose Galloway, 286 Admiral Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

TURK, IRENE.—Please let me hear from you. Charlotte, same address.

LOWE, ROMEDIA.—Last heard of in 1924 at Fort Mill, South Carolina. Please write to your old friend, Lloyd, in care of this magazine.

SPARKS, JOE.—Last heard from five years ago at Hickman, Arkansas. Your daughter would like to hear from you and your family. Please address Mrs. Geneva Dook, Capitol City Hotel, 163 Marietta Street, Atlanta, Georgia.

RICHARDSON.—Would like to receive information about my father, who left me when I was a child, but who has written to me from different parts of the U. S. A. Recently when he was in Chicago he asked for the following address, requesting a reply: Mrs. Richardson, Pangburn, Arkansas. Father's name was William he married again. Please address any information to R. Richardson, 11 Fielding Street, Paterson, New Jersey.

WEIGEL, MISS E.—Earl, wherever you are, write to me, if only to let me know where you are. Charlie is and talks quite well now. Hasn't written me for a letter. Name.

NEELY, LISTER, HOGIE, and EMMA.—Ratched at Leno, Texas. Emma married the Hoagy and lived at Waxahatchee, Texas. Write to C. M. Neely, 1009 Highland Street, Dyersburg, Tennessee.

BLACK.—Please let me know where you and Gerie are. You miss your baby, Willie, you and Gerie. You write to me a week. Didn't get your letter. Your wife, Emily Coombs.

COLLINS, MICHAEL.—Son of the late Patrick Collins of Emmorette. Height about five feet six inches, dark complexion. Hair from the Mountain. Michigan. All information will be welcomed by his brother, James Collins, 467 Chamberlain Street, Peterboro, Ontario, Canada.

FOX, S. F.—Last heard of in Bakersfield, California, in February, 1917. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his brother, Jesse, at Page, Washington.

STANTON, Mrs. ANNA.—Was in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1916. Has a little boy, Floyd, by a former marriage. I now have home in Vallejo, California. Have never married. Please write to Ira Herman Spangler, 1214 Kentucky Street, Vallejo, California.

JEAN, BURRIS ARNOLD.—He is seventeen years old, weighs one hundred and thirty pounds, and is five feet five inches tall. Has dark complexion with black hair, lightly sprinkled with gray, dark eyes, heavy eyebrows, with thin scar through one. Please come home. Mother and I need you. Write in care of this magazine. Burton.

HACKETTBACK, WILLIAM.—Last seen in Brooklyn navy yard. Discharged in 1922. Please write to Joseph G. Bauer, 604 S., Smallwood Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

STEVENS, Sergeant AL.—Served in the 1106th Aero Squadron in France. Last heard of in East Chicago, Illinois. Rumored that he returned to France. Please write to your old buddy, Sergeant James P. Means, 1819 Nevada Street, Wellsville, Ohio.

MERRILL, GEORGE.—Veteran. Your old buddy is very anxious to hear from you. James F. Means, 1819 Nevada Street, Wellsville, Ohio.

HICKS, WESLEY.—About eighty-five years of age. Last heard of in Chattanooga, Tennessee, living with his sons, George and Dave Hicks. Any information regarding them will be highly appreciated by their granddaughter and niece, Beatie May Allen, R. F. D. 8, Buford, Georgia.

SWEET, Mrs. JOE.—Last heard of in Ottawa, Canada. Her husband was in the last war and is a boilermaker by trade. Write to your brother, Edmund G. Collyer, Spruce Lake Hotel, Saskatchewan, Canada.

MULLIGAN, SHERIDAN.—Last heard of in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1907. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his sister, Mrs. John McMill, 234 Third Street, East Liverpool, Ohio.

RYAN, CORNELIUS.—Alias Richard Gordon. Last heard of in One-Arched Front Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, forty years ago. Is about seventy years old. Please communicate with E. Ryan, State Hospital, Tewksbury, Massachusetts.

LA RUE, ROBERT K.—Where have you been these three years? Baby Corinne and I miss you. Please write to us. You need not give your address. Your wife, Ethel, Palace Hotel, North Platte, Nebraska.

LA RUE, "BABE."—Please trust me and write to me, regardless of circumstances. Will always love you. Mummy, in care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, JAMES W.—Last heard from in 1912. Was going to South America. Thirty-eight years old, light-brown hair, blue eyes. At one time worked in wheat fields near Hannaford, North Dakota. Please write to your mother, in care of this magazine.

WILSON, MRS. ETTA, or MRS C. B.—Last heard from at Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. Has three children, Harold, Agnes, and Wilfred. Please write to your friend of "Soo Hill" days, Mrs. Harvey Davidson, of Peshtigo, Wisconsin, care of Potato Rajid.

GEORGE F.—Regardless of all, I still care. Please let me hear from you. "B." care of this magazine.

LILLIAN.—All is forgotten. Write to mother and father at Centralia, Washington, Route 1, Box 356.

WEAVER, ALBERT D.—Left home from Boardman, Oregon, August 4, 1926. Heard last that he left Yakima, Washington, about September 25, 1926. Thirteen years old, five feet one and one half inches tall, gray eyes, light-brown hair, medium complexion. Scar in left corner of mouth; slightly lame in one leg. Please come home or write. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Ruth F. Weaver, 609 North Wasas Street, Elkhart, Washington.

KEAMAN, JIMMY.—Last heard of at 3433 Fullerton Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. About twenty-three years old. Tall, dark hair, brown eyes. His old pals from Michigan would like to hear from him. Please write to C., care of this magazine.

HANSON, LILLIE.—Of Babcock, Wisconsin. Her daughter, born September 15, 1907, and adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Orval Brown of Babcock, Wisconsin, is anxious to hear from her. Please write to Nellie, in care of this magazine.

EAPNON, EMMA.—Still here and am awaiting for you. Please write to Detroit, Lawrence, 2514 South Ninth Street, St. Louis, Missouri.