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STREET & SMITH'S

APRIL 28

Western Story

Magazine
EVERY WEEK

A
COMPLETE
NOVEL
BY
W.C. TUTTLE





"MY OWN CODE GAVE ME

this raise"

"A LITTLE over a year ago I adopted a code covering my spare time. I decided to systematically devote a portion of it to improving my training, in the thought up-to-date knowledge is an ace in the hole. My hunch was right! That International Correspondence Schools course is directly responsible for this raise. And the way the boss talked, another one is not so far away."

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Vol. CXXIX Contents for April 28, 1934 No. 6

TWO NOVELS

The Fighting Kid	<i>W. C. Tuttle</i>	9
Fooled To Fortune	<i>E. W. Chess</i>	74

TWO SERIALS

Gun Gift	<i>Max Brand</i>	50
Part Six		
The Barking Dog	<i>Charles Wesley Sanders</i>	112
Part One		

SHORT STORIES

Patriarch of the Peaks	<i>Frank Richardson Pierce</i>	44
Biffalo Bull's Swallow Tale	<i>Roland Krebs</i>	67
No Cow Pony	<i>H. Fredric Young</i>	96
Idaho's Big Idea	<i>Hugh F. Grinstead</i>	104

AN ARTICLE

Cowboy Lingo	<i>Ramon F. Adams</i>	126
(Continued from Last Week's Issue)		

MISCELLANEOUS

Uncle Sam Wants His Unfenced	66	Sunlight Runs Beacons	95
Raising Stiff-kneed Goats	73	Tombstone Looking Up	103
Jumping Frog Contest Revived			125

DEPARTMENTS

The Round-up	<i>The Editor</i>	129
Mines And Mining	<i>J. A. Thompson</i>	131
The Hollow Tree	<i>Helen Rivers</i>	133
Where To Go And How To Get There	<i>John North</i>	136
Guns And Gunners	<i>Lieut. Charles E. Chapel</i>	139
Missing		141

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Can You Find 5 Faces?

It is fun to look for the hidden faces in the trees, clouds, etc., in the picture at the right. Are your eyes sharp enough to find them? Some look straight at you, some are upside down—others are sidewise. It is not as easy as some people may think, but don't give up—keep looking and you may find them. When you do, mark them and send your answer right away. Quick!

Many people have received big cash prizes from companies with whom I have been associated. Some have received several thousand dollars. Names gladly furnished on request. Answer today and see for yourself if you can win the first prize. Oh Boy! what you could do with \$2,250.00 all in cash at one time. I will be glad to pay it to you if you are adjudged the winner.

Hurry—mark the 5 faces you find, send your answer quick. You may be the one to receive the \$2,250.00 prize.



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FOR Promptness \$1,250.00 EXTRA
or a total of \$2,250 if you are prompt and win 1st prize.

Remember, send not one penny with this coupon—all you do now is to find 5 faces, if you can, and mail the coupon. We will answer you right away and tell you how you stand.

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My name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

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33x4.75-19		2.45	0.95	29x5.50-19		3.35	1.15
29x4.75-20		2.50	0.95	30x6.00-18		3.40	1.15
29x5.00-19		2.85	1.05	31x6.00-19		3.40	1.15
30x5.00-20		2.65	1.05	32x6.00-20		3.45	1.25
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31x4	2.95	0.85	34x4 1/2	3.45	1.15
32x4	2.95	0.85	30x5	3.65	1.35
33x4	2.95	0.85	33x5	3.75	1.45
34x4	3.25	0.85	35x5	3.95	1.55

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Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5 Truck	\$4.25	\$1.95
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32x8 10 ply. Truck	7.95	2.75
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If you are a good, honest person, willing to follow my simple plain instructions you are eligible to handle one of these fine-paying Routes. Earnings begin at once. There is no long wait or delay to get the money you need. You can devote either full or spare time to the business. Even spare-time Route Operators make up to \$5.00 a day. You will really be in business for yourself, with no one to boss you. The work is pleasant, the hours are short, and the profit possibilities are exceptionally large.



Have a PERMANENT ROUTE With a Big Weekly Cash Income

Everybody uses Coffee, Tea, Spices, Extracts, Baking Powder and similar household supplies. They need these things to live. You simply take care of a regular route in your locality, making calls on your customers once a week and keeping them supplied with the things they need. You handle the money and keep a big share of it for yourself. You get all the profits—you don't divide up with anyone. I'll furnish you with hundreds of fine premiums and amazing special bargain offers just to give your customers. Hundreds of people are waiting to be served in many localities.

hard or difficult about the work. There will be no red tape connected with getting started. You won't have to rent a store, buy fixtures, or other high priced equipment to start with.

I FURNISH EVERYTHING
 Just as soon as I hear from you I will send you complete details of the inside workings of this nation-wide Tea and Coffee Route Plan that is taking the country by storm. I will explain just how you go about handling the business. The plans I give you cost me thousands upon thousands of dollars and years of time to prepare. They are time-tried and proven. They have brought quick money relief to hundreds and thousands. Why not to you?

LOOK AT THESE UNUSUAL EARNINGS
 My Tea and Coffee Plans are not an experiment. If you have been working part time or for low wages, this is your opportunity to get more cash immediately—money to pay your bills and live well. Here's what some

have already done: Wm. E. Berkheimer, Pa., cleared \$20.00 in one day and as high as \$90.00 in one week. Stanford Berg, Ind., \$75.00 in one week. Wm. H. Newcomb, N. Y., \$24.00 in one day, \$80.00 in one week. G. V. Budaus, Texas, jumped his income from \$20.00 a week to \$85.00 in a week. These exceptional earnings show the amazing possibilities of the offer I am now making to you. Better send me your name today and find out the great possibilities of my offer.

SEND NO MONEY—JUST NAME

Don't send me a cent. Just rush me your name so I can lay all the facts before you and then you can decide for yourself. My plans are complete. I send you absolutely free the details of my offer. I even furnish brand-new Ford Tudor Sedans to producers as an extra bonus. Send name on coupon or penny postcard. Costs nothing. Do it today.

SPECIAL OPENINGS FOR WOMEN

I have wonderful reports of the success women are having handling Neighborhood Tea and Coffee Routes. Even in their spare time they make as high as \$5.00 a day. The work is light and pleasant. Mrs. Carrie McCalmant, Nebr., had earnings of \$50.00 in a week, despite a sick husband and two children to take care of. Mrs. Jewel Hackett, here in Ohio, decided to try the business and she made \$33.00 in seven hours. These are a few of the hundreds of exceptional earnings reported, showing what can be done with my plan.

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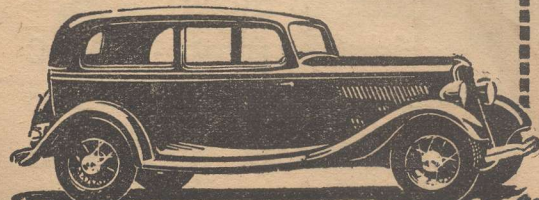
MONEY FOR YOU AT ONCE

My amazing new Tea and Coffee Route Plans provide for your having immediate cash earnings. If you are honest and reliable and willing to take good care of the customers on one of these Routes, then you are just the person I am looking for. You will start in your own locality, right near where you live. There is nothing

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I furnish my producing Route Operators with brand-new Ford Tudor Sedans as an extra reward or bonus. This is not a

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Name

Address

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 (Please Print or Write Plainly)



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29x4.40-20	2.35 .55	30x3 1/2	2.35 .75
29x4.50-21	2.40 .85	31x4	2.39 1.00
29x4.75-19	2.48 .85	32x4	2.35 .85
29x4.75-20	2.50 .95	33x4	2.35 .85
29x5.00-19	2.55 1.05	34x4	2.25 .85
29x5.00-20	2.55 1.05	32x4 1/2	2.45 1.15
28x5.25-18	2.90 1.15	33x4 1/2	2.45 1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95 1.15	34x4 1/2	2.45 1.15
29x5.25-20	2.95 1.15	35x5	3.05 1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25 1.15	35x5	3.75 1.45
29x5.50-18	3.25 1.15	35x5	3.95 1.65
29x5.50-19	3.25 1.15		
30x5.00-18	3.40 1.15		
31x6.00-19	3.40 1.15		
32x6.00-19	3.45 1.25		
33x6.00-21	3.65 1.25		
32x6.50-20	3.75 1.35		

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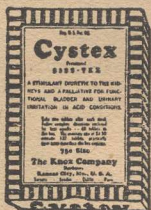
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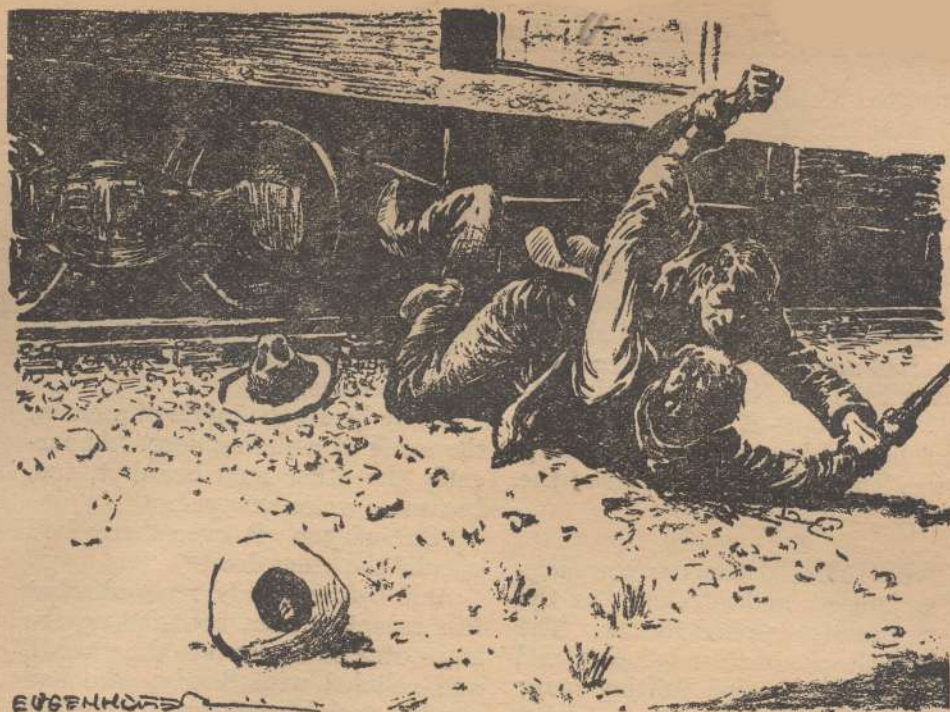
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The FIGHTING KID

By W. C. TUTTLE

Author of "Western Will," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A RECOVERED GUN.

A PASSENGER express roared down through the Arizona hills, bucking a head wind, which sand-scoured the sides of the dim Pullman cars, and caused the hunched figure of "Sandy" Shores to hunch still lower on the blind-baggage steps. His old hat was pulled low over his eyes, his collar held close around his mouth and throat by his two hands, while the wind, whistling around the rear of the engine tender, cut through his thin clothes.

Beneath him the steel rails sang,

and the monotonous *clickety-clack, clickety-clack* of the wheels beating over the rail joints caused him to chant bitterly to himself, "Goin' home, goin' home, goin' home."

Going home! Home from a penitentiary, where they had caged him for a year. Going home with a parole paper in his pocket, which said that every thirty days he must report to the nearest peace officer. Every thirty days for four years. A week before he had been released on parole, he received an almost illegible scrawl from "Idaho" Jones, saying that Sandy's father had been shot from ambush, and that they had buried him on the hill.

There was something else in that

letter, but Sandy had not been able to decipher it. The soft-pencil scrawl had been blurred by a dirty thumb, but he could read the word "Elsie," and it seemed that the last word might be "Tom."

Elsie Landis had been Sandy's sweetheart. She was the daughter of "Big Buck" Landis, the sheriff, who had arrested Sandy for rustling calves from the Rafter P cattle outfit. And Tom—if it was the only Tom he had known in that country—was Tom McCall, foreman of the Rafter P.

SUDDENLY the car couplings jangled and creaked, as the engineer applied the air. The whistle shrieked in Sandy's ears, and he wondered if some drifting range cattle had broken through the right-of-way fence and were down in the cut along the track.

It was an uphill grade through this long cut, and the train was rapidly slowing to a stop. Sandy was not curious. He judged it was still ten or fifteen miles to Gun Sight City, and he had no liking for a walk of that distance. They were stopped now, but all he could hear was the labored exhausts of the big engine ahead of him.

Then he heard voices on the right side of the train, and slid to the lower step on the opposite side, ready to drop off in the darkness, if anybody came his way. After a few moments he heard voices again, one of them apparently very vehement over something.

Then the voices came more plain; coming to him from beneath the express car. He heard a man saying: "We better cut this car loose."

A voice replied: "We'll pull the job right here. Tell him to open that door, before we blow the damn thing open."

This order was punctuated by a pistol shot, followed by an oath. A voice said:

"Fool—comin' up here with a lantern."

"Open the door, Crowley," said another voice. "This is Cap Smalley. They'll dynamite it if you don't."

"Ain't the fool got any brains?" rasped a voice.

Sandy heard the rattle of a chain, the creak of a sliding door. Apparently the other men heard it, too, because a voice snapped:

"One of you git over there; he's openin' the other door!"

And before Sandy realized what this meant, a man bounded up the steps, started to jump to the ground, and collided with Sandy, who had partly straightened up. Together they pitched off the train and went rolling in the gravel.

Sandy was partly stunned, but he grasped the bandit's gun and twisted it from his hand. A shotgun roared from the partly open express-car door, and a load of buckshot tore into the ground near them. The messenger's aim was very poor. A gun roared on the other side of the car, and the messenger crashed the door shut.

Sandy was nearly on his feet when the bandit made a lunge at him, but he flung himself aside, and the man went sprawling. A moment or two later Sandy eased himself past the pilot of the engine, below the beams of the powerful headlight. He could see the flash of shots on that side, as he plunged into the shadows of the cut.

One of the men was yelling an order, and another man came over the rim of the cut, plunging down past Sandy, showering him with gravel, and ran heavily toward the train. Sandy clawed his way to the

top, crouched behind a jumble of brush, trying to get his bearings.

Not over a hundred feet away, apparently tied to the right-of-way fence, were a number of dark objects—the horses of the train bandits. Instinct told Sandy that this last man, left to handle the get-away horses, had gone to lend a hand with the actual holdup.

Sandy ran over the uneven ground, clawed his way through the barbed-wire fence, and went up to the horses. One of them nickered to him, and he laughed softly as he untied the rope. Shoving his newly acquired gun inside the waistband of his pants, he swung into the saddle, reined away from the fence, and rode off slowly, studying the familiar outlines of the distant hills in the starlight.

THE rattle of pistol shots came to his ears, but he paid no heed. The joy of being back again on the starlit range, the feel of a good horse under him, the wind sweeping through the sage, made him forget that those men were holding up, or at least attempting to hold up that train.

He forgot his wrinkled, dirty clothes, his nondescript hat, frayed shoes. Nothing seemed to matter now. He was back where a man may be free to ride to the sunset's rim. He could feel the weight of the big Colt gun inside his waistband—and loved it.

At an old cattle crossing he rode across the tracks. Far down the track he could see the beams from the engine headlight. Joshua trees, the gargoyles of the desert land, seemed to wave a greeting with rheumatic limbs, and he waved back at them.

Here he struck a broad cattle trail. Lifting himself in the saddle,

he sent the horse at a mile-eating gallop, heading for little Hidden Valley and the Forked S Ranch. It was long after midnight when Sandy rode in at the little adobe ranch house. Moonlight silvered the hills now. The ranch house was dark when Sandy dismounted.

"He-e-e-ey!" he yelled loudly. "Hello, Idaho!"

For a full minute, Sandy waited for an answer. Then he called again, and a soft voice replied from an open window:

"You git out of here, before I turn you into a angel."

"Idaho, don'tcha know me? This is Sandy Shores."

"Don't lie to me, you crippled crawler." There was a deadly menace in the old man's voice.

"I'm not lyin', Idaho," replied Sandy. "Don'tcha recognize my voice? I'm not lyin', Idaho."

"Well, I'll be a belly-crawlin' reptile, if it don't sound like who you say you are, feller. Wait'll I light a lamp, and then you can come in, with yore hands in the air."

"All right, old-timer."

The lamp was lighted. Sandy heard the old man unbar the door as he came up the steps to the front door. Against the opposite wall stood Idaho Jones, a sawed-off shotgun tensed at his hip, his gnarled old hands gripping it tightly. Idaho was tall, thin, with a totally bald head, deeply lined face, decorated with huge eyebrows and a long, hawklike nose. Just now he was clad in faded, red woolen underwear, which bagged dismally.

They looked closely at each other for several moments, and the old man relaxed his grip on the gun.

"Sandy, it's you, shore as hell!" he gasped huskily.

Sandy went swiftly across the room, and their hands met. Un-

heeded tears ran down the old man's cheeks, but he was trying to laugh.

"Them clothes——" he choked. "Sandy, you look like hell."

"I been wondering," said Sandy, a catch in his voice, "how long you've had them red woolens."

They both laughed weakly. Idaho barred the door and placed his gun on the table.

"How didja ever bust loose, Sandy?" he asked. "And how close are the officers?"

"I'm out on parole, Idaho. No officers chasin' me. Once upon a time dad done a favor for the man who is now the governor of this State. I reckon he's tryin' to pay it back by parolin' me. Anyway, I'm here."

"Gosh, I'm glad, Sandy. But how didja git here?"

They sat down together, and Sandy told about the train holdup.

The old man grunted with amazement, as Sandy told of grappling with the bandit, taking away his gun, and later taking one of their horses.

"I wonder how much they got, Sandy?" he said.

"I wasn't interested, Idaho."

"Uh-huh. At that, I'll betcha you could have routed 'em."

"Listen, Idaho," said Sandy. "Suppose I'd have been wounded or caught—and me with parole papers in my pocket."

"Yeah, that's right. Sa-a-a-ay!" Idaho was staring at the butt of the gun Sandy had taken from the bandit. "Lemme see that gun."

SANDY leaned back and removed the weapon. He started to hand it to Idaho, but stopped and looked closely at the handle. He lifted his eyes and stared at Idaho, an expression of amazement on his lean face.

"My gun!" he exclaimed huskily. "The gun the law took away from me. Why, there's the silver 'S' that I inset in them bone handles."

"She's yore gun, Sandy," said Idaho. "Yore gun—in the hands of a train robber."

Sandy laid the gun on the table. "That can wait," he said softly. "Tell me about dad."

Idaho rubbed his stubbled chin, and a great sadness came to his eyes as he replied:

"It was early mornin', Sandy. I was a-gettin' breakfast. He was down at the corral, saddlin', when I called him. He had knotted a new rope and was trying to get the kinks out of it. He drug it up from the corral, stopped out by the kitchen doorway, and was a-lookin' at the hondo.

"I heard the bullet hit him. I jist don't remember a-hearin' of the report. I dropped a skillet of bacon and jumped out there, but he was already down. He tried to say somethin'—but he couldn't.

"I knowed he was dead, but I put him in the house and ripped hell-for-leather agoin' to Gun Sight City for a doctor and the sheriff. But neither one done any good. Doc Leveen said he never knowed what hit him."

Sandy sat there, staring at the floor. Sandy was only twenty-five, but looked older. He was of medium height, lithe, muscular. His eyes were very blue, his nose slightly hooked, his mouth wide, but thin-lipped, above a strong chin. His close-cropped, sandy-colored hair showed a tendency to curl.

"Every time I go to town," continued Idaho, after a long silence, "the sheriff rides herd on me."

Sandy lifted his head and looked at the old man.

"Why does he do that?"

"'Cause I done told him that the first chance I got, I'd send Dave Pierce and any of his Rafter P outfit the hot end of a bullet, that's why. They sent you to the penitentiary and they killed Jim Shores, the squarest man that ever lived."

Sandy nodded slowly.

"I got yore letter, Idaho. There was somethin' in it about Elsie Landis, wasn't there? It was kinda blurred on the letter."

"She's agoin' to marry Tom McCall."

After a long pause Sandy said, "He's still foreman for the Rafter P, ain't he?"

"Yeah, the crook! And after all the dirty work them Rafter P fellers has done, Dave Pierce went to yore father's funeral."

"Nice of him," said Sandy.

"Nice! Comin' there to gloat. With you in the penitentiary and yore father dead, he'd be able to buy in the Forked S and get the water he's been wantin' for years. But yo're back now, Sandy; thank God. How about somethin' to eat?"

"Eat? Idaho, I haven't had a meal for twenty-four hours. I'm as empty as Limpy Lucas's head. That's funny. Why, I ain't thought of Limpy Lucas since I left here. How is he gettin' along?"

"Same as ever," said Idaho, as he tugged on his pants. "Still runnin' his ranch, I reckon. Last time I seen him, he said he was a-thinkin' of gettin' some goats. Said there was money in goat milk."

"Poor devil," said Sandy. "Queer ideas."

"Yeah, queer," agreed Idaho. "Innercent bystander. Yore father done lots of good turns for Limpy. Givin' the devil his due, so has Dave Pierce; but neither one was to blame for Limpy gettin' hurt. When yore father and Pierce cut loose at each

other, Limpy ducked in between 'em. At least, that's what everybody said, and it must be true. That was ten, twelve years ago. Time shore flies, Sandy. Well, I'll wrangle a flock of ham and eggs and coffee."

"That's great," said Sandy. "I'll put up that horse."

"Plenty hay and oats in the stable. In the mornin' we'll have a look at that horse and saddle. Mebbe we can figure out who owns 'em. I'm shore glad yo're back, Sandy."

"Mebbe you think I ain't."

Idaho rattled a stove lid as he started to build a fire. The door closed behind Sandy, and the old cowboy's mouth twisted in a grin.

"God," he said softly, "you shore heard me. Three times hand-runnin' I've asked you for this: 'Bring back that fightin' kid'—and he's back."

CHAPTER II.

QUICK ON THE TRIGGER.

THE passenger train, an hour late, brought word of the attempted holdup to Big Buck Landis, the sheriff. Four men had attempted to rob the express car, but the messenger had refused to open the door, and, according to the engine crew, the robbers had either lost, or had forgotten to bring detonating caps, in order to blast down the car door. One of them had shot and wounded an inquisitive brakeman; and after trying every means to induce the messenger to open the door, they shot the door full of holes, gave it up as a bad job, and rode away.

The messenger told of opening the door on the opposite side from where the robbers were working, and seeing two men, presumably members

of the band, on the ground, apparently fighting each other. He said he fired a hasty shot at them, after which he closed and locked the door. He did not believe he had wounded either of them.

The sheriff, summoned from his home, listened to all this, and went back home to bed. He realized the futility of going down there in the darkness. The bandits would be miles away from the spot. His deputy, Ponca Price, had gone out to the Rafter P Ranch, and was probably in a poker game. Morning would be soon enough to make an investigation, anyway, decided the sheriff.

SANDY SHORES slept late that morning, and when he awoke, Idaho Jones was sitting on the edge of the bed, smoking a cigarette. Sandy blinked at him, looked all around the room, and settled back luxuriously in the blankets.

"It ain't a dream, after all, Idaho," he said. "I tell you, I was scared to wake up. Is breakfast ready?"

"I can cook her in about two shakes," replied Idaho. "The first thing I want to tell you is that yore horse and saddle are gone."

Sandy sat up quickly.

"Gone? You mean——"

"Yessir; gone—went. Not a horse in the stable. I was down there about six o'clock, kinda anxious to have a look at that outfit; but they was gone."

Sandy sank back in his blankets, frowning thoughtfully. He remembered that the door of the express car was open and that the light from the car was on them for several moments. He smiled slowly.

"Idaho, I reckon I took that gun away from somebody who recognized me. When one of their horses

was missin', they figured I had it and that I'd head for this ranch, so they trailed along behind me and took it away."

"That must be what happened," agreed Idaho.

After breakfast Sandy saddled a horse and rode to Gun Sight City. It was a typical, down-at-the-heel cow town, but to Sandy it was a wonderful place. He tied his horse in front of the sheriff's office and walked boldly in. Both the sheriff and deputy were there.

Big Buck Landis was a huge man, with iron-gray hair, a walruslike mustache, and a booming voice. Ponca Price, the deputy, was a lean, lanky cowboy from Oklahoma, dark as an Indian. Ponca had buck teeth, and he seemed forever trying to make his lips meet over them.

The two officers stared at Sandy, then looked at each other, as though each of them sought confirmation from the other.

"Yeah, it's me," said the young cowboy.

The sheriff got to his feet, a grudging smile on his face.

"It shore looks like you, too," he said, not ungraciously. "When and how didja get out of the pen, Sandy?"

"When don't make no difference," replied Sandy. "Here's my papers, Buck."

He handed the parole papers to the sheriff and turned to Ponca.

"Why don't you say somethin', Ponca?" he asked.

"Why, I—I don't reckon I could think of anythin'. How are you, Shores?"

"So they paroled you, eh?" said Landis. "Well! Lucky for you, eh?"

"I'm duly appreciative," replied Sandy. "I served one out of five."

"Well, I reckon a year in there

gives a feller plenty time to figure out that crime don't pay."

"You ain't preachin' to me, are you, Buck?" asked Sandy.

The sheriff shook his head. "A lot of good that would do. What are yore plans?"

"Oh, I reckon I'll keep on runnin' the Forked S. Me comin' back won't make Dave Pierce very happy, but I'm not worryin' about his feelin's, Buck."

"I don't reckon you ever did, Sandy. You'll keep Idaho Jones?"

"Why not?"

"Well, he's been talkin' pretty loud lately. Says he's goin' to massacre all the Rafter P outfit the first time he has a chance."

"Don't the Bible say somethin' about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?"

The big sheriff snorted and turned back to his desk.

"The sooner you quit fightin' the Rafter P outfit, the better you'll be off."

"Meanin' that I ought to crawl to Dan Pierce and say, 'Mr. Pierce, I'm sorry I've acted the way I have.'"

"No, I don't reckon Dan wants you to crawl up to him."

"I hope he does."

"Why do you hope that?"

"So the man can always have somethin' to hope for."

"Well, Sandy, all I can say is that I hope you behave. You've had yore lesson. And the first time you break that parole, back you go."

"Is that so? All due respect to you as an officer, Buck; but when I bust that parole, neither you nor any other officer in Arizona will ever send me to the pen again. You may plant me on the hill, but you'll never cage me again."

Sandy turned and strode from the

office, but turned quickly and went back inside again.

"Buck, when you arrested me, you took my gun. I want it."

The big sheriff frowned thoughtfully, started to open a drawer of his desk, but turned back to Sandy.

"It must be at yore ranch," he said. "Ponca gave it to yore father after you went away."

"I gave it to him here at the office," added Ponca. "He said he wanted it, so I gave it to him."

"Well, that's all right then," said Sandy. "Thanks."

HE left the office and walked up the street, where he met "Limpy" Lucas. Limpy was a queer character. Victim of two bullets in a gun fight between Jim Shores and Dave Pierce, which left him crippled in his right leg, and not just right mentally, one bullet having cracked his skull.

Limpy wore his hair long, and had some queer ideas in dress. He owned a little ranch, where he batched, raised a few cattle, chickens, and a lot of worthless dogs and cats. He stopped short at sight of Sandy and waited for the young cowboy to join him.

"Hyah, Limpy," said Sandy, holding out his hand.

Limpy shook hands with him in a detached sort of a way, a puzzled expression in his faded blue eyes. Then he began counting on his fingers. He counted one finger, stopped, and twisted his thin face thoughtfully. Then he counted another finger, shook his head, and then counted the other three quickly.

"I was only away one year, Limpy," said Sandy.

"Only one year? That's right. They give you five, didn't they?"

"Yeah, but they let me out in one

year, Limpy. How's things at yore ranch?"

Limpy brightened visibly. "Fine. Yeah, I reckon I'm gittin' on. Do you know, somebody was tellin' me about ostriches. Them there feathers are costly, they tell me. Elsie Landis wears one on her hat. I dunno—mebbe I'll git me a herd of 'em—I dunno."

"Elsie Landis wears one, eh?" said Sandy.

"Awful purty one," said Limpy. "She's goin' to wed with Tom McCall, they tell me. You know Tom, don't you?"

"Yes, I know him, Limpy," said Sandy.

"Great big devil, Tom is. He could squash me with one hand."

"How are you and the Rafter P outfit gettin' along, Limpy?"

Limpy grinned slyly. "They ain't foolin' me with any dimes."

Sandy shook his head, and his lips tightened. Dimes! They were the evidence against Sandy—damning evidence. Suspecting that young calves, newly weaned and unbranded, were being stolen, Pierce and McCall had taken calves, cut small slits through the skin of their briskets and inserted ten-cent pieces.

With a number of witnesses they examined newly branded Forked S calves, and found the dimes they had placed there. It was conclusive evidence that Sandy Shores had stolen the calves, as he had sworn to personal ownership, before the investigation. The calves had been marked with a running iron.

"You remember the dimes, do you, Limpy?" asked Sandy.

"Sure. But they can't fool me. I won't take nobody's calf."

"That's fine, Limpy."

"I look for 'em," confided Limpy. "Ever' once in a while I rope a calf

and look for dimes. Easy money. But I ain't found any."

"I'm back now; mebbe you'll find some."

"Well, I'll keep lookin'. See you later."

SANDY hitched up his chaps and started up the street. He was wearing the same clothes he had worn before his arrest—blue shirt, a faded, scarlet neckerchief, overalls, high-heeled boots, and wide-skirted chaps, with big silver conchas. On his head he wore a broad Stetson, which had cost him the price of a good steer.

As he came to the front of the post office, Elsie Landis met him, face to face. She had a package in her hands, but at sight of him it fell unheeded to the sidewalk. The color quickly drained from her face, and she stared at him wide-eyed. The shock of seeing him was almost too much for her nerves. She knew he was in the penitentiary—and here he was, dressed as he always dressed, unchanged, free.

"It's me, Elsie," he said softly. "I'm home again."

"Sandy?" she whispered weakly.

"I'm sorry I scared you, Elsie. You see, I—I thought mebbe somebody else would tell you that I was back."

"Nobody told me, Sandy."

"Well, I don't reckon anybody knowed I was back."

"But how——" Elsie hesitated.

"Parole," explained Sandy. "I got back last—yesterday."

She nodded. Sandy picked up her package and gave it to her.

"You knew about—about your father?" she asked.

He nodded. "Idaho wrote me."

"I'm so sorry, Sandy."

"Thank you, Elsie. I was in to see yore father a while ago."

"There was an attempted train robbery last night. Dad and Ponca rode down there this morning. The robbers failed to get anything."

Two riders were approaching them, and Sandy turned to see Dave Pierce, owner of the Rafter P, and Tom McCall, the foreman. Both were big men. McCall was about thirty years of age, a powerfully built man, good-looking, and a capable man with cattle. Pierce was fifty, grizzled, hard-faced, wearing a stubby mustache. Pierce and Sandy's father had been enemies for many years.

Judging from their actions, Sandy's appearance in Gun Sight City was a decided shock to both men, as they kept their eyes on him, even as they dismounted and tied their horses.

"Just a little surprised, eh, Pierce?" queried Sandy.

"Naturally," replied Pierce dryly. "We wasn't expectin' you for at least four years more."

"I'd like to know how you got loose," said McCall.

"I really must be going," said Elsie. "I am glad you are back, Sandy."

"Thank you, Elsie."

The three men watched her go down the street.

"You didn't say how you got loose," reminded McCall.

"I shot all the guards and blew down the walls," replied Sandy.

"Yo're still the smart kid, eh?" said McCall.

"Too smart now to let you misbrand cattle and put the deadwood on me, McCall. From now on I'm ridin' with both eyes open. And don't forget that some day the Rafter P will pay for dry-gulchin' my old dad—you bunch of ten-cent crooks!"

SANDY turned on his heel and went across the street to his horse, his lips white with anger, Pierce and McCall looked at each other questioningly.

"I reckon we'll just have to stop that boy," said McCall.

Pierce's eyes were speculative as he watched Sandy ride away.

"He'll make trouble, sure as hell," said McCall.

Pierce nodded slowly. "He's like his father—quick on the trigger."

"I'm not scared of his trigger," declared McCall.

"You better be," said Pierce dryly. "Jim Shores and Idaho Jones taught him to shoot—and he's bitter against us. He's fast with his gun, Tom. Jim Shores never squeezed a trigger in his life, and he taught Sandy to shoot that a way."

"Never squeezed a trigger? What do you mean?"

"He worked down the trigger pull to a point where the weight of the barrel put on just enough pressure to force the trigger."

"That don't scare me none," declared McCall.

They walked down to the sheriff's office, where Buck and Ponca were discussing Sandy.

"We met him up the street," said Pierce. "He's still full of trouble."

"Hell!" snorted Ponca disgustedly. "One slick-ear kid ain't goin' to worry me none. I'd take him across my knee and spank him with a gun barrel."

"You didn't mention it when he was here," reminded the sheriff dryly.

"Well, the play didn't come up right, Buck."

"No, I s'pose not. But if I was you, I'd lease out that spankin' job."

"Same here," said Pierce. "How'd he get loose, Buck?"

"Paroled."

"Yea-a-ah? It would go kinda hard with him, if he don't behave, wouldn't it?"

"Well, it would slap him right back in the pen for four years."

"I wouldn't worry about *him* any more." Pierce smiled. "He'll go back pretty quick. Sandy Shores can't behave himself."

"It's kinda like this," said the sheriff seriously. "I realize that Sandy is wild—and all that—but I ain't sendin' him back to the penitentiary for somethin' I think he didn't do."

"Let me get that straight," said Pierce coldly. "You ain't hintin' that we might try to railroad him, are you, Buck?"

"We're all good friends, Pierce," replied the big sheriff easily. "Let's try and stay that way."

"That's all right, Buck; I just didn't like the way you said it."

"You ain't backin' Sandy Shores, are you, Buck?" asked McCall.

"I'm neutral, Tom. My job is to back the law."

"Fair enough." Pierce laughed.

"It shore is," agreed Tom. "But everybody knows Buck shoots square."

"Yo're right there," said Ponca. "If everybody shot as square as Buck does, me and him would be lookin' for jobs."

CHAPTER III.

THE SHERIFF'S WARNING.

SANDY plunged into the ranch work. The calf crop of the Forked S had been neglected, and for a week, working from daylight to dark, he and Idaho Jones range-branded calves. But every calf that was roped was carefully examined for concealed markers.

"They got me once, Idaho," said Sandy, "and they'll get me again, if

they can. You know and I know that I never misbranded a calf in my life—but they got me for it. Next time, if there ever is a next time, there won't be any parole for me."

Idaho yanked his rope off a marked calf and turned back to his horse.

"The present generation is a-gettin' soft," he said. "If they'd done that to me, when I was yore age, I'd have took that sawed-off Greener shotgun over there and salivated the whole gang. Up around Pocatelly, Idaho, they shore didn't agitate the Jones fambly much. Paw was a great resenter, and he brung us up that a way."

Sandy laughed softly, as he mounted. "The theory is all right," he said, "but if you'll remember, they took me and my gun, before I knew what it was all about."

"Yeah, that's right. Like I've allus said, the Law down here in Arizony don't give you a even break. Why, up near Pocatelly, when the Law wanted one of us Joneses, the sheriff sent word, 'Git the wimmin and children under cover, 'cause we're a-comin' to law you.'

"It wasn't no sneakin' job, bein' sheriff up there, near Pocatelly. They didn't pack no warrants. No, sir. The sheriff, if he felt that the odds was a little agin' him, put some iron stove lids inside his shirt, sent us word that he a-comin'—and come; that's all."

"What happened to yore pa?" asked Sandy seriously.

"Anxiety."

"What do you mean, Idaho?"

"Well, I'll tell you. The sheriff hadn't been after us for two weeks, and paw got anxious for a battle. He never said nothin' to the rest of us—jist went to town to chide the sheriff for this seemin' neglect. Paw was a heap like that feller Napoleon

—plumb effective, up to the point where he tried to cover too much territory.”

“I suppose he went down in history,” said Sandy.

“No, sir—right on the main street of Pocatelly. But our sheriff wasn’t no namby-pamby sort of officer. He closed the saloons for one whole day, and invited all the Joneses in for the funeral. Why, even the gov’nor of the State got into the spirit of the thing, and sent a comp’ny of soldiers down there to participate. Paw was a old Confederate soldier, and when them soldiers fired a salute over the grave, one of the hilly-billy Joneses, hidin’ out in the brush, thought they was startin’ trouble, and cut loose at ’em. He got a sargint and a loot’nant, before his gun jambed. Them hill-billy Joneses allus was careless about their guns.”

“Did they get him?” queried Sandy.

“Oh, no; they re’lized it was a mistake. Folks up there is tolerant.”

“I reckon we better snag a few more calves,” said Sandy.

“That’s right. I ain’t no hand to retail fambly hist’ry, Sandy; I was jist showin’ you the difference in things. We was men—up there near Pocatelly.”

They went on, finishing up their work for the day, and on the way back to the ranch that night Idaho said:

“Sandy, you ain’t seen Elsie Landis, have you?”

“I saw her the day after I got home,” he replied.

“Was she glad to see you?”

Sandy shook his head. “I don’t reckon so. No reason why she should.”

“Uh-huh. You knowed the weddin’ is to be next Saturday, didn’t you?”

“Next Saturday? No, I didn’t know when it was to be, Idaho.”

“If it was anybody, except one of them Rafter P fellers.”

“Let’s not talk about it any more,” said Sandy.

GOSSIPING tongues in Gun Sight City wondered if Elsie Landis would marry Tom McCall, now that Sandy Shores was back. It angered Big Buck Landis.

“Of course, she’ll marry Tom,” he declared. “She was through with Sandy when he was sent over the road. He ain’t a free man. He won’t be free of the Law for four more years. And more than that, my daughter ain’t marryin’ a jail-bird.”

Limpy Lucas drifted in at the Forked S Ranch. He often stopped to get a free meal. He had heard Buck Landis make his statement, and Limpy told it to Sandy and Idaho, over a meal of beef and beans.

“I’m goin’ to the weddin’,” said Limpy proudly.

“Who asked you?” inquired Idaho.

“Elsie Landis. I asked her if I could come, and she said I could.”

“I reckon it’s a public weddin’.”

“Yeah—in the church. I’m shore goin’. I ain’t never seen a weddin’, but I’m goin’ to see one Saturday night.”

Sandy left the table and went outside. Limpy upended the bean pot on his plate and looked inquiringly at Idaho.

“What’s eatin’ him?” he asked.

“Nothin’ that you’d sabe,” replied Idaho.

“Stummick?”

“I dunno. Somethin’ inside him hurts.”

“Uh-huh.”

Limpy ate thoughtfully, until his plate was empty.

"Sandy used to be stuck on Elsie," he said. "She's a pretty girl."

"She shore is," agreed Idaho.

"Prettiest girl in the world, I reckon."

Limpy's world was very small, so Idaho made no comments. Finally he said banteringly:

"Why don't you git married, Limpy?"

Limpy's eyes narrowed, as he looked at Idaho.

"Yo're makin' fun of me, ain't you?" he asked. "Who'd marry me?"

"Quién sabe?" replied Idaho. "It takes all kinds of folks to make a world."

"I ain't no fool," said Limpy.

"You ought to keep that to yourself," advised Idaho. "You don't want to disappoint everybody, Limpy."

"No," agreed Limpy inanely, "I don't. Well, I'll be driftin'."

"Come in again," invited Idaho. "Glad to have you."

"Shore," said Limpy. "I was a-comin' anyway."

Late in the afternoon Sandy saddled a horse and told Idaho he was going to Gun Sight City.

"Go careful," advised the old cowboy, noting that Sandy was wearing the gun he had taken from the train robber.

"I'll take care of me," replied Sandy, and rode away.

As far back as he could remember, he had loved Elsie Landis. They had gone to the same little school, later to parties and dances. Girls came and went, but Sandy only had eyes for Elsie. Even Big Buck Landis had admitted that Elsie and Sandy were going to be married—and then the crash came.

SANDY thought of all these things as he rode through Hidden Valley, and his heart grew bitter against Dan Pierce and his gang. He knew they had framed him, ruined him, cheated him out of happiness. And one of the men who had done this was now going to marry Elsie.

And he met her on the road, about a mile from town, riding a little brown mare, Chica, which he had broken and presented to her.

"I was going out to see Mrs. Eastland," explained Elsie. "She is doing some sewing for me."

"Chica's lookin' nice," said Sandy.

"Yes," agreed Elsie, and they sat there, staring at each other.

Finally Elsie turned away and looked across the hills.

"Day after to-morrow is Saturday," said Sandy softly.

She nodded, but did not look at him; she was looking down the road, where two riders had appeared around a curve, only a few rods away.

"Here comes dad and Tom," she said.

Sandy turned his head and watched the two men ride up. Judging from their expressions, neither man was pleased to find Sandy and Elsie together.

"Well!" snorted Big Buck. "Goin' somewhere, Elsie?"

"Out to see Mrs. Eastland," she replied.

"Well, you better hurry, if you want to get back before dark."

"I'll ride with her," offered Tom McCall.

"That's fine," agreed the sheriff. "You headin' for town, Sandy?"

"Yeah."

"All right, so am I. See you later, Tom."

Sandy rode along with the sheriff for a way, before anything was said.

It was Sandy who broke the silence with:

"Nice weather we're havin', sheriff."

Buck turned and looked at him.

"You jist *happened* to meet Elsie, didn't you?"

"You don't suppose she'd make an appointment to meet a jailbird, do you?" retorted Sandy.

The big sheriff flushed quickly, realizing that Sandy had heard what he had said.

"You don't need to squirm," said Sandy. "I'm not yelpin' about losin' her, Buck. But to lose her to a ten-cent crook like Tom McCall is——"

"That's plenty!" flared the sheriff. "Tom's no crook."

"Pierce's whole gang is crooked."

The sheriff glanced at Sandy's holstered gun.

"I wouldn't pack that gun, if I was you," he said. "One fool move on yore part—and back you go."

"Don't put no crooked deadwood on me, Buck," advised Sandy softly. "That Rafter P outfit would frame a job on me, if they can."

"Pierce ain't that kind," said the sheriff.

"Ain't he? He marked calves and then run my brand on 'em. He sent me to the penitentiary—and him, or some of his outfit, murdered my father. Now," said Sandy bitterly, "one of the men who crooked me into the penitentiary is takin' the one thing on God's green earth that I—I—— Buck, I've tried to forget it—but I can't."

"They're goin' to be married to-morrow night," said the sheriff firmly. "I know how you feel, Sandy; and if you show up in Gun Sight City, wearin' a gun, I'll put you in jail until the weddin' is over. I know it wouldn't be legal, but I'll do it."

Sandy threw back his head and laughed bitterly.

"That's about as funny as anythin' I ever heard, Buck," he declared. "Why don't you call out the troops from Fort Huachuca? You might have 'em plant a couple field pieces to overlook Hidden Valley, so they can shell the road."

"That weddin' will be pulled off, without any interference," declared the sheriff coldly. "Don't forget what I said about you wearin' a gun into town to-morrow."

"It's a public weddin', ain't it?"

"For friends of the bride and groom."

Sandy laughed as he drew up at a hitch rack.

"I'll see you to-morrow, Buck. And don't forget—you might call out the troops."

The sheriff found Ponca Price at the office and explained what had been said between him and Sandy.

"Don't worry about him," said the deputy. "I'll get Dutch Hess and Pete la Borde to work with me, and we'll scheme out somethin' to make Sandy start trouble. Then we can throw him in jail and send him back to the pen."

"Wait just a minute," said the sheriff. "I'll personally pistol-whip the first man who tries any scheme to railroad that kid. He's as dangerous as a rattler. Right now his life don't mean one damn thing to him. If you and Hess and La Borde started anythin' with him, he'd kill some of you—mebbe all of you. Anyway, if there was any left, Idaho Jones would settle with them. Let him alone. He won't wear a gun in sight to-morrow, but he'll have a gun on him. Watch him, that's all."

"He wouldn't take a crack at Tom McCall, would he, Buck?"

"I ain't sayin' what I think he

might do. But I do know this; I wish this weddin' was over, Ponca. I've got a hunch that somethin' might happen. It's kinda in my bones."

"He won't get far, Buck; not with all of us watchin' him."

"I suppose I'm sort of an old fool, Ponca. But I do want to see Elsie happily married." The sheriff squinted thoughtfully. "Happily married. Funny thing, Ponca," he said musingly. "Elsie and Sandy were goin' to get married, too. Tom was foreman of the Rafter P, and they sent Sandy over the road. Tom was the main witness. And now he's goin' to marry Elsie. It's a funny world."

Ponca laughed shortly. "You speak as though Tom framed Sandy."

The sheriff jerked up his head quickly.

"I did not. If I thought for a moment that he did, I'd run him out of Arizona. Pierce likes Tom. He says he's goin' to turn it all over to Tom one of these days; make him his pardner. They'll make money, too."

"Well, I wouldn't worry about Sandy Shores," said Ponca.

CHAPTER IV.

MURDER.

SANDY told Idaho about the sheriff's declaration, and the old cowboy laughed delightfully.

"That'll be fun," he said.

Sandy shook his head. "It would mean a killin', Idaho. And what would be the use?"

"Well, yeah, I reckon so," admitted Idaho thoughtfully. "Kid, I've got a hunch they'd try to make you do somethin' that would shove you right back in the pen. We'll go un-

armed. As much as I'd like to swap lead with some of them snake hunters, we better play safe."

"That's my hunch," said Sandy.

It was late in the afternoon when they came to Gun Sight City and tied their horses at the Peacemaker Saloon. The sudden activity of both sheriff and deputy, and the cowboys from the Rafter P amused Sandy. Neither of them wore belts or guns. The sheriff looked them over gingerly, wondering where they had their concealed weapons, and decided not to ask any questions. Many people were coming to town, many already there, because of Saturday. The little church was being decorated with wild flowers. Sandy saw a load of ocotillo, with its flaming red blossoms, being taken into the church.

Behind the saloon was a huge heap of empty cans, cow bells, and all sorts of sound makers, which would be used for the charivari after the wedding. Whisky was already flowing, and the Peacemaker was a bedlam of conversation. Idaho Jones, with several glasses of whisky under his belt, was too busy to remember that Sandy might get into trouble and need help.

Sandy was well aware that Ponca Price, "Dutch" Hess, and Pete la Borde kept close watch on him.

"What a fool I was to come here," he told himself. "What can I do? Sit here and cry inside; eat my heart out—for what?"

It was sundown as he walked over to the hitch rack and untied his horse. Idaho was already too drunk to ride, so Sandy mounted his horse and rode out of town. He felt sure that one of the three men followed him far enough to determine that he was leaving for Hidden Valley.

But Sandy did not mind. Pete la Borde reported to Ponca, who

carried word to Buck Landis, at the church, where he was supervising the decorating.

"Gone home, eh?" mused the sheriff, picking an ocotillo thorn out of his hand with the point of a knife blade. "Well, that's best. He could see that we was all set for him. How do you like the decorations?"

"All right, if you don't fall into 'em, Buck."

"Better keep an eye on that bunch at the Peacemaker, Ponca. They'll drink a lot of whisky, and they might get noisy. I'll sure be awful glad when this weddin' is over. Elsie looks like a ghost, and her mother is worried to death. All the women in the country are down at the house, offerin' advice. Mebbe that's what's wrong with her. The preacher was down there, too. Such a lot of fuss over a weddin'."

"Elsie ain't sick, is she?" asked Ponca.

"Scared, I reckon. You go 'long and herd them drunks."

"Tom ain't in yet, is he, Buck?"

"He won't be, until it's time for the weddin'. Him and Pierce are comin' in together. But don't say anythin' about it. We want everybody settin' down in here—not scattered all over—when it's time for the weddin'."

PONCA went back to the saloon and joined in the festivities. Some went out to eat supper, but most of them stayed at the bar and drank hard liquor. Idaho was one of these. Not often did he go on a spree, but this seemed a justified occasion. Darkness came, and with it more of the wedding guests; men, women, and children. Entertainments were scarce in Gun Sight City. After the wedding there would be tables groaning with food

at the sheriff's home, and plenty of bottled and keg liquor, with which to toast the lucky couple.

Seven o'clock was the hour for the wedding. Shortly before that time the church bell sounded a warning, and the crowd vanished in that direction, except those unable even to make a start. Idaho sat down on the bar rail and dared anybody to take him to the church.

A buggy team drew up at the front of the saloon, and Tom McCall hurried in with Dan Pierce. Both men were satorially wonderful, according to range standards; both uncomfortable, flushed.

"Just time for one short drink," said Pierce, as the bartender put out the glasses.

Idaho managed to focus one eye on Pierce, and said:

"I huh-hope it's shyanide; tha's what I hope."

Pierce glanced at Idaho, but made no reply. More weighty things awaited them. Pierce tossed silver on the bar, and both men hurried outside.

"High-toned, eh?" muttered Idaho. "T' devil with'm, shay I."

At that moment the saloon seemed to jar from the report of a heavy gun. It was as though two shots, hardly spaced at all, were fired together. The buggy team jerked back, tearing a porch post loose, upset the buggy, and went thundering down the street. A man cursed painfully.

The frightened bartender ran around the end of the bar, stumbled over Idaho's legs, and sprawled through the doorway. Other men were running up the street, their boots pounding on the hard ground. The sheriff was one of them.

They carried in Dan Pierce, cursing savagely, but not seriously hurt.

"McCall is dead," said the sheriff. "Buckshot at close range."

For the next few minutes, the place was in an uproar. Men scattered in all directions, knowing well that the assassin would not be lurking close. The doctor made a swift examination. Pierce had been shot through the legs with several buckshot, but discovered that he was able to walk unassisted.

Idaho Jones sobered quickly. In his heart was a terrible fear that Sandy, bitter from the injustices done him, had lost his sense of balance and had done this terrible thing. Limpy Lucas came in and stood in front of him, looking at the blanketed form on the pool table. Idaho shoved him aside and started for the doorway, as two of the searchers came in. One of them was carrying a double-barreled shotgun, which he placed on the bar and called the sheriff.

Idaho saw the gun, turned and went out. It was the ten-gauge Greener belonging to the Forked S Ranch. He remembered seeing it in its accustomed corner of the main room just before he and Sandy had started for town. He went straight to the hitch rack, found his horse, which he led away for some distance, before he mounted in the dark and galloped out of town. He was going to warn Sandy that the shotgun had been found. How Sandy had lost that gun meant nothing. In his flight from the scene of the shooting, he might have dropped it and been unable to find it in the dark.

It was some time before men were able to think calmly. The sheriff, white of face, cold-eyed and grim, backed against the bar and began asking questions.

"So Idaho Jones was here, eh?"

"Yeah, he was here," admitted the bartender. "Settin' there on the

bar rail. He told Pierce he hoped he'd drink cyanide. Pierce and Tom didn't pay no attention to him, but went right out."

"That gun belongs at the Forked S Ranch," said the sheriff. "I've seen it many times. Sandy Shores left here about sundown."

"Looks like a cinch," said Dan Pierce painfully.

"I told him yesterday," continued the sheriff, "that if he wore a gun up here to-day, I'd put him in jail, until after the weddin'. He didn't have any gun in sight."

"Say the word, and we'll go git him," said Dutch Hess.

"Let's all go and get him," said La Borde. "There's only one way to handle a snake like that, Buck."

"I've got a good rope," said some one else.

"Find him first," remarked a cowboy. "I seen Idaho Jones pull out, when Ed brought in that shotgun. He's halfway to Hidden Valley now."

"That's true," said the sheriff. "Sandy knows the hills as well as any livin' man. This is no mob job. I'll handle it. No use rushin' down there, 'cause we won't find anythin'. I'm goin' back to my family now. To-morrow is another day."

"You shore had the right hunch, Buck," said Ponca.

IDAHO JONES rated his horse well. He knew that no other horse in Gun Sight City could overtake him, but he wanted a margin of safety, so he nearly killed the animal in his mad haste to reach the ranch.

Sandy sat up in his blankets, blinking in amazement at the rush of Idaho to light the lamp. Idaho had lost his hat. He ran across the room, peered into the corner, and ran back, facing Sandy.

"You git up right now!" he snapped. "No time to lose!"

"Have you gone plumb loco?" asked Sandy.

"Me? Hell! Yo're the one that went loco. You fool, why didja lose yore gun? Sandy, they'll be here after you! Git out of them blankets."

Sandy slid out of the blankets, reached down the side of the bed, and drew out his six-shooter.

"Here's my gun," he said.

"The shotgun!" roared Idaho. "You lost yore shotgun!"

Sandy shook his head. "What kinda whisky are they sellin' now-days?"

"You lost the shotgun in Gun Sight City, after you killed McCall!"

Sandy got to his feet and stepped closer to Idaho.

"Say that again, will you, Idaho?"

"You killed McCall and lost yore shotgun!"

"That's all right, Idaho," said Sandy. "Don't worry about it. You set down and take it easy, while I make you some black coffee. You shore smell like bad liquor."

"You—you——" Idaho grew inarticulate, flapped his arms helplessly. Then he grew suddenly calm.

"Tom McCall was shot and killed in front of the Peacemaker Saloon to-night, Sandy," he said. "Dan Pierce got some of the buck-shot in his legs. Somebody found our old shotgun near the saloon. When I seen that gun, I sneaked out and headed down here to warn you."

Sandy sat down on the blankets and reached for his tobacco and papers, while Idaho nervously watched him roll a cigarette. Sandy's eyes shifted to the corner where they kept the old shotgun, and saw that the gun was not there.

"They'll be here pretty quick," said Idaho.

Sandy nodded and began dressing swiftly.

"I won't be far away," he said calmly. "No use runnin' into the hills until I know more about this."

He buckled on his gun belt, opened a window, and slid across the sill.

"You better go to bed, Idaho," he said, and closed the window.

"Don't scare worth a damn," muttered the old man. "Jist like his father. Well, I've done all I can, I s'pose."

He went into the kitchen, found a whisky bottle containing a big drink, and proceeded to pour it down his leathery old throat. He came back to the main room and sat down beside the table, nodding sleepily.

Idaho did not hear the door open, nor did he hear the four men enter the room. They were there, menacing him with guns, and he found himself trying to explain that he hadn't done anything wrong. They were Pete la Borde, Dutch Hess, Ed Nelson, and Joe Walters, all from the Rafter P Ranch.

"We're not after you, you old fool!" snapped Pete la Borde. "We're down here to git Sandy Shores. Where is he?"

"Sandy? Oh, yea-a-ah," Idaho remembered now. "Why, I dunno where he is. What do you want him for?"

"You know damn well what we want him for," snarled Dutch Hess, a square-headed, bull-necked cowboy. "And you better tell us where he is, or we'll hang you up on the end of a rope."

"Listen t' me, Idaho," said Pete, waving the muzzle of his Colt within an inch of the old man's nose. "You rode the legs off yore horse to warn Sandy. You seen that shotgun in town. Tell us where

Sandy went, before I chop yore nose off with this gun barrel."

"Start choppin'," said Idaho calmly.

"Run him up on a rope a couple times, and he'll talk," said Dutch.

"Oh, he'll talk, before we get through with him," replied Pete.

"You ain't had much experience with *men*, have you?" asked Idaho.

Ed Nelson tossed a lariat to Pete, who flung out the coils and deftly flipped the loop over Idaho's head. The old man never blinked.

"Before you hang me," he said, "I wish you'd tell me which one of you sidewinders stole our shotgun and murdered Tom McCall."

Pete struck him across the mouth, and the old man jerked back, blood painting his lips.

"That's as good an answer as any, Pete," said Idaho.

"I'd like a better one," said Sandy's voice from the doorway. "And the first one of you coyotes to turn around with a gun in yore hand gits a one-way ticket to hell. *Drop—them—guns.*"

Pete was the only one to turn his head; his the last gun to fall.

"Shuck off that rope and pick up the artillery, Idaho," said Sandy.

The old man joyfully obeyed the order. Four sullen cowboys backed against the wall at Sandy's command.

"A fine bunch of whippoorwills you are, beatin' up an old man."

They were a hard-bitted quartet, these Rafter P cowboys, but they had nothing to say.

"Want to pay Pete for that punch in the nose, Idaho?" asked Sandy.

"I ain't never hit a helpless man yet," replied Idaho. "If I ever git that low, I hope I swaller a poisoned bait."

"All right; get goin', you scorpions."

Sandy stepped aside and motioned toward the open doorway. Without a word the four men filed out on the little porch.

"Where are our horses?" snorted Pete.

"Headin' for home, I reckon," replied Sandy. "Anyway, they was goin' in that direction when I left 'em. A little walkin' won't hurt you none. *Buenas noches, mofetas.*"

Sandy closed the door on the group of disgruntled cowboys.

"I know what he said," remarked Joe Walters. "*Mofetas* means skunks, in Mexican."

"And," replied Pete dryly, "that don't help the situation none, as far as I can see, so we might as well start walkin'."

CHAPTER V.

RIFLE SHOTS.

OLD IDAHO poked a stick of wood into the rusty stove, straightened up, and looked at the sheriff, who was leaning against the frame of the kitchen door.

"I know how you feel about it, Buck," he said. "But put yourself in my place. Would you tell where yore pardner was hidin' out?"

"No, I don't reckon I would," admitted Buck. "But we'll get him, sooner or later. The coroner's jury——"

"I know," interrupted Idaho. "They said that Sandy Shores killed Tom McCall. But I'll tell you that one of that Pierce outfit stole that shotgun, killed McCall, and then dropped the gun. Would Sandy drop the gun, knowin' that everybody would recognize it?"

"It was found behind the saloon," replied the sheriff. "An empty keg had been accident'ly rolled into the openin', and the sign shows that the

killer stumbled over the keg. Mebbe he flung the gun away, and couldn't find it in the dark. Mebbe he was kinda stunned, and all he thought of was to git away. Losin' that gun ain't no alibi."

"Well, I've told you how Sandy acted when I got home, Buck. He had an idea that I had gone loco. He shore didn't act guilty."

"Guilty men don't always act guilty, Idaho."

"Mebbe not. How come you didn't bring no posse? Come alone, didn't you, Buck?"

"Yeah, I came alone."

"Even a sheriff can lie. I put my old field glasses on you out there a couple miles on the grade, and I seen Ponca Price cut into the brush. If I ain't mistaken, he's out behind the stable, holdin' a Winchester in both hands."

The sheriff flushed quickly as he turned and looked toward the stable.

"You might as well call him in, Buck," said Idaho. "We'll have somethin' to eat."

Buck Landis called to Ponca, who came sheepishly from a corner of the stable, dangling the rifle in his hand.

"It's gittin' so a feller can't even believe a sheriff," observed Idaho.

Ponca looked questioningly at the sheriff, who laughed shortly.

"I plumb forgot about you havin' them glasses, Idaho," he said.

"No catchum, eh?" said Ponca.

The two officers sat down in the kitchen, while Idaho prepared a pick-up meal. He slid a pan of biscuits in the oven and wiped his hands on a towel.

"How'd Elsie take it?" he asked.

"How would any girl take it?"

"That all depends," replied Idaho. "If she didn't love anybody else, of course——"

"What do you mean, Idaho?"

"You can't fool me, Buck. I've knowed them two kids a long time."

"Don't forget that Elsie was goin' to marry Tom McCall."

"And still lovin' Sandy Shores, which she didn't realize, until he came back here."

"Why do you say that? What do you know about it?"

"Jist guessin', Buck; like I do when I cook or bake. I never measured anythin'—jist guess—and it allus comes out right."

The big sheriff did not reply, but sat there, staring thoughtfully at the floor. Ponca broke the silence.

"What was Sandy's idea in comin' in to ask about that six-gun?" he asked.

"What six-gun was that?" queried Idaho.

"The one we took off him when he was arrested. He asked what we done with it, and I'll bet he had it all the time."

"Oh, you mean the one with the silver S on the handle?"

"Yeah. He came in to ask about it."

"There's a funny thing about that gun," said Idaho. "Sandy was beatin' his way on that train when it was held up."

The sheriff jerked up his head. "Sandy was on that train?"

"Ridin' the blind baggage," replied Idaho. "Him and one of them there outlaws got tangled up together, and Sandy took that gun away from him."

"Wait a minute," said the sheriff. "You makin' this up, Idaho?"

"I'm not makin' up anythin'. Sandy stole one of their horses and rode it home that night, and the horse and saddle was taken from our stable, before daylight in the mornin'."

"Why wasn't this told to me?" demanded the sheriff.

"It wouldn't do you any good, Buck."

"Well, it proves that the robbers recognized Sandy."

"That ain't all of it." Idaho chuckled. It was impossible for him to pass up a chance to do a little lying.

"What do you mean?" queried the sheriff.

"I dunno if Sandy would like to have me tell this or not, but I don't see where it could do any harm. He said that him and this outlaw was rollin' on the ground, when the express messenger opened the door, throwing some light on 'em—and Sandy saw the face of the man he was fightin'."

"He did!" The sheriff got to his feet. "He saw—he knew the man?"

Idaho nodded seriously.

"Why didn't he come and tell me?" asked the sheriff.

"Well, I dunno," drawled Idaho. He knelt down and examined the biscuits in the oven. "You see, Sandy wasn't feelin' so awful friendly toward the Law, Buck. You can't blame him. Anyway, he said he couldn't prove it. The Law wouldn't take his word for it. But he knows who they are."

"All of 'em?" asked Ponca.

"Yeah, I s'pose he does, Ponca."

"Which means that we'll have to get our hands on Sandy Shores and have a talk with him," declared the sheriff.

"He's wanted for murder," reminded Ponca, "and that reward will read, 'dead or alive,' Buck."

"I know it—but I want him alive."

"Oh, there's a reward, eh?" said Idaho.

"There will be. The county will offer a thousand, and Dan Pierce will offer the same amount."

"Dead or alive," muttered Idaho.

"I thought the law considered a man innocent until the law proved him guilty. You ain't givin' him a square deal."

"A killer ain't supposed to get a square deal," said Ponca.

"Not after it's been proved," said Idaho. "I'm goin' to explain all this to Sandy, and I'm goin' to git the names of the men who stopped that train and shot the brakeman. Mebbe our cock-eyed Law won't even arrest 'em on that evidence, but it'll make 'em feel mighty embarrassed."

"Will you bring me the names, Idaho?" asked the sheriff eagerly.

"I shore will, Buck—as soon as I get 'em from Sandy. Well, the biscuits are done, so we might as well wrap ourselves around some nourishment. I suppose you know that four of the Rafter P gang came down here last night to grab Sandy."

"I know it. They walked home without their guns. But you can't blame 'em. Tom McCall was mighty well liked by all the boys. They'll all be ridin' the hills, searchin' for Sandy."

"Let 'em search for him. He's got plenty food, plenty water, and no man knows the breaks of Hidden Valley like Sandy does."

They ate their meal, and the two officers thanked Idaho, who watched them ride away. He piled the dishes on the stove and sat down in the doorway, with his old field glasses. Both riders were there, going up the grades, where Idaho had seen them separate earlier in the morning. But the sheriff did not know that there was another opening, a half-mile farther on, where Idaho could see the road again. Only one rider passed—the sheriff on his black horse; Ponca Price had cut back.

"I'll give that nosey son of a gun somethin' to worry about," declared

Idaho, as he went down to the stable, where he saddled his horse and struck off into the hills.

He knew he was being followed. He felt sure that some of the Rafter P outfit had been watching the ranch, and they, too, would be trailing him, expecting him to lead them to Sandy's hiding place. So the old cowboy became very intricate. He went up canyons and then back-tracked, hoping to run into his pursuers. He rode the tops of ridges, where he studied the country with his glasses.

Finally, after miles of crooked traveling, he decided that he had either lost his pursuers, or they had decided that he was merely making fools of them. Tired, but chuckling to himself, he worked down through the brush to a little parklike space, where a spring bubbled from under an ancient sycamore.

Dropping his reins and sprawling on the ground, he managed to dig out a tiny pool, large enough to afford him a cold drink. Behind him, only a few feet away, was the rim of a shallow canyon. He slaked his thirst, got slowly to his feet, and as he turned toward the canyon, something struck him a vicious blow on the head. From across the canyon came the whiplike crack of a rifle, but Idaho Jones did not hear it, because he was rolling over the rim of the little canyon.

Limply he crashed through the brush, rolled into a manzanita snag, where he dangled limply, like an abandoned scarecrow. His horse began picking its way up through the brush. Again the rifle cracked, and splinters flew from a manzanita limb beside Idaho's bald head, but Idaho did not move. The tough manzanita wood had turned the bullet.

LATER that afternoon Ponca Price came to Gun Sight City, tired and weary. He stabled his horse and went into the office, where Big Buck Landis was talking with the prosecuting attorney.

"No luck," reported Ponca. "Idaho headed into the hills, and he sure led me a merry chase. I missed him back there in the breaks, and I never did find him again. If Sandy is back in there, we'll have a job findin' him."

"He outsmarted you, eh?" commented the sheriff.

"I admit he did. I heard two shots fired, about fifteen, twenty seconds apart. Prob'ly a signal. Anyway, I came back, Buck."

"I told you it wouldn't work. Idaho Jones will never lead anybody to Sandy Shores; he's too blamed smart for that."

The sheriff went wearily home that evening. Mrs. Landis, a meek-looking little woman, sat in the parlor, sewing, when Big Buck came in, kicked off his boots, and sank down in a protesting rocker.

"You didn't catch him, Buck?" asked Mrs. Landis.

The sheriff shook his head. On the table was one of the newly printed reward notices for Sandy Shores.

"Where did you get that notice?" he asked.

"Limpy Lucas brought it up here."

"He did, eh? Probably tore it down. How's Elsie?"

"She's upstairs."

Buck leaned back and shifted comfortably.

"Ann," he said, "I don't quite sabe Elsie. Everybody around town thinks she's mournin' her heart away up here. You and me know she ain't."

Mrs. Landis closed her lips

tightly, and her needle fairly flew. Finally she drew a deep breath and looked up at her husband.

"There's something I haven't told you," she said.

"Yeah? What is it, Ann?"

"Five minutes before it was time for Elsie to go to the church, she made up her mind to not marry Tom McCall. She took off her veil and was insisting on changing her clothes, when word came about Tom."

"She——" began Buck, but hesitated. "Why?" he asked.

"Elsie wouldn't give any reason."

Buck's jaw tightened as he looked at his wife.

"Well," he said softly, "I'll have to take my hat off to Idaho Jones; he's a prophet."

INSTEAD of hiding out in the hills, Sandy dug deep in the hay of the stable mow. He was not to come out until after dark, and not then, unless Idaho told him that the coast was clear. It was well after dark when he slid out of the hay and crawled carefully to the hay window at the end of the stable, which faced the house.

Not a light was showing, and Sandy wondered what had happened to Idaho, who should, according to agreement, have a supper ready to bring down to the stable. It was too dark for Sandy to see anything except the dark bulk of the old ranch house. He wanted a smoke, but was afraid to light a match.

And although he could not see anything out there, a sixth sense seemed to tell him that danger lurked. Somewhere a coyote yipped dismally, and far out on the range a cow bawled. For an hour, Sandy sprawled at the hay window, hungry, wishing for a cigarette.

Then he heard a noise—the soft

creaking of wires. Some one was crawling through the barbed-wire fence behind the house. In a few moments he heard the rattle of wood, as though the man had fallen over loose firewood on the woodpile.

Then there was another noise, as though some one had brushed along the side of the stable, and he heard the soft crunch of gravel. Leaning outside, he listened closely, as footsteps clattered on the kitchen steps and the door was flung open. Whoever it was near the stable seemed to be walking swiftly toward the house, but Sandy was unable to see in the darkness.

A lamp was being lighted inside the house. Sandy could see light shining through the living-room window, and he thought he heard a voice, but could not be sure. It occurred to him that Idaho was the one who had lighted the lamp, and the other man was some one who was watching the house in hopes of catching him, Sandy.

Suddenly a tongue of flame lashed out toward the lighted window, and the report of a heavy rifle broke the stillness. It was so unexpected that Sandy nearly fell from the window. A man was running down across the yard, passing the stable. Sandy swung over the edge, hung by his hands, shoved away from the wall with one knee, and dropped to his feet in the yard. He listened for a moment and heard the thud of running hoofs, as a horse raced up the road.

He ran to the kitchen doorway and drew his gun. The lamp was still burning as he stepped into the living room, and there stood Idaho Jones, part of his shirt torn off and wrapped around his bald head, staring down at the body of a man on the floor. Idaho seemed dazed, and his face was streaked with dried

blood. He stared at Sandy and pointed at the body.

"Through the winder," he whispered weakly. "Somebody got him."

"Who is it, Idaho?"

"Pete la Borde."

Sandy closed and barred the door, and dropped a blanket over the exposed window. He came back to Idaho, who looked more dead than alive.

"What happened, Idaho?" he asked. "You've been hurt."

Speaking painfully, omitting all unnecessary details, Idaho told of his ride through the hills, trying to lead the cowboys on a wild-goose chase, and being shot at the little spring.

"I landed in a manzanita," he said huskily. "I reckon they thought I was dead. And didn't I have a time gittin' out, and back to that water. That saved my life, Sandy. My horse was gone, so I had to walk home. Gosh, it was a million miles. I was plumb numb all over. That bullet shore branded the old man's topknot."

"Dang lucky it didn't kill you, Idaho. But what about this deal?"

"Pete? Well, I got here and lit the lamp, and there was Pete, with his gun lined up on me. I reckon mebbe he thought I was you. I didn't say nothin', but he come closer and he says, 'What happened to you?' And jist then—kerwhap! Then here comes you, Sandy. Man, I shore need a drink."

Sandy found a bottle under his mattress, and gave it to Idaho, while he made an examination of Pete la Borde. The bullet had made a clean, round hole through the windowpane, struck Pete in the throat, and smashed into the wall across the room.

Sandy sat down, holding his face in his two hands, trying to puzzle

out what to do. Idaho was only interested in getting enough of that whisky inside him to brace his ragged nerves. It had been a terrible ordeal for the old cowboy.

"I've got to find Pete's horse," said Sandy, getting to his feet. "We'd have a sweet job makin' the Law believe we didn't kill him, if they found him here."

"Me," said Idaho, his voice a bit stronger, "myself personally don't care a damn what the Law thinks. Law or no Law, they can't go around creasin' my old bald head with hot bullets and leavin' me draped on the aidge of a canyon, hangin' in a manzanita, like a sour-dough's monthly wash. From now on, I shoot on suspicion."

"Anyway," said Sandy, "I'll find that horse."

CHAPTER VI.

ELSIE'S NOTE.

NOW I just don't remember what time Pete left here yesterday," said the bartender at the Peacemaker Saloon, in answer to the sheriff's query. "I 'member him bein' here. He was standin' here at the bar, readin' one of them new reward notices. I 'member now that I looked out the window and I seen Ponca Price ridin' past, goin' to the office."

"He left here after Ponca came, eh?"

"Must have been pretty soon after that."

The body of Pete la Borde had been found about a half mile from town, lying beside the road. His horse was only a short distance away.

Excitement ran high in Gun Sight City, when the body was brought in by the sheriff and coroner. There was not a single clew as to who had

killed him. But the sheriff knew that Pete had not been killed at that spot, as there was not a drop of blood on the ground, or on the horse or saddle.

Word had been carried to the Rafter P Ranch, and Dave Pierce came in, riding in a buggy. His legs were still sore from the buckshot wounds. Pierce was unable to advance any theory, except that Pete might have gone out to try to collect that reward.

The sheriff went to have another talk with the coroner, Doctor Leveen, and the doctor showed him something he had discovered in the wound. On a piece of paper he had several small slivers of glass, which they examined closely.

"Shot through a window, eh, doc?" said the sheriff.

"Something like that, Buck. It seems the only theory."

"I reckon I'll look for a bullet hole in a window. It looks like window glass, doc."

"Possibly. Of course, it might be from a glass or a bottle."

"I like the window idea the best."

He went back to the office, and a few minutes later he and Ponca rode toward Hidden Valley. He told Ponca about the glass in the wound.

"Mebbe Pete tried to peek through a window," suggested Ponca.

"Well, he's all through peekin', if he did," replied Buck.

An hour of hard riding brought them to the Forked S. Idaho Jones, his head cleanly bandaged, was taking his ease on the front porch. He waved a greeting to them, and they dismounted at the porch.

"What happened to you, Idaho?" asked the sheriff.

"Thinkin'," replied Idaho.

"Thinkin'?"

"Yeah. You've seen fellers

scratch their head, when they was a-thinkin', ain't you, Buck? Well, I reckon I scratched too deep. That's the worst about thinkin'. You fellers ain't found Sandy yet, have you?"

"You know damn well we haven't," retorted Ponca.

"You don't need to snap at me," said Idaho.

The sheriff looked closely at the old cowboy as he said:

"You didn't happen to know that Pete la Borde was murdered last night, did you?"

"Pete la Borde?" Idaho's astonishment seemed genuine. "Well, who handed a harp to that Canuck?"

"That's what we're wonderin', Idaho."

"Uh-huh. Where is he?"

"He's in Gun Sight City."

"Yeah? Well, you come a long ways to do yore wonderin', didn't you? Or is this jist the tail end of a big job of wonderin' you've been doin'?"

"That don't make any difference," replied the sheriff.

"Where'd he meet his fate, Buck?"

"We found his body about a half mile this side of town."

"Pshaw! What was he killed with?"

"Rifle." The sheriff looked keenly at Idaho. "He was shot through a window."

The old cowboy's eyes never wavered. "Lemme see," he said slowly. "Half mile this side of town? Ain't a house for— Huh! Do you mean he was packin' a winder with him, Buck?"

"No, of course he wasn't. Packin' a window!"

"Mebbe the feller that shot him had a winder along, eh?"

The sheriff got to his feet.

"Mind if I take a look at yore windows, Idaho?"

"At our winders? Hell, no! Look 'em over, Buck. Help yourself."

HE went with the two officers. The broken window pane had been taken out entirely, and over it had been glued a piece of paper, which had the appearance of having been there for months.

"That's the only one that could have been busted by a shot," said Ponca.

"Mebbe, but not for a long time," said the sheriff. "That paper's been on there for months. Well, I reckon we might as well go back."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Idaho.

The officers had no more comments to make, and Idaho sat down on the porch, chuckling to himself, as he watched them ride away.

"Been on there for months," he said softly. "I reckon it was pretty smart of me to dip that paper in coffee and then dry her out in the oven, before gluein' her in place. If I hadn't been so natcherally honest, I'd have been a great criminal. I'll have to go out and tell Sandy, I reckon. He said I was crazy to go to all that trouble."

But Buck Landis was far from satisfied. The only reasonable solution was that Pete la Borde had tried to capture Sandy, and had been killed. The murder of Tom McCall could only be blamed to Sandy, because no one else in the country would have had a reason for the deed.

"And still it don't fit," he declared, as they rode back to town.

"What don't fit?" asked Ponca.

"I reckon I was thinkin' out loud. You say you heard two shots fired out there yesterday?"

"Yeah, I heard two of 'em."

"Uh-huh. Idaho's got his head all tied up. Mebbe he could show a receipt for one of them shots."

"Why would anybody shoot Idaho?" asked Ponca.

"I wish I knew. I tell you, I'm gettin' bug-eyed over all this shootin'. I'm goin' to tell Dan Pierce to keep his men at home. With that reward money in sight, they're prob'ly scattered all over the hills, ready to crack down on anybody."

"If this keeps up, he won't have any crew left," said Ponca. "Two of 'em gone already."

SANDY sat on the hay and listened to Idaho's triumphant account of how his antiqued piece of paper had fooled the officers.

"You'll have to admit that I'm smart, Sandy," he said.

"Yo're foxy enough," admitted Sandy. "But if yo're real smart, tell me why somebody tried to kill you yesterday."

"I didn't say I was a mind reader."

"Do you know," said Sandy thoughtfully, "I believe that bullet was intended for you last night, instead of Pete la Borde."

"Why?"

"I don't know why. Who would want to kill Pete? It's a cinch they didn't mistake you for Pete yesterday, when you was shot."

"Me and him don't favor each other much, except havin' two arms and two legs," admitted Idaho.

Sandy sat there on the loose hay, twirling the cylinder of his gun, and trying to puzzle out what this was all about. Idaho glanced at the gun and grinned widely.

"Them there officers of the law was askin' about that gun yesterday," he said.

Sandy looked up quickly.

"You asked 'em where it was, didn't you, Sandy? I mean, the day you got back."

"I wanted to know who got it."

"Well, I thought I'd give 'em somethin' to think about, Sandy; so I done a little lyin'. I said you saw the face of the man you took that gun away from, and I said you prob'ly knowed who all four of 'em was. Buck got mighty interested, but I couldn't tell him anythin' definite. I said I'd git the names from you."

"What did you do all that lyin' for?"

"Oh, jist to get 'em excited, I reckon. They've done charged you up with two murders already, so a train robbery or two won't make much difference. Anyway, they can't pin that onto you."

Sandy frowned thoughtfully as he said:

"If they had given my gun to dad, you'd have seen it, don't you suppose?"

"I'll bet I would. I never even heard him mention it."

"All right. Don't take any more chances, Idaho. Keep yore eyes open."

It was late in the afternoon when Limpy Lucas rode up to the ranch house on an old buckskin horse.

"Hyah, general," greeted Idaho. "Visitin', or jist a-passin'?"

Limpy grinned and sat down in the kitchen.

"Pete la Borde got killed last night," he said.

"Yo're kinda late with that information, ain't you, Limpy?"

"I heard about it in town. Folks say he got killed here."

"They do, eh? Well, you can go back and tell 'em you heard that he didn't do no such a thing."

"Uh-huh." Limpy nodded va-

cantly. "They ain't caught Sandy yet?"

"Nobody heard about it yet, if they have. What's the news in town?"

"I ain't heard any—much." Limpy looked cautiously around. "Ain't nobody listenin' around here, is there?" he asked.

"No-o-o. Whatcha got on yore mind, Limpy?"

Limpy produced a sealed envelope, which he handed to Idaho.

"Fer Sandy," he whispered. "You git it to him, will you?"

Idaho scowled at the envelope, turned it over in his hands.

"Who sent it?" he asked.

"I ain't tellin' nothin', 'cause I promised."

"You always keep yore promises, do you Limpy?"

"I shore do. You give it to him, will you?"

"If I see him, yeah."

"Well, I've got to go home."

IT was rather unusual for Limpy to be in a hurry, but Idaho decided that Limpy, for all his queer ideas, might be afraid that being at the ranch would incriminate him. Idaho worked around the corral and stable for a long time, before approaching the haymow.

Sandy opened the letter, which read:

SANDY: Meet me to-morrow night at the old adobe on Wells Road at eight o'clock. Must see you. ELSIE.

"You stay away from that old adobe," advised Idaho. "That's a trap letter."

"It's Elsie's writin'," said Sandy. "I know her writin'."

"Somebody imitatin' it, I tell you. They're baitin' you. Limpy wouldn't tell me who gave him that letter."

"I know. But mebbe Elsie made him promise not to tell. Damn it, I've got to be there—trap or no trap. But that's Elsie's writin'."

Idaho took the envelope and examined it closely.

"Did you ever know that Elsie is chewin' tobacco these days?"

"Yo're crazy!"

"She shore does, Sandy."

"Don't be ridiculous. Elsie chewin' tobacco!"

"Well, anyway," declared Idaho, "the feller who sealed this here envelope chews tobacco. Look at that brown smear. If that ain't plain old spittin' weed, I ain't never seen none."

"By golly, it looks like it!" snorted Sandy. "Wait a minute!"

Sandy unfolded the letter and looked at it again.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "This letter has been opened and folded to fit a smaller envelope. See what I mean?"

"Yeah, that's right. But why?"

"Here's why? Elsie gave Limpy that note to bring here. Limpy let somebody else read it. They had to ruin the envelope, so they put it in another one. It's a trap, Idaho; but not baited by Elsie."

"Some day," said Idaho, "I'm goin' to wring Limpy's neck."

"Aw, he ain't right in the head," said Sandy. "Don't blame him too much."

"Don't blame him too much, eh? They'd dry-gulch you, Sandy."

"That's the worst of it," sighed the young cowboy. "Elsie will go out there to meet me in the dark, and you never can tell what will happen to her."

"They wouldn't hurt a girl."

"I'm not so sure, Idaho. Mebbe I better be there."

"Ain't you got no brains a-tall?"

"Sometimes I wonder if I have."

"You've got to have brains to wonder with, so you better use what little you've got—and stay right here."

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE OLD ADOBE.

BIG BUCK LANDIS was thoroughly disgusted with everything. He had been in conference with the prosecuting attorney, and had been told that he was very lax in his work in attempting to capture Sandy Shores. The lawyer said:

"I have kept a close check on your activities, and it seems to me that you have made little or no effort to apprehend this criminal. It has been hinted that there are certain sentimental reasons why you are not putting forth a proper effort."

Big Buck promptly exploded, told the attorney a few things, then walked out of the office, from where he went home, nursing a great wrath.

Little Mrs. Landis recognized the symptoms and said nothing, as her lord and master sprawled in a rocker and scowled at the red, red roses on the wall paper.

"Sentimental reasons!" he snorted. "The bug-eyed centipede."

Mrs. Landis realized that Buck was not making reference to the many-legged *Scolopendra cingulata*.

"Where's Elsie?" he asked.

"She's upstairs, Buck. Do you want her?"

"Nope; just wondered."

Mrs. Landis put her sewing aside, carefully placed her glasses on the table, and sat back in her chair. Recognizing the preliminary to a discussion, Buck said:

"What's on yore mind, Ann?"

Mrs. Landis listened intently.

Elsie had turned on the phonograph upstairs.

"It's about Elsie," said Mrs. Landis softly, although the music of the phonograph would drown out ordinary conversation.

"What's wrong?" asked Buck.

"She wrote a letter yesterday, and I saw her give it to Limpy Lucas. He came past on his horse, and she talked with him at the gate. She came back in, wrote the letter, and a little later he came along, and she gave it to him. Buck, I'm afraid she wrote it to Sandy Shores."

"Shucks! How'd Limpy deliver it to Sandy—if she did?"

"I don't know."

"Hm-m-m," mused Buck. "He might give it to Idaho. He'd know where Sandy was. Did you say anythin' to Elsie?"

"No, I didn't. But I thought you ought to know. Buck, I don't want Elsie mixed up in anything that is wrong."

"She ain't goin' to, I'll tell you that. Limpy Lucas, eh? Actin' as a go-between, is he?"

"He's not as simple as he looks, Buck."

"Simple enough. I'll watch Limpy Lucas, y'betcha. If he brings her an answer, I want to see it."

The phonograph stopped, and in a few moments Elsie came down. She was wearing her riding clothes.

"Hello, dad," She smiled. "Why so serious?"

"Was I serious?" he asked, smiling.

"You looked as cross as could be. Ma, have you seen my gloves?"

"They're on the porch where you left them, my dear."

"Goin' some place?" asked her father.

"I'm going out to Eastlands. Mrs. Eastland sent in word that my dress

is ready to try on, so I'll probably stay out there for supper."

"I don't like to have you ridin' around late and alone," said Buck.

"Why? No one would ever hurt me, dad."

"Things ain't just right around here lately. You never know what to expect."

"Don't worry about me. It's only three miles, anyway. I'll be back by nine o'clock."

"Well, be careful. You better have one of the Eastland boys ride back with you."

"Maybe I will. But don't worry; I'll be all right."

A LITTLE over a mile south of Gun Sight City, the Wells Road forked from the road to Hidden Valley, running eastward. Less than a mile from the forks, on the north side of the Wells Road, was the old adobe house, little more than a ruin now. It was nearly hidden in a grove of ancient sycamores. Originally a two-story structure, little remained of the upper half, where the weakened timbers had collapsed under the weight of the old, handmade tiles.

About a mile eastward was the home of the Eastland family, where Elsie was to have supper.

Regardless of the fact that a trap might be laid at the old adobe, Sandy Shores was there before daylight that morning. He left his horse in a thicket a quarter of a mile north of the adobe, and before the dawn painted the ridge of the old building, Sandy was ensconced on one of the old timbers, a dozen feet above the ground floor, with a small canteen of water and enough food for the day.

It was an ideal hiding place, but a mighty bad spot, in case he was discovered. He had climbed up

there, using an old timber in lieu of a ladder, and then flung it aside. His only exit was straight down.

Idaho Jones had quarreled with Sandy half the night over this "fool move," as he termed it, but Sandy had made up his mind.

"I know it's a trap," he admitted. "But Elsie will be there."

"They won't hurt her," argued Idaho.

"Anyway, I'm goin' to be there."

And there he was, stretched out on an old beam, with a wait of about fourteen hours ahead of him, and no way of knowing what was going on in Hidden Valley and Gun Sight City.

For one thing, Dave Pierce had disappeared. He came to town in the evening to have Doctor Leveen dress his buckshot wounds. The doctor said he was there about nine o'clock, and left fifteen minutes later. Apparently no one else in Gun Sight City had seen him.

The hands at the Rafter P Ranch decided that Pierce had sat in on a poker game in town. He was driving a single horse and buggy.

"Somethin' more to worry about!" snorted the sheriff. "Better wait and see if he don't show up."

About four o'clock in the afternoon Dutch Hess, Ed Walters, and Ponca Price decided to ride into Hidden Valley and see if they could find any trace of Dave Pierce.

"Go ahead," said the sheriff. "But I don't know of any reason why Dave would go to Hidden Valley."

"Mebbe he went down to try and find Sandy Shores," suggested Dutch Hess.

"Rot!" snorted Buck. "Dave couldn't even walk good. Anyway, he offered a thousand dollars reward, and it's a cinch he wouldn't be out tryin' to win his own money."

Time passed slowly for Sandy, but

he was content to wait. Idaho puttered around the ranch, keeping an eye out for anybody who might come down the road. Late in the afternoon inaction palled upon him, so he saddled a horse, took his rifle, and headed north.

At the foot of grades leading down into the valley, he almost ran into Ponca, Dutch, and Ed, who had tied their horses off the road and were squatting in the shade of a live oak, playing cards.

"They're either watchin' the road, or killin' time," decided the old cowboy as he left the road and circled to the east.

After a long detour he reached the road again. Passing the forks at the Wells Road, he struck into the hills, completed a number of aimless circles, where he could watch his back tracks, and eventually came out about two hundred yards north of the old adobe where he squatted in the brush, the rifle across his lap.

DARKNESS comes swiftly after sundown in the desert country, and Sandy's only light was the glimmer of stars through the broken roof. He could see the faint outlines of the old doors and windows, but there was not enough light for him to see the face of his old watch.

Crouched on the old beam, he strained his ears for any sound. He heard the scrape of a boot on gravel, and later he thought he heard whispering voices, but it might have been a soft wind through the old ruins. He felt that there were people down there in the darkness, outside the old walls.

Then he heard the sound of galloping hoofs, far away. The rhythm of the beat was changed, and after a while he heard the soft *plop* of slow-moving hoofs, as the animal turned

off the road and came up toward the front of the old adobe.

The horse stopped, and he heard the creak of saddle leather as the rider dismounted.

"Sandy!"

It was Elsie's voice, pitched low.

"Sandy!"

Sandy's jaw clenched tightly. He was afraid to answer her; afraid there were others to hear his voice.

"Oh!" Elsie screamed softly.

"Sandy!"

"Elsie!"

A man's voice had answered her. A shot crashed out. Two more, close together. Sandy saw the spurt of flame from the two guns. Elsie screamed, and a man cried out in pain.

"Dad!" screamed Elsie. "Oh—they shot him!"

A man cursed, and Sandy heard running feet. He swung crosswise of the old beam, clawing with his hands as he slid over the edge.

"I'll get a doctor!" exclaimed Elsie. "Whoa, Chica! Whoa, Chica."

"Wait, Elsie!" called Sandy. "I'm comin' down."

It was a long drop, and one of his heels caught over the edge of a timber, nearly breaking his leg and throwing him heavily. Dimly he heard Elsie screaming as he staggered to his feet. He wondered why she was screaming as he stumbled through the old doorway.

Somewhere near him a man cursed triumphantly, and a shot was fired almost against his eyes. He saw the flash, and a mighty blow knocked him to his knees. He was trying to get up, but he did not seem to have any control over his legs. He could not hear any sounds, except those he was making himself.

"I'm a lot of help," he told himself. "Jist a lot of help."

A voice boomed in his ears, the hard, cold voice of Idaho Jones:

"Where are you, Sandy? What happened?"

He saw the flicker of a match light, and Idaho's strong hands grasped him by the shoulders. He managed to get to his feet.

"Did you git hit?" asked the old cowboy anxiously.

"Yeah!" panted Sandy. "I must have—I was down. Where'd they go? Idaho, I believe they got Buck Landis. I heard Elsie scream his name."

"Where'd she go?"

"Mebbe to get a doctor. But I heard her scream again. Oh, damn it, my head's all wrong."

"I've known that for years," said Idaho dryly. "Oh—oh! Here's somebody! Wait'll I light a match."

THAT somebody was Big Buck Landis, flat on his back, groaning softly. He had a bullet through his right shoulder and a bullet scrape across his temple, which was bleeding freely.

"So they've gone to shootin' sheriffs, too, eh?" muttered Idaho as the match flickered out. "Sandy, are you sure Elsie went to town?"

"I'm not sure of anythin'—except that *I'm* goin' to town."

"They'll get you sure, if you do."

"I can't help that. I've got to find Elsie and I've got to get a doctor for Buck. C'mon, Idaho."

"Of all the danged fools! Oh, all right. Where's yore bronc?"

"I know where he is; get yore own horse, if yo're goin' with me."

Sandy was slow in finding his horse. His eyes were still hazy from the flash of that gun, and his cheek was bleeding from where the heavy bullet had torn along his face. But he joined Idaho on the road, and

they went galloping toward Gun Sight City, riding knee to knee.

They jerked their horses to a sliding stop in front of the Peacemaker Saloon; but, except for the bartender and one other man, the place was empty. Whirling their horses, they galloped down to the sheriff's office, only to find it closed and locked.

"We'll get the doctor!" panted Sandy, and away they went again.

Doctor Leveen, absorbed in a book, looked up in astonishment at Sandy, who flung the door open and stumbled into the room. Sandy was dirty, bloody, wild-eyed.

"Elsie? Has she been here, doc?" blurted Sandy.

"Elsie Landis? No, she hasn't. Sandy, what—"

"Buck Landis—shot! He's in front of the old adobe on the Wells Road, doc. Hurt pretty bad—you get there quick."

The doctor was on his feet, reaching for his coat and hat. He did not stop to question Sandy, who looked at him dumbly, shook his head, like a fighter, trying to clear his fogged brain, and backed out.

"You're hurt, Sandy," called the doctor.

"I'm all right, doc; you tend to Buck Landis."

He went back to his horse, where Idaho waited for him.

"She ain't been here," said Sandy. "C'mon."

They circled the block to the Landis home, where Sandy walked stiffly to the front door. Mrs. Landis answered his knock. For several moments, the woman did not recognize him.

"It's Sandy Shores, Mrs. Landis," he told her. "Is—is Elsie here?"

"Sandy! Why, I—no, she isn't home now; she's out at Eastlands. What on earth is the matter, Sandy? You've been hurt."

He tried to smile, but it was only a grimace.

"I'll be goin' now," he said, and walked away.

She called to him from the lighted doorway, but he did not stop.

"Back to the Peacemaker, Idaho," he said.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUN BATTLE.

PONCA PRICE, the deputy, Dutch Hess, and Ed Walters were at the bar, having a drink, when Sandy and Idaho came in. Ponca saw their reflections in the back-bar mirror and slowly lowered his glass.

Ponca realized that he and his two companions were at a disadvantage, so he turned slowly toward the doorway.

"Shores!" he exclaimed softly, his eyes narrowing.

Dutch and Ed turned quickly.

"Yeah," replied Sandy easily. "Shores. And it might interest you to know that Big Buck Landis was shot to-night and he's layin' in the weeds in front of the old adobe on Wells Road."

"Buck Landis!" exclaimed Ponca. "Shot, you say?"

"You heard it," said Idaho coldly. "Shot down in the dark. And we know who shot him, you coyotes!"

Ponca Price was not appointed deputy sheriff from lack of ability with a gun. His right hand streaked for his weapon before the words were out of Idaho's mouth, but Idaho was not caught napping. His big Colt thundered past Sandy's right elbow, and Ponca's trigger finger tightened a fraction of a second too soon. He pitched forward, firing the shot into the floor, as Dutch Hess, partly shielded by Ponca's falling body, shot at Idaho.

Sandy was unprepared for this

sudden gun battle, but before Dutch could fire again, Sandy's bullet knocked him down beside Ponca. Ed Walters lifted both hands quickly, coughing from the powder smoke.

"I'm out of it," he declared. "Don't shoot."

Idaho, his left arm hooked over the edge of the bar, gritted softly:

"Get goin', Sandy. I've got it in the laig—can't walk. Keep goin'; find Elsie. I'm all right. Don't let 'em get you, kid."

Sandy saw the frightened eyes of the bartender appear above the bar top, as he backed out of the place. Back in the saddle, he was dazed and undecided what to do. He heard the rattle of wheels as the doctor galloped his buggy team out of town.

"Find Elsie," he muttered.

Men were running up the street, attracted by the sound of shots at the Peacemaker.

Sandy whirled his horse and galloped away.

"Ponca, Dutch, and Walters," he enumerated. "One chance left—and what a slim chance. C'mon, bronc, we're splittin' the breeze."

He rode swiftly in the darkness, down past the forks of the Wells Road, down the winding grades which led to Hidden Valley, but swung off on an old road a short distance above the floor of the valley.

Several miles unrolled beneath the hoofs of his galloping horse, before he saw the dark bulk of some old buildings at the right of the road. He slowed down, swung off his saddle at an old gate, and dropped his reins over a post. There was not a light showing. It was the tumble-down ranch of Limpy Lucas.

Cautiously Sandy approached the front door. Limpy Lucas had

played him false in showing some one else that note. Sandy guessed rightly that Buck Landis had suspected Elsie and had followed her, only to be shot down by the ones who had read that note and had prepared the ambush. Right or wrong, two men had paid for that ambush.

Sandy listened closely for any sounds, but the place was as quiet as a graveyard. He stepped up and knocked softly on the door. There was no answer, so he knocked loudly, and discovered that the door was not even fastened. He shoved it wide open with his six-shooter, and called Limpy's name.

Still there was no answer. Sandy drew back and considered his next move, wondering where Limpy might be. He reached in his pocket, took out a match, and stepped just inside the doorway, as he started to scratch the match on his boot heel. At that very moment something struck him over the head, and he seemed to be falling for hours.

HE finally struck bottom with a terrible crash. He heard a laugh, and after a few moments he became cognizant of his immediate surroundings. In a hazy way he understood that he was on his back on the floor, his hands tied behind him, and a terrible roaring in his head. His mouth tasted salty, and any effort increased his nausea.

He blinked at the yellow light from a lamp, and gradually he was able to distinguish objects—people. There was Elsie Landis, sitting in a chair, staring at him. Her face appeared white and drawn in the yellow light.

He twisted his head and glanced the other way. Dave Pirece looked down at him. The rancher's hair was matted, face streaked with dry

blood. He was white-faced, too, except for the bloodstains. Sandy could see that Pierce's legs were tied to the chair. Elsie must be tied, too, because her hands were behind her back.

He heard that laugh again, and lifted his head off the floor to see Limpy Lucas beside the table.

"So you figured it out, didja?" said Limpy. His eyes looked blood-shot; wild eyes in a snarling, sneering face.

"Damn little good it'll do you though." He chuckled insanely. "All three of you. I've lived years for this."

"What's the matter with you Limpy?" asked Sandy.

Limpy leaned over Sandy, his bony hands clenched.

"You ask me what's the matter with me? Look at me! Limpy, that's me! Somethin' to laugh at. Draggin' one foot all my life. Yore paw and Dave Pierce done this to me. They done it so they'd have somethin' to laugh at. Laugh now, will you? No woman would ever look at me. A devil of a lookin' man, ain't I?"

"You thought you'd marry Elsie, eh? Well, it was me that mis-branded them Rafter P calves—the ones they put the dimes into. I run yore brand on 'em, Sandy Shores; and I sent you to prison. I put you where you couldn't have her. I thought mebbe yore paw would kill Dave Pierce, but he didn't, so I killed yore paw. He helped Dave Pierce make me somethin' to laugh at, and now I've got Dave Pierce.

"And when Tom McCall was goin' to marry Elsie, I stole yore old shotgun and killed Tom McCall. I'd kill any man that might marry her. I'm goin' to kill you to-night, and I'm goin' to kill Pierce."

"Listen to me, Limpy," said

Sandy, trying to speak calmly. "What you do to me don't make no difference. But if you harm one hair of Elsie's head, they'll skin you alive."

"Who are they?" demanded Limpy. "The sheriff? Hell, he's dead; I know he's dead."

In Limpy's twisted brain must have been the thought that as long as the sheriff was dead, all law ceased.

"He's not dead," denied Sandy. "The doctor is with him."

"Is that true, Sandy?" asked Elsie weakly.

"I got the doctor for him, Elsie; he'll pull through, I think."

"Thank God for that!"

Limpy laughed insanely. "Yo're lyin' to me; I know yo're lyin'."

"When they get you, you won't think so. They might come any time."

Limpy stared at Sandy, his eyes mere slits in a white, evil face.

"Any time, eh?" he muttered. Then he turned, walked to the door, where he listened for a moment before slipping outside. When the door closed, Dave Pierce said:

"I'm sorry, Sandy—about sendin' you to the pen."

"Think of somethin' besides sorrow," replied Sandy. "We're in a devil of a fix, Pierce."

"What can we do?" asked Elsie. "Limpy's crazy."

"Crazy as a loco-eatin' rattler," said Sandy.

"Listen, Sandy," said Pierce. "I've got a gun inside my shirt. He overlooked it. It's loose in there—but it might as well be in New York, for all the good it'll do."

"Wait!" whispered Sandy, pulling himself to a sitting position. He swayed and jerked across the few feet that separated them.

"Is it on this side, Dave?" he whispered.

"Yeah; saggin' over my belt. But even if you got it——"

SANDY shoved his face under Pierce's bound arm, grasped a mouthful of shirt, and yanked upward. Again and again he yanked out shirt, praying steadily that Limpy would stay away.

Finally, with a last jerk, the shirt came out, and the gun clattered to the floor. Sandy twisted his body around and grasped the gun with one of his hands. He was obliged to hold the gun upside down, but by bracing himself against Pierce and the chair, he was able to get to his feet, which were tied tightly together. Then he turned his back to the door, watching over his shoulder.

Limpy came in and carefully barred the door. He did not see the stooping form of Sandy Shores. In his hands he carried several sticks of dynamite and a short coil of fuse.

"Nobody comin'," he said, and laughed harshly, as he started to straighten out the fuse. "Even if they do, it'll be too late, 'cause I'm goin' to blow——"

At that moment Sandy squeezed the trigger. The light flickered from the heavy concussion, and a bottle fell off the table. Limpy was still standing there, a look of amazement on his face. Slowly the coil of fuse slipped from his fingers, and made a soft swishing noise, as it recoiled again on the floor.

Came the sharp *click-click*, as Sandy managed to draw back the hammer again. But he did not have to shoot a second time. Limpy went down slowly, sprawling in a heap in the middle of the floor.

There was a sound of galloping hoofs, which stopped near the door, and in a few moments Idaho Jones,

limping badly, and with a bandage tied tightly around one leg above the knee, stumbled inside. He was hatless, and little beads of perspiration flickered on his bald head.

"Are you all right?" he asked anxiously.

"We are now," replied Pierce. "It was a mighty close call."

Idaho looked down at Limpy, then at the others.

"What did he do, shoot himself?" asked Idaho.

Sandy turned around and showed Idaho the gun in his hand.

"Well, I'd kiss a pig!" snorted the old cowboy. "I reckon I better cut you folks loose. What are you doin' down here, Pierce?"

"Kidnaped by that maniac," replied Pierce. "He spoke to me as I left Doc Leveen's place last night, and then hit me with somethin'. I woke up down here."

"He hit me, too," said Elsie weakly. "I—I don't know how he brought me down here."

"He shot dad," said Sandy. "He told us he did. He said he shot Tom McCall, too."

"Yeah, and that ain't all," said Pierce, flexing his sore wrists. "He run Sandy's brand on our calves, and made us send Sandy to the pen."

"Well, can you imagine that!" snorted Idaho. "Sandy, they'll have to give you a pardon for that. Think of it, kid!"

"I'm thinkin', Idaho."

"Well, here's more to think about. Ponca Price cashed in to-night, but before he died, he come clean. Him and Tom McCall and Pete la Borde and Dutch Hess was the ones that tried to rob that train. It was their first job. Ponca was scared that me and you knew who it was, so it was Ponca who tried to murder me back in the hills. He wasn't sure, so he came out to the ranch. He didn't

know Pete was there, and accident'ly killed him. As an outlaw gang, they was a terrible bunch of misfits."

"My father?" queried Elsie anxiously.

"Oh, yeah," replied Idaho. "He's goin' to be all right. I met him and doc at the forks. Doc says he'll prob'ly be better than ever."

"Well, I suppose we might as well be pullin' out for home," said Pierce. "I'm sorry all this killin' had to be done, but I'm glad things turned out like they have."

"What about me bein' a little glad?" asked Sandy.

"And me, too," added Elsie.

Idaho stepped in between them and put an arm around each of them.

"You know, I'm kinda glad, too. even if I have got a hunk of lead through m' laig that kinda crippled

me for a while. Elsie, I'm goin' to make yore paw admit that as a prophet I'm jist a little over one hundred per cent. Fate, that's what it is; aided and abetted, as the lawyers say, by a crazy man and an upside-down pistol shooter."

"And," added Sandy, "by an old bald-headed rannihan that couldn't stay home and mind his own business."

Idaho looked critically at Sandy and shook his head.

"Yo're a fine-lookin' thing for anybody to love—but go ahead and ask her, while me and Dave finds some transportation. I'd like to git everythin' settled, you know."

"He doesn't need to ask me, Idaho," said Elsie softly.

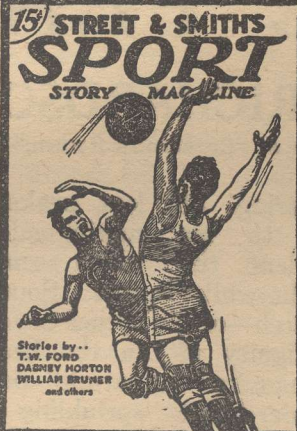
"Good! Everythin' is cleared up, Dave; let's git the horses."

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PATRIARCH OF THE PEAKS

By FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE

Author of "Buckaroo's Return," etc.

ALIGHT powdering of snow clinging to his thick pelage lent the great bull elk the whiteness of a patriarch—and a patriarch he was in dignity of bearing and wisdom. No man knew his age, but a few of the older forest rangers had long known him, and they affectionately named him Old Moses.

It was a fierce land which bred Old Moses—the Olympic Peninsula in the most northwesterly part of the United States. Here tower si-

lent peaks eternally snow-crested; roaring gales sweep the harsh ridges which seemed to rip into the blue sky. Somber forests of fir and spruce cover the lower country, and in the heart of these forests are natural pastures and a generous sprinkling of lakes which gleam like jewels. Here, too, the streams run faster, the trout fight a little harder, and the cougars are a little fiercer. It is the most distant edge of the West.

Year after year Old Moses had watched over his band, guarding

them against cougars and coyotes; leading them to the best areas to graze and browse; teaching the calves to swim and bathe in the lakes. He knew, as all wild creatures know, there must come a day when age would make him unfit for leadership. He knew, too, that until a younger and stronger bull appeared, no other was capable of taking that leadership.

To-day, Old Moses was feeling the weight of his years. Since morning the pitiful bawling of the hungry calves was in his ears. Their cold noses nuzzled the dry udders of their half-starved mothers, and often they would drop in the snow, exhausted. Then Old Moses would prod them into action, and from somewhere they found strength to follow.

In his way, perhaps, he conveyed to them the fact he was taking them to a new feeding ground, and this gave them the courage to go on. On a wind-swept flat the old bull paused and looked back to assure himself none of the weaker animals had fallen. All were in the trail his great body was literally smashing through the heavy drifts. All were closely following except one. To the left, present, but never quite with the herd, stood the renegade bull, the wayward son of Old Moses's family.

WITH a curious mixture of pride, hope, and doubt, Old Moses gazed briefly at the renegade. Then his inspection shifted back on the cows, with the bawling calves leaning against their mothers. The weary trek was resumed another hour, when again he stopped. The stream the band had been following, forked. The right fork led to Low Pass, beyond which lay Peaceful Valley with its crystal streams, natural parks, and rich meadows. The left fork led to

High Pass and beyond that, too, was rich forage—and cougar country.

The rich forage had attracted deer and elk, which in turn had attracted the big cats, as well as the skulking coyotes which fed off the cats' leavings.

Old Moses knew all about the rich forage and cougars of the High Pass country, so he took the right fork. If all went well, the band would be feeding to-night.

As he drew near Peaceful Valley, vague fears took form and became clean-cut facts. The odor of green, growing things was lacking. In its stead, Old Moses caught scents he associated with fire and terror—the odor of charred wood.

He pushed ahead, belly-deep in the snow, with the eager, hungry creatures who looked to him for life and protection, crowding at his heels.

The right fork ended in a frozen spring covered with drifts, and there was a small divide ahead. The old bull lunged through the last snowy barrier and gazed in bewilderment. This was Peaceful Valley, but it was no spot that he recognized.

The pasture with grass and wild hay was gone. No hint of the natural parks remained, except in the form of charred stumps. Unknown to Old Moses, fire had swept through the valley the previous summer. Now no living thing remained as far as the bull could see.

The renegade bull smashed his way to the crest of a near-by knoll and peered at the desolation. The band was now complete to the last animal. For this Old Moses had led and guarded them—for starvation.

In the spring there would be grass, and perhaps the bones of a dead elk band for the first rangers and game wardens to see. And a hundred springs in the future there

would be natural parks and timber, for the surrounding trees and wind would seed the area. Men might again call it Peaceful Valley.

As Old Moses stood there, the weaker calves collapsed into the snow. Half-starved mothers licked them gently and lifted questioning eyes to their leader. The winter pelage wasn't sufficient to keep out the cold when the body was insufficiently fed. Old Moses considered.

A tired, wet old man who had struggled all day only to find a cabin larder empty at night, might have understood Old Moses's reactions as he gazed on the desolate scene. He turned ponderously and looked on the members of his band. The elk were thinner; the long, hard trek had taken a great toll in good, hard meat and fat. The pounds had dropped off steadily, and more must drop before they again ate anything approaching a square meal.

Old Moses turned back to the forks and began breaking trail toward cougar country. A wind at his back swept away the clouds and carried the band's scent over the ragged, wind-swept ridges which notched the winter sky. The scent eddied about rocky lairs, and presently a gaunt cougar lifted its head, and a malevolent gleam came into its cruel eyes. Among the scents it identified that of a yearling—and a yearling should be easy to pull down. The muscles in the cougar's powerful body began to flow, and it descended to High Pass with the swift silence of storm-blown fog.

A PALE moon came over the mountains and flooded the land with a ghostly light. There were stirrings in shadowy thickets, and an owl soared on silent wings through the frosty air. Suddenly it dropped, and there was an

agonized scream. Something writhed in its talons. The cougar looked up briefly; his turn would come later. The moon rose higher and cast the distorted shadows of the elk band on the snow. Tragedy stalked on every side. It was in the very air. Old Moses had known a thousand such nights. Instinctively the band drew closer, and the renegade bull moved in—the nearest he had come since the beating Old Moses had administered during the October love moon.

The snow deepened, a crust formed, and progress was only possible by repeated lunges. Steam plumed from the old bull's nostrils; his heartbeats were visible against his sides, and the sobbing of his lungs was audible to the renegade bull who was laboring as hard, but with less physical distress.

Over the crust skulked gaunt, cowardly shadows, circling the band warily, seeking a calf which might weaken. Coyotes! The cougar hissed in disgust as a coyote passed within a rod of the ledge where it crouched. They were cowardly creatures which never took a chance.

Old Moses saw the portals of High Pass directly ahead. If he could smash his way through, then progress would be downward and easier. By daylight the exhausted band should be browsing on its new range. He gathered his strength for the final thrust, and was pushing ahead when his wise old eyes caught a trace of a movement on a rocky ledge.

A shrill, sliding shriek ending in a terrific bawl was his warning to the band. At the same instant the cougar leaped. One paw raked the bull's left shoulder, leaving deep, crimson furrows. The cougar leaped again, but the snow broke under the violent backthrust of its springing legs

and threw it off balance. The leap fell just short.

The scent of fresh blood has a strange effect on wild creatures. The hunter's attack is quickened, and the odor strikes terror in the hearts of the hunted. The yearlings and cows milled about, bawling in terror, and found some scant measure of comfort in shoulder-to-shoulder contact. The calves huddled close to their mothers, watching the fearsome, tawny creature that attacked so swiftly the eye missed many of the movements.

Old Moses reared and struck out with his front hoofs. The cat eluded them by a narrow margin. A cloud of vapor burst angrily from its mouth. As it shifted to better footing, a coyote, emboldened by the odor of hot blood, launched himself from a thicket and slashed viciously at the bull's hamstring, which, if severed, would bring him down. The fangs went deep, but missed. Old Moses whirled and drove his head into the coyote's furry body, then, with an angry toss of antlers, hurled it, writhing, aside. An old cow stamped the remaining life from the body.

The cougar leaped again, front paws finding lodgment on the bull's spine, while the hind claws dug into his foreleg. The cat's fangs tore at the bull's throat. He fell, rolling the cat under him. The snow broke the crushing impact of the fall and saved the cougar briefly. The bull staggered into deeper snow, and a second coyote, running lightly on the crust, slashed at an exposed flank and withdrew with crimson fangs.

ABOVE, the cold moon lifted higher, as if to bring more light on the primal scene. The bull ignored the coyote for the greater foe. He forced the attack,

and the cougar bounded back. A ridge of snow broke and threw it off balance. The bull's forefeet struck out, and crimson showed on the tawny coat for the first time. Steam burst from the cat's nostrils as if suddenly forced from the lungs.

Bugling, Old Moses drove his sharp hoofs into the cat again. A second cat, attracted to the scene, slunk to an overhanging ledge and peered down, tail lashing nervously. Here was food for the taking—enough for several cats. There would be no quarreling over spoils.

It was a long drop, but the blood scent broke down lingering caution. The cougar shot outward and struck Old Moses full on the back. The bull went down, then tried to rise. A paralysis had swept through him. He was conscious of all that was taking place, but there was no physical pain. The hateful face with its gleaming fangs darted at his throat, but there was no sensation of torn nerves and flesh.

So this was death!

Old Moses did not ponder on such things as death. His reasoning powers did not extend that far. He knew without a leader his band was doomed. Only the strongest bull could protect a band in cougar country. He could see his son, the renegade bull, on the edge of the herd, watching.

The renegade was a superb animal. There is nothing more lordly in the deer family than the bull elk. He stood almost five feet at the shoulder, and weighed over seven hundred pounds, and his massive antlers, measured along the beam, were also five feet.

From the first the renegade had been a source of trouble, and a mischief maker. Again and again Old Moses had saved his life because he

ventured too far from the band, as a calf and yearling. When he was two years old, he had contested with Old Moses for the leadership of the band. He accepted discipline and partial banishment, but never defeat. If he couldn't be leader of this band, then his attitude was, "I'll form a band of my own." He had tried to cut cows out of the herd, and had given Old Moses busy months.

It was to the renegade the old bull, helpless from a spinal blow, now turned. The renegade had watched the fight from the first, expressing his feelings by pawing the snow and bugling, or tossing his magnificent head defiantly. Mischief, or cutting out cows for a band of his own, was not involved here, and discipline ran strong. Old Moses had taught him never to interfere.

When the old bull went down, the renegade's fury increased. His charge was terrible in its fury, as if the floodgates of his rage had suddenly burst. He moved in a direct line, bowling over a cow and two calves which managed to get in the way.

The cougar, larger than the first which had attacked Old Moses, whirled snarling and confident to meet the renegade. With a bound it was beyond danger. The renegade charged on until the cougar was between himself and the old bull.

THE cat, realizing it must dispose of this second bull before it could kill the first, began to circle. A coyote cut in and tore at Old Moses's flanks. He bawled angrily, and the creature backed off, uncertain.

The renegade was now meeting his first test. Fangs and claws tore at his flesh as the cougar launched

a sudden attack. There welled within him a desire to run from this snarling creature, but this passed, and pain merely served to increase his anger.

He lacked the certainty of attack the old bull displayed, but his movements were quicker. And he learned with each passing second; learned at the cost of hot blood and rasped nerves. A small pack of coyotes now squatted about, waiting to gorge themselves. One great bull was down, a second was bleeding. After that there would be a band of cows, yearlings, and inexperienced bulls, not to mention tender calves.

There would be other cougars among the ridges to pull down the elk from time to time, so the coyotes watched with dripping fangs and bright eyes.

The renegade charged and almost caught the cat against a rock. One of the antlers broke off a foot from his head, leaving a sharp, ragged stump. The cat leaped to a low ledge, whirled and dropped, intending to break down this bull as it had broken down the first. With a defiant bugle and toss of its head, the bull whirled. His timing was perfect. True, the greater portion of the cat's weight struck his spine. True, he almost went down. But the broken antler drove deep into the furry stomach. The renegade tossed his head in a mad effort to rid himself of the writhing creature. The broken stump drove deeper. The bull charged into a tree and emerged with the cat struggling on the stump and spread of sharp prongs.

The renegade stood briefly, with legs set far apart, breathing heavily. The cat had ceased its struggles, and the long, furry tail, curiously hard for all of its fur, dangled across one

of the bull's bloodshot eyes. The weight was bearing him down, bowing even his strong neck. The coyotes were beginning to move about, sensing helplessness and the moment for successful attack. These creatures would not kill him. They would break him down, then eat him alive.

He turned his burdened head toward another tree with low-hanging branches, and charged. There was a splintering of wood, a sharp snapping of antlers, and the renegade emerged with twin stubs on his head. Behind, there lay in the snow broken branches and a tawny mass of fur impaled on an antler.

Long the renegade stood there, heart pounding against his ribs, lungs sobbing for air. A breeze stirred, and snow began dropping from the burdened firs and spruces. The renegade turned toward the huddled mass of cows, yearlings, and calves. A restlessness was among them—the restlessness that comes after an interval when flesh, nerves, and muscles are frozen with fear.

The renegade's youth responded to the demands he made on a tired and undernourished body. He pushed into the deeper snow, smashing a trail through the portals of the pass. Beyond lay cougar country, with its rich grazing and browsing valley. But what of cougar country? The renegade was confident. He had met one of the great

est cats under adverse conditions and triumphed.

His victory had been at the cost of torn flesh, blood, and a lordly pair of antlers. What he suffered in personal appearance he had gained in self-confidence. In April new antlers would begin to grow.

The coyotes blocking the way slunk to cover. When the renegade was gone, they would finish the silent monster rangers affectionately called Old Moses. One by one the band passed the old bull. When the last had gone, Old Moses twisted a leg into position. There was sensation in it now. He heaved, got almost to his feet, and fell. Something in his spine snapped as a slightly dislocated vertebra slipped into place. He felt the sensation that is life and movement flow through his limbs. Again he struggled, and this time remained on his feet. He knew his reserve was almost drained, but the broken trail was not hard to follow, and down there in cougar country plenty of food would restore his strength. And so he moved, with honor and dignity, a lordly bull who had played his appointed rôle in wild life until another of his kind had fitted himself to take the leadership.

Ahead of him was the ease and the freedom, that a patriarch—a patriarch of the peaks—deserves. Behind, the coyotes scattered, seeking less formidable game.

A Thrilling Novel,

"SPEEDY FROM NOWHERE," by H. BEDFORD-JONES,

in Next Week's Issue.



GUN GIFT

A Serial

By MAX BRAND

EMBITTERED by the loss of his right hand, Daniel Finlay, who practices law in the town of White Water, finds pleasure in being a secret trouble maker. He sees a fine opportunity for mischief when Mary Wilson, a pretty young girl, happens to be noticed by Bob Witherell, a handsome gunman whom Finlay has successfully defended on the charge of robbing a stagecoach.

The lawyer tells Witherell that Mary Wilson is engaged to John Saxon, a hard-working young fellow who has a place in the mountains where he has a small herd. And by praising Saxon, Finlay sets Witherell's mind against that young man.

As a result, Witherell shames Saxon before the people of White Water by making him dance to the tune of a six-gun; then Witherell and his companion's burn Saxon's place and rustle his herd. Unable to gain redress, or the money for a new start, Saxon despairs. About to commit suicide, he is stopped by Finlay, who gives him a revolver and prevails upon him to learn to use it for the sake of revenge.

After two months' practice with the .45 in the wilderness, Saxon returns to town and secures a job as bouncer at Lefty Malone's Rolling Bones Saloon. Witherell comes to the place, and Saxon kills him in a gun duel. Finlay then reminds

Saxon that Witherell's brother, a notorious desperado known as the "Solitaire," will seek to avenge the killing. The lawyer sends Saxon to Boots Russell, who formerly rode with the Solitaire, but has fallen out with him. Boots agrees to join forces with Saxon against the Solitaire and the four men who ride with him.

Boots recruits three other hard young men, Del Bryan, Joe Pike, and Tad Cullen; also Arthur William Creston, a huge Negro, who cooks for the group. They locate the Solitaire's hang-out. In a gun battle, a bullet furrows Saxon's scalp; but two of the Solitaire's men are killed, and one wounded, and the noted desperado is forced to flee with the survivors. Left behind is the loot of many robberies, which Saxon and his men divide.

Returning to White Water with his share, Saxon tells Finlay what he has done. The lawyer insists that Saxon turn over the money to him, saying he will find the rightful owners. Finlay then plots to have Saxon killed by the Solitaire, so that he may keep the money for himself.

Approaching Finlay's house the next night, Saxon encounters the Solitaire. In the dark, their battle, with guns and then with bare hands, is inconclusive, the Solitaire fleeing when the town is aroused.

After this failure of his scheme, Finlay arranges another ambush. He has Saxon accompany him on a trip to a bank at Stillman which has been raided by the Solitaire; ostensibly this journey is to be made to return the stolen money. En route, the Solitaire shoots Saxon at a river bank, and he falls into the stream. Finlay then rushes back to White Water, with the story that he was robbed of the money in his

custody, and Saxon killed, by bandits.

But Saxon has managed to hide himself in the water, almost submerged, and screened by brush. After his assailant is gone, he emerges from the river and binds his wound. He is found, unconscious, by Mary Wilson and Molly, a friend of the Solitaire's, who have ridden to warn Saxon of his peril. He is brought to the White Water Hotel to recuperate, and is guarded there by his men.

Finlay is not suspected, but one night he is held up by Tad Cullen and robbed of five thousand dollars—part of the money given him by Saxon.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TEN-DOLLAR BILL.

WHEN old Finlay had walked on, muttering savagely, Tad Cullen turned the next corner, then scratched a match, and looked down at the uncovered contents of the little parcel. When he saw the greenbacks he smiled. He flicked up the corners of them, and, assured that he had several thousand dollars in that thick sheaf, he jammed the money into his pocket.

He was a good deal ashamed of having robbed a friend of his boss's, but shame could not live long in a heart like Cullen's. When he cast about for what he would do next, he remembered that he had wanted a drink, and now he wanted it more than ever. Any sensible man, having raised such a wind, would have taken himself out of the town, but there was no savor for life in Cullen unless the days were freely sprinkled with danger of one sort or another. He simply trusted that his

face could not have been recognized by the lawyer's eyes in the dark beneath the trees, and therefore he rounded the corner and walked straight into the Rolling Bones.

There were half a dozen men in the place, and big Lefty Malone, with a black eye and a grin on his face, was serving the drinks. Cullen ordered a whisky and paid for it with the top ten-dollar bill from that thick sheaf he had taken from Finlay.

He was thinking: "Four or five thousand dollars in a lump! It sure pays to be a lawyer!"

While he pursued this thought, and sniffed at his whisky and then swallowed it, he did not notice that the bartender, instead of dropping the ten-dollar bill into the cash register when he rang up the change, stared intently at the bank note and then pursed his lips.

He made the change, with the absent-minded look of a man in thought. And the bill itself he laid on the shelf under the bar beside a long printed list of numbers.

Part of the money stolen from the Stillman bank could be identified by the numbers printed on the bills, and it was a similarity in the number on this ten-dollar bill that had caught the attention of Lefty Malone. For he had a peculiar interest in the ways of the law. Lefty had been on the verge of prison, in the very shadow of the bars, so to speak, more than once in his younger days. Now that he was out of trouble himself, he did not mind seeing others get into it. And now, in half a minute, he spotted the identical number that he was looking for!

When he had done that, he cheerfully filled two or three orders for drinks, stepped from behind the bar, and went into the back room of his

place, where six men were at a poker game. He closed the door and said:

"Gents, one of the Solitaire gang is outside at the bar. I've spotted one of the numbers of the bills that've been advertised. What'll we do about it?"

"Aye, it may be the right number, but the wrong man," said one of the gamblers. "It might 'a' passed through a good bit of circulation before it wound up in his hands."

"It's as fresh and straight as a playing card just out of a case," said Lefty Malone. "Boys, I reckon we'll take this gent in."

"If that's the lay of the land, sure we will," said they, and rose from their chairs.

That was why a little procession of men filed in from the card room, while Lefty himself went around behind the bar and busied himself at once with the washing of glasses.

It was a big man with a full front and a flow of pale mustaches who came up to Cullen and held a gun close to his head.

"Brother," he said, "how long's it been since you seen the Solitaire?"

CULLEN turned from the bar and faced the leveled Colt squarely. He felt that he was two thirds gone, but not entirely. Besides this fellow, five others had weapons in their hands, but, as though they trusted their comrade to conduct affairs safely and easily, none of those guns was pointed. It left, for the moment, only one weapon to deal with. And Cullen took note of the fact.

"I dunno what's eating you," said Cullen.

"Put up your hands, and you'll begin to find out," said the stranger.

Cullen obediently lifted his hands above his head. But in his eyes

there was a waiting shadow that was not entirely reflection.

"There's my hands touching the sky," said Cullen. "Now talk to me about the Solitaire."

"You bought a drink with a ten-buck note just now," said the stranger.

"It's a lot of money," said Cullen, "but cow-punchers have had that much before."

"Not with that number on the ten-spot—not with one of the numbers of the stolen cash from Stillman," said the stranger.

The eyes of Cullen opened very wide. It was not entirely of his own predicament that he was thinking. He was more troubled about another thing that bewildered him. If there was a number of a stolen bill in that heap of money which he had taken from Finlay, then how did it come into Finlay's hands?

To be sure, every one knew that a certain amount of the stolen greenbacks had been in Finlay's possession on the day when he rode with John Saxon through the Stillman Pass. But all of that money had been taken from him by the Solitaire's gang. That was the story which Finlay had published. And now—

The thing kept Cullen staring, wide-eyed. He could see echoing and reëchoing possibilities extending, so to speak, through the open window at the end of the bar and into the dark of the night. If Finlay retained part of that money, then he had it all! If he had it all, then he had never been robbed; if he had not been robbed, he had lied about the Solitaire gang. If he lied about that gang—might he not have worked hand in glove with them?

The story grew in the mind of Cullen. It staggered him. Finlay,

men said, was the best and the nearest friend of John Saxon. Such treachery was surely impossible, and yet—

"Harry," said the stranger, "step up and fan this gent. There's a coupla lumps under his coat that might be extra bandannas, but they might be guns, too."

"All right, boys," said Cullen, "but take it easy!"

Then he acted. The thing was not so hard. As the surety of the stout man increased, he had allowed the level of his Colt to decline until the hand which held it was hardly more than hip-high. And Cullen kicked up with all his might, accurately, and knocked that gun spinning up to the ceiling.

It exploded in mid-air and crashed a bullet through a bottle behind the bar.

The sudden act, the roar of the gun, the total surprise, made every man in that barroom jump; but Cullen jumped farthest of all. He went by the astonished face of the fat man like a streak. For the open window he headed, and dived into the dark of the night as into a soft depth of water. The fall on the hard ground nearly knocked the wind out of him. He went on staggering hands and knees to a patch of brush near by, and sat down in the middle of it as a stream of angry, shouting men poured out of the saloon.

They came through the back door. They came through the front door. Some of them leaped into saddles and rode vaguely up and down the street. Some of them ran over the empty field behind the saloon, but no one thought of looking into the heart of the little shrub that stood alone so close to the side of the saloon.

For an hour the excitement continued. After it died down, a good

crowd had assembled in the Rolling Bones to drink to the pleasant occasion, and through the window, Cullen could see the worthy sheriff lifting his glass with the others.

So Cullen stood up, stretched himself, and walked in leisurely fashion back to the hotel. He merely took care that, as he crossed the street, there was no one else in view.

In the back yard of the hotel he found his two companions, and Boots gave him an ugly greeting:

"Where you been all this time? Drinkin' a barrel? Is that what goin' to get a drink means to you."

"I've been sitting in a bush watchin' the boys hunt for me," said Cullen.

"You been what?"

"I'm a wanted man," said Cullen carelessly. "And now, don't ask me no more questions. I gotta see the chief, and I can't go up the stairs inside without bein' spotted by gents that might know me. Here. Gimme a boost and I'll climb up to the window from the outside here."

Creston it was who lifted him up.

"You're the gent that started the ruction on the street a while back? What you thinkin' about, anyway?" demanded Boots.

"Nothin'," said Cullen as he reached for the sill of the window of Saxon's room. "Only thinkin' that a lawyer can be a liar—and a murderin' sneak, too!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

STUNNING NEWS.

SAXON was not asleep in his room. Now that he was alone, with his light out, he faced in the darkness the thought of the Solitaire, and that thought made him get out of his bed and begin to manipulate his revolver. The familiar weight of it, gliding com-

fortably over his fingers, made him seem far stronger than he was, in fact. He was still very weak, but the right hand of a man is the last part of his body to succumb to weariness or the actual lack of strength. Therefore he could manage the heavy Colt almost as well as ever.

It was a great reassurance. He flashed the weapon at the dull glimmer of the doorknob. He aimed at the thin high light that touched the back of a chair, and at the gilded rim of the mirror. And every time he felt sure that the bullet would have flown true. His spirits were therefore rising when he heard a soft sound outside his window, and then saw the head and shoulders of a man outside the window frame against the stars.

He covered that form with his gun.

"Chief!" said a whisper. The voice became faintly audible as that of Cullen. "Hey, chief!"

Big John Saxon put away his gun. "Come in!" he invited.

He reclined on the bed, half dressed as he was, and saw Cullen quickly slip through the window.

"There's a lamp on the table here," said Saxon. "What's the matter?"

"I don't want any lamp for showing you what's the matter," said Cullen. "It's the kind of thing that you won't thank me for telling you. This is what it is."

He came close and crouched down into a chair beside the bed.

"Here," he said, "is a wad of money. Five thousand, lacking a mite. It's your money."

"How can it be mine?" asked Saxon.

"It's money that you started taking to Stillman that other day."

"It can't be that money," said

Saxon. "Finlay was carrying it all, and the thugs grabbed it all from him."

"Then you explain this to me," said Cullen. "I got busted in a poker game a while back. Boots cleaned me. I wanted a drink, and I was flat. I went around the corner and stuck up the first man I saw. It was Daniel Finlay. He tried to pull a gun with a left-handed draw, but I tapped him on the wrist, and he dropped it. I fanned him. He said he only had fifteen bucks on him. I pulled out this wad of five grand. I go to the saloon, and there I try to buy a drink, and Lefty Malone, he spots the number on the ten-spot. It's one of the numbers that the bank in Stillman advertised. Malone gets a crowd, and they jump me; I manage to wriggle out. And that's why I'm here handing you the package of dough."

Saxon lay back on the pillows, stunned. His brain picked up the ideas one by one, rejected them, refused to put them together.

"If that were true," he said, "then it would mean that Daniel Finlay—but he can't be! Finlay's the most honest man in town."

"Yeah, that's what I thought," agreed Cullen, and said no more.

"But what does it mean?" asked Saxon.

"I dunno," said Cullen. "I get the story, and I hand it on to you with the evidence. You can make up your mind about it better than I can!"

"I've got to see Finlay!" declared Saxon.

"Do you?"

"I've got to see him. Ask somebody to go to his house. He may not be in bed yet."

"I'll bet he ain't in bed," said Cullen. "Nobody puts up with a loss

of five thousand iron men all on the easy. He's awake, all right, if swearing can keep him awake."

"Send somebody for him. You'll have to get out of town."

"Yeah, I'll have to move."

"I wish, before you go, that I could have you handy when Finlay comes."

"I'll be any place you say."

"It's too dangerous for you. Go back to the shack. Do you need money?"

"I got some change now that'll do me, and there's plenty of grub at the house. I don't need any money. None of that marked poison, anyway. There's skulls and crossbones all over it."

"So long, partner."

"So long, chief. Good luck."

He slid through the window, and was gone as he came, merely murmuring from the window:

"I'll send somebody for Finlay."

AFTERWARD John Saxon lay back on his pillows again and tried to think the thing out. Suppose, he thought, that one of the thugs who robbed him had gotten into trouble in the meantime? What a queer freak of fortune if one of the very men who had taken the money from Finlay had afterward got into a jam and had to come to the lawyer he had wronged, and had had to give him part of the stolen money as a retainer.

But the thing was impossible, Saxon decided. There had hardly been enough time for such events to happen. Besides, honest Daniel Finlay would not be found in the criminal courts very often. He would pick his cases.

The long minutes went slowly by. Saxon lighted the lamp beside his bed, and presently a slow step came

up the hall, and a hand tapped at his door.

"Come in!" he called.

The door opened, and Daniel Finlay stood tall and lean on the threshold.

"Ah, John!" he said, and gave Saxon his smile.

He crossed the room and held out his left hand, which Saxon grasped. Intimately, gently, with the eye of a friend, he smiled down on John Saxon.

"You need something?" he asked.

The heart of Saxon melted.

"I had to see you, Mr. Finlay," he confessed.

"I'm glad you sent for me," said Finlay. "Sleep, as you know, does not come easily to me at night. My books keep me up, John. Study, and thoughts that do not come often in the day. Solitude, after all, is the happy region for the mind. And all evening I've been sitting there."

"Without going out at all?" asked Saxon.

"No. I kept at home," said Finlay.

Saxon sickened.

"Then it's a lie that I heard," said Saxon. "I heard that you'd been stuck up and robbed on a side street an hour or so ago."

Finlay received the shock by merely lowering his eyes. It was his way. With his eyes veiled, he could defy any glance, because his face in itself would never change color, would never betray him.

Where had Saxon heard the news? He himself, of course, had not dared to speak a word about his loss. For if it were recovered, how many questions would be asked?

"I'm sorry that you heard about that, John," he said. "As a matter of fact, I told a little fib just now in the hope that you wouldn't be upset."

"Is this the money that was taken from you?" asked Saxon. And he laid the sheaf of bills suddenly under the table lamp.

Finlay was shocked as by a bullet. For a wild instant he dreamed that Saxon himself might have performed the robbery. His brain whirled. Merely lowering his eyes would not serve him now. He would have to do something more, so he leaned far forward and brought his face very close to the sheaf of bills.

What should he say? What should he do?

There was a frightful temptation for him to snatch out his gun and empty it into the body of this man whom he had betrayed. But in that case he would have no escape. Too many people knew that he had entered that room.

"Yes, John," he said. "That's the money that was taken from me."

"Is it?" said Saxon, vainly searching the face of the lawyer, praying that he might find no guilt there. "And you know what money it is, Mr. Finlay?"

There could be only one reason behind that question.

And Finlay said, though it cost him strength out of his very soul to speak the words: "Yes, I know what money it is. Part of the money that you and your men took from the Solitaire's outfit."

"Mr. Finlay," said Saxon, with something like a groan in his voice, "isn't it part of the money that you were taking to Stillman for me? Part of the money that you were robbed of?"

"That?" said the lawyer, opening his eyes in surprise. "Tut, tut! Could they have exchanged it as soon as that? I don't think so. I really don't think so! It really couldn't be."

He shook his head calmly.

"It's strange," he said, "that this has come back to you."

"Aye," said Saxon. "It's strange. It's too strange, Mr. Finlay. And—it makes me a little sick."

HE closed his eyes, and while they were shut, Finlay allowed one flash of hate to cross his face. For it was too absurd that this clumsy-witted dummy, this stupidest of men, this most malleable of tools, should have been drawn by chance or speculation, or by both combined, to suspect him.

There was treachery in fate, if this were the case. But it would be strange indeed if he did not manage to hoodwink the gull again.

"Great heavens, John," he cried suddenly, "is it possible that you suspect—that you dream—no, no, my dear lad! You don't doubt Daniel Finlay! You don't think that I could ever——"

"I don't want to doubt you," said Saxon, looking up with a real agony in his eyes. "I certainly don't want to doubt you, Mr. Finlay. I'd rather do anything than doubt you. This thing sticks into me like a knife. I can't help wondering how you happened to have that money on you!"

"Shall I tell you, John?" asked Finlay.

"Aye, tell me!"

"I wonder if I should?" said Finlay. And his eyes wandered away toward empty space and the stars beyond the window frame. His mind was empty at that moment, and no possible expedient appeared to him.

"I have to know," said Saxon. "No matter what it costs, I have to know the truth!"

That instant the device came readily into the mind of Finlay. Joy burned through him

"The fact is," he said, controlling the exultation that worked the muscles of his throat, "the fact is that I think I *shall* tell you, John. It's a very strange thing, but I'm going to try to explain it to you. Your nerves are quite steady, John?"

"Aye, steady enough."

"But wouldn't it be better if I were to show you the mystery as well as talk about it?"

"Can you do that?"

"Yes. Are you well enough to take a short walk—a very short walk?"

"I'm well enough to walk miles if I can get rid of the doubts that are in me, Mr. Finlay."

"It's only a matter of going to the house where that friend of your Mary lives. Do you know where Molly lives?"

"Yes, I know where the house is. Do you know her, Mr. Finlay?"

"In my business," said the lawyer, "you know it is necessary for me to meet many strange people. She is one of the strangest, John!"

"What can you show me there?"

"Ah, I can show you at once—no, if you are able to take the walk, it's better for you to wait and see with your own eyes a thing that will astonish you—but it will make all clear."

"I'll go," said Saxon. "I'd go if I had to crawl on my hands and knees. Mr. Finlay, if I can't believe in you, I can't believe in anything!"

"My dear lad!" said Finlay.

He added: "I'm going home. I must do that first. Then I am going to return in an hour's time, and I'll meet you in the lane beside the hotel. It will be easy for you to get there. Just turn on the stairs and go out the side door, and no one will see you. Good-by for a moment, John!"

CHAPTER XL.

A GIRL'S QUANDARY.

BUT it was not to his home that Finlay went. With his left hand still tingling with the parting grip of Saxon, he left the hotel and walked straight to the old Borden house. When he knocked on the front door, the voice of Molly called out:

"Who's there?"

"Finlay," he answered.

Her quick, light step approached. She unlocked the door and held it open.

"Come in, Danny Devil," she said. "Nice to see your jolly old mug again, twice on a night."

Finlay gave her not a look. He went to the table where the Solitaire was lounging aslant in his chair, still sipping coffee. The man was as handsome, as graceful as a fine black panther. His steady eyes, fearless as the eyes of a beast, considered Finlay with interest, but with no kindness.

"Well, Finlay?" he demanded.

"I've got him in a bag," said Finlay. "I've got him ready for you. I'm ready to bring him here and pop him into the house."

"Saxon?"

"Yes."

"You mean you'll bring him here to-night? But he's still sick in the hotel."

"He's well enough to walk—and handle a gun. I wanted to show you that I really live up to my engagements, Solitaire. Now I want to finish off my old share of the bargain—I want to wash my hands of it by bringing him to you here."

"That's right, Danny," said the girl. "Wash your hands in blood. That's the best way. That'll make 'em clean."

Finlay turned on her in a rage.

"You devil!" he said to her.

"My, my, listen to Danny talk!" said Molly. "What a little gentleman he is!"

"Shut up!" said the Solitaire to the girl. "You—Finlay—you mean, really, that you can walk the swine into this house to-night?"

"I can."

"But he'll have twenty men with him, eh?"

"He'll come alone. He'll come if he has to crawl!"

The Solitaire leaped to his feet, exultant.

"Finlay," he said, "you're one of the great men of the world. You're the greatest man that I ever knew. Bring him here, of his own accord, and I'll call you the champion devil and wizard of the world!"

He began to laugh.

Finlay said: "You'll have your man. You haven't been drinking, Solitaire?"

"No."

"Have you got other men around here—in whistling distance?"

"Yes."

"Get 'em in here. Because—Saxon has to die!"

"Even John Saxon is on your trail, is he?" said the girl. "Even honest John is opening his eyes and watching the fox a little?"

"Solitaire," protested Finlay, "it chokes me to have to listen to her. Will you get more men in? Will you make sure of Saxon?"

"I'll make sure of him. I'll get 'em in," said the Solitaire. "How long before he'll be here?"

"Forty minutes—or less."

"Forty minutes? Only forty minutes?" The Solitaire threw both hands above his head in a glory of triumphing.

Then he cried in a great voice: "Get out—and bring him, then! I'll have the trap ready."

Finlay, for some reason, hesitated for one instant, staring dubiously at the girl. Then he turned and left the room.

THE Solitaire, after the lawyer had left, began to pace up and down, his shoulders cleaving the fog of cigarette smoke which rippled together again in his wake.

"Forty minutes! And already they're passing. Molly, when I think of laying that rat dead on the floor—when I think that he's going to lie there—on the floor—dead—dead!"

He laughed joyously, went to a front window, and threw it open.

"Going to call in the hounds, Solitaire?" said the girl.

"I'll whistle in a couple of the boys," said the Solitaire.

"That's right," she answered. "Don't take chances. It doesn't pay a man to take chances when there's the old chill in him."

"What chill?" asked the Solitaire, turning toward her.

"Fear, boy!" said Molly.

"Fear? Of Saxon? I've stretched him out three times, and three times the luck has saved him!"

"That's it," answered Molly. "You're not afraid of Saxon. You're just afraid of his luck!"

"I'm not afraid of any part of any man living," said the Solitaire. "You know it, too. What's the matter with you, Molly?"

"No, you weren't afraid a month ago. You weren't afraid before Saxon came up to you. But it's different now, Solitaire."

He stared at her. She was calmly indifferent to his glance.

"I've seen it working in you for a long time," she told him. "I know how those things go. They start small, but they grow big. First

time you said that Saxon had had a lot of luck. Second time you called it luck, too, when he got away from you. But you had the marks of his hands on you just the same. There still are some black-and-blue spots on you. And you know that twice you've been made to run. That puts the cold in a man's blood—to have to run. You may not be afraid when you start sprinting, but you've got the ice on the back of your spine before you've gone two jumps. Then comes the third time—and your nerve is running out. You can't stand up to him alone!"

"You lie!" shouted the Solitaire. "I faced him alone."

"Aye, with three rifles at your back—just to make sure."

"Why not? I did the real fighting!"

"You're going to do it again to-night," said the girl, sneering. "You're just going to get a couple of rifles in—to make sure!"

He slammed the window down with a crash.

"I won't call 'em—if you think I'm afraid of any man——"

"I hope not, but I was sure beginning to wonder."

He came up to her slowly.

"You think a good deal about this John Saxon, eh?" he asked her.

"Sure. I think a lot of him," she said.

"If he got me, you'd be mealy mouthing around him in a minute!"

"That claim is all staked out," she said. "A better-looking girl than Molly has it. One of the real good girls, Solitaire—and he's one of the real good boys."

"I've really got an idea that you've been thinking a lot about him!"

"I have," she said.

"You're going to see a lot of him to-night, then," answered the Soli-

taire. "You've got a regular heart interest in him, and I'm going to hand you his heart—on a platter!"

"That's the way to talk, boy," she told him. "You do your best, too. It won't be any walk-over. You're getting him pretty weak and just out of a sick bed. But it won't be any walk-over. That right hand of his will be able to flash a gun."

"You sort of beat me," said the Solitaire, lowering his head and staring out at her from beneath his bent brows. "You've always beat me, one way or another. But there's nobody like you."

"Not yet, Solitaire," she answered.

"One of these days, soon, you know what? We're going to get married," said he.

"That's the way to talk," she said. "Just as if you already had jumped Saxon and left him behind in the dust. But he's not dead yet, old son. Not by a long shot. Sit down and pull yourself together. Go back there in the kitchen and sit down, and pull yourself together. You'll want steady nerves for this game."

He hesitated for an instant, as though in doubt of her motives. But finally he nodded.

"You're right," he said. "You nearly always *are* right. I'm going to pay a lot more attention to you from now on, old girl."

With that he left the room and walked into the kitchen, closing the door gently behind him.

The girl lay back in her chair, with her head far tilted, staring at the ceiling, trying to make up her mind. The doubt lasted a long time, and she was still in a quandary when she heard the two pairs of footfalls approach the house. After that came a gentle tapping at the front door.

"Come in!" she called.

And, as the door opened, she saw

Finlay and big John Saxon, looking drawn and pale against the black of the night.

CHAPTER XLI.

FLASHING GUNS.

TO Saxon, that red-lipped, dark-eyed girl was like something reappeared out of the past. She had changed from his picture of her, but not a great deal.

As he saw her there, reclining in the chair, only beginning to rise slowly, he tried to fit her into the other picture which Mary Wilson had given him of the white storm, and the mountain cold, and his own great body helpless, his mind lost in the wild sea of the delirium, and this girl taking charge of him.

He went across the room with awe in his face. When he took her hand, he said:

"Mary has told me a good deal. Not as much as you could tell. But she's told me a good deal."

She glanced at Finlay and shook her head at Saxon.

"Never mind," she said.

"I'm not to thank you, even?" asked he.

There was in her eyes such a curious expression as he never had seen before in the face of any human being. She seemed to be surveying him in flesh and in spirit. There was something at once affectionate and cold about her, something kind and cruel.

"Thank me?" she cried. "Thank me?"

She began to laugh in a manner stranger and wilder still. "Thank me for what?" she repeated. "For this?"

She pointed toward the door at the back of the room as she spoke, and then Saxon, turning, saw that

that door was opening softly and slowly—on blackness.

And suddenly he knew everything.

He spared one lightning glance aside at Finlay, and saw a face like a yellow stone, with a sneer carved on it. The left hand of Finlay was sliding inside his coat. His deadly eyes were glued to the face of Saxon.

"You—Finlay! No, not you!" breathed Saxon.

He saw the girl, too, standing back against the wall, with her hands spread out against it. She leaned forward a little. Perhaps there was some passion in her face, but above all there was a vast animal interest. It was as though she expected a most interesting play to commence—a scene wherein she might be summoned to the center of the stage!

Once—it was long, long ago in his childhood—Saxon had seen by moonlight two he-wolves battling savagely, and a she-wolf lying sleek and slender and aloof beside them, to eye the battle.

He thought of that—in a blinding flash he saw it—then he saw the Solitaire's face looming out of the darkness of the kitchen doorway.

"Saxon! Fill your hand!" shouted the Solitaire, and his own gun gleamed in a broken upward section of a crescent.

There was a strange falling sensation in Saxon—not of dropping to the floor, but of pitching straight forward at the open doorway. And there was no fear. It was as though the pain he had endured were a wind that had blown him clean of all terror. His gun had come out with a single lightning twitch. He had time to think of many things. He had time to remember how he had been in his hotel room, practicing with his gun at the gleaming edge of a

mirror. And the flash of the rising gun of the Solitaire was just such a mark.

The gun of Saxon was barely clear of his clothes before he fired.

The gun of the Solitaire thrust out into the lamplight and swayed to this side and that. It exploded, but the bullet merely ripped up the floor at Saxon's feet.

His own answering shot, he knew, drove straight through the middle of that shadowy bulk.

Then the Solitaire walked out of the doorway into the light, moving with small steps, the gun hanging down in his loose hand, dripping off the ends of his fingers, as it were. But there was something frightful about this disarmed advance, and the frightfulness was in the face of the outlaw. For he had the blank look of an idiot.

He was in his shirt sleeves. The shirt was blue; a big splotch of crimson was springing out in the middle of his breast.

"Finlay! Watch Daniel Finaly!" screamed the girl.

SAXON jerked about in time to see the long left arm of the lawyer sweep out from beneath his coat, carrying a blunt-nosed revolver. And Saxon used his own Colt like a saber to strike that weapon out of the hand of Daniel Finaly.

The gun went whirling and slithering along the floor. Finlay made no effort to regain it. He simply stood there as he had been at first, his face yellow stone, with the sneer carved on it.

"Solitaire! Solitaire!" the girl was crying.

She had run to him. She took the gun away from him and threw it on the floor.

"Solitaire, what's the matter? Don't look like that! Ah—my——"

Those last words came out in screams.

"He's going to die," said Saxon to Finlay. "Get out of here and—well, wait for me in your house!"

Finlay walked out of the room, and Saxon stepped to the girl. He tried to help, as she was guiding the Solitaire into a chair. She struck him in the face, raging, with her solid little fist.

"You've killed him!" she screamed. "You fool—see what you've done—you've killed him! You've killed the Solitaire! Oh, and I gave you your break—and you've killed him!"

The Solitaire lay back in his chair, all loose as pulp. Every bone in his body seemed to be broken. There was no life in his eyes. He had that same fool, blank look of a half-wit.

"What's the matter, Molly?" he said. Blood bubbles came up to his lips and broke into a tiny spray. "What's the matter? What time is it?"

She snatched out a handkerchief and wiped his mouth. She grabbed him by the hair of the head.

"Solitaire!" she said rapidly, savagely. "You're dying. Don't blabber like a fool. You've got to die like a man. You hear me? Solitaire! You're dying!"

"What's the matter?" repeated the Solitaire. "Something hit me—I'm kind of numb——"

His voice was so thick that it was hard to understand the words. The blood bubbles kept rising and bursting. The girl kept her grasp on his hair, and now she shook him.

"Solitaire! You're leaving me. You're going away from me. You're dying, and I'll never see you again. Solitaire! Don't you understand? Kiss me, darling, darling!"

"Hello, Molly," said the Solitaire. "What's the racket about? Leave go of my hair."

"Solitaire, I tipped him off—I gave him his play—and the fool murdered you. I didn't know. I thought fair play. Oh, wake up and say good-by to me!"

But the Solitaire would not say good-by. The blood bubbles no longer broke on his lips. His eyes looked beyond the girl; a loose smile had formed on his face.

Suddenly, understanding, she groaned, and drew his head to her in both her arms.

CHAPTER XLII.

FINLAY'S FAREWELL.

BIG John Saxon went with short steps back through the town. He tried to keep everything out of his mind, and by fixing his eyes on the objects of the night—shattered rays of lamplight, thin beams from the stars—he was able to be in the present moment, only.

When he got to the house of Finlay, he went softly up the front steps and pulled the door open without rapping. Finlay sat in the corner behind his desk. He had some packages of currency before him. He was calm, deliberate, at ease.

"How are you, John?" he said. "That was a clean bit of work that you did back there. Very quick and clean!"

For a moment Saxon had a sick feeling that the man might be trying to talk his way into another good position. For answer he pushed the bulldog revolver onto the desk, the muzzle pointing toward the lawyer.

"Certainly," said Finlay gently, almost cheerfully. "Of course, John. I understand perfectly. And I thought that, since we've done a good many things together in the

past, we might do one more at the present moment. I thought I could make a little bargain with you. Here is the rest of the money I've stolen from you. Nearly fifty thousand dollars more of it. See how money comes home to roost where it belongs, like so many good chickens! And furthermore, I'll be able to leave a tidy little sum to you, John, if you'll undertake not to tell what you know about me. I've always been a black devil, John, but a good many people have been thinking that I'm white. I've been a horrible hypocrite, of course. But it was my peculiar pleasure. We all have to have our pleasures, eh? We can't live when life is too dry a bone, you know. So I want to know if, in return for everything I have in the world, you'll not talk about what you know? There won't be much good in it. It will only be harming the dead, you see? Do you think you could do so much for me—for the sake of the friends that we used to seem to be?"

Saxon said: "There's the girl. There's Molly. She knows!"

"She'll never mention my name," said the lawyer. "I'm beneath her, you see. A great, savage soul like Molly would never even remember me, any more than she would remember dirt under her feet. Besides, she has her dead man to think about. Was it frightful—the dying, I mean?"

Saxon said heavily: "What did you mean, in the beginning—when you gave me the gun? What would you gain by seeing me kill Bob Witherell?"

"The pleasure of power that is not seen. The pleasure of a god in moving the minds of men. Isn't that understandable? Conceivable, I should say."

"And all the rest——" muttered

Saxon. "You were with the Solitaire when you seemed to be with me."

"I worked one against the other. I didn't much care, except that I wanted to see blood. Not until the money hunger got into me."

"Why, I admired you—looked up to you," said Saxon gently.

"Other people do, too," said Daniel Finlay. "What I'm begging is not life. Tut! I'm not afraid of dying. But I don't want to die out of the minds of all the people in White Water. I've always despised them. But now I see that they're my only immortality. Saxon, for the sake of mercy, will you give me my chance?"

"Yes," said Saxon suddenly, shortly.

He picked up the Stillman money.

"The rest—your own property—I don't want it, Finlay," he said. "But—good-by. Poor Finlay, I'm not hating you just now!"

"Aren't you?" said Daniel Finlay.

"No," said Saxon. "Good-by."

He held out his hand. It was grasped eagerly.

"After that," said Finlay hungrily, "I know that you'll be true to your word. You'll not speak ill of me, John. God bless you, God bless you! God forgive my evil life, and bless your good one! I tried to make you a crook, a scoundrel, but the steel in you was too straight and true. Good-by, John. Good-by!"

He saw Saxon pass through the door, and as the steps descended to the street, Finlay was already writing:

To All Whom It May Concern:

I, Daniel Finlay, being in my right mind and in full possession of my faculties, sit down to take away a life which is no longer useful to the world or pleasant to me. If I sin in so doing, I offer to the world, as my ex-

cuse, the many years of obscure pain and the friendless days of my existence. May all whom I have wronged—if any such there be—forgive me. If ever I have done good for men, may they pray for my wretched soul, lonely on earth, lonely, surely, in the life to come.

My property money, house, land—it is not much—I give and bequeath to a noble and glorious man, John Saxon, who was in this world the nearest of all my friends and the only one, I can attest, who really knew me.

(Signed) DANIEL FINLAY.

When he had finished this document, he pushed it to the farther corner of the desk, and took up, at once, the bulldog revolver which John Saxon had brought back to him from the Borden house.

Finlay began to smile, because he saw, suddenly, that his life held nothing, and that for years it had been really empty. He had done nothing but gull the gullible, and now his chance of retaining a favorable place in the memory of other men depended upon the charitable kindness of one of those who had been gulled and betrayed, and who knew all about the betrayal.

But it seemed to the lawyer that he had a fighting chance of winning out in the end. He was not altogether sure that by leaving his little estate to John Saxon he would bribe that young man. He rather doubted it. He saw, with a startled soul, what the truth was—that John would never be moved by money.

However, the arrangements were now made, and soon the soul of Daniel Finlay would be speeding beyond land and sea.

He picked up the gun again and lifted it. His last thought was of Molly and the Solitaire. All had been so well planned—and only the fact that Molly had pointed out to Saxon the opening of the kitchen door had destroyed the scheme. He

thought of the Solitaire alone, dying, and the blood bubbling on his lips.

By that red stain, among the newly come ghosts, he would be able to recognize his old companion in crime. With that fantasy in his mind, he looked down the muzzle of the gun. Some men were said to dread this moment, but not Daniel Finlay. He was still smiling as he pressed the cold, hollow rim of the barrel against his temple. He pulled the trigger. His ear heard no report. His body felt no pain. Death at one shadowy stride possessed him, and his head fell loosely back against the top of his chair.

In that position they found him, with his left hand pointing down to the gun on the floor, and his right arm lying on the desk, the puckered skin of the stump looking a little purple. He was smiling. His eyes were not quite closed. There was an air of great understanding in his face, partly disdainful, partly amused.

That was how a very good man ought to look, they thought. When they carried him to his grave, the entire town followed. They buried the Solitaire in the morning; they buried Daniel Finlay in the afternoon. The sheriff made the speech at the grave before the minister said the last words. The minister said:

"It is almost as though we had to pay for the worst by giving up our best!"

And the whole town prayed, or tried to pray, for poor Daniel Finlay.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE END OF A GUN.

SAXON was not at either of those burials. He had sent on a messenger to Stillman, and the messenger carried with him the loot that had been taken on that

other day from the Solitaire; after that, Saxon went back to bed.

He heard, there, the report of Finlay's death. He begged Mary to go to the Borden house. There she found a little crowd already gathered. The body of the Solitaire had been found laid out in his best clothes, with his hands folded across him and peace in his face.

Five hundred dollars was discovered in an envelope tucked under his head, and the envelope was addressed to the sheriff.

"You weren't man enough to kill the Solitaire," said that characteristic note, "but you may be man enough to bury him. John Saxon was crazy with luck four times, or he would have been four times dead!"

The letter was not signed. But of course it came from Molly. That morning, the whole town followed the body of the Solitaire to the grave, just as it followed Finlay in the afternoon; but Molly was nowhere to be seen.

That evening, word came from Stillman, brought by the weary president of the bank there. He not only brought thanks to Saxon, but he brought ten thousand dollars. He thanked Saxon with all his heart. This recouping of the losses would enable the bank to open its doors again, on top of the money that already had been regained.

Saxon gave back half of the reward.

He merely said: "Some months ago I was wiped out. Five thousand just about covers the money that I lost then. And that's all that I want back."

"And what about the blood you've lost, Saxon?" demanded the banker. "Doesn't that count?"

"It was bad blood," said Saxon, "and it had to come out."

He got out of the hotel and the town by night, a few days later. He had to escape like a fugitive in order to avoid the fuss that the townsmen would make over him because, only the day before, he had refused to take the estate of Daniel Finlay and, instead, had donated the whole thing to the welfare of the widows and orphans of the county.

"But why?" Mary Wilson had asked him. "Even if Finlay got his money in bad ways, you could use it in good ways, John. There wouldn't be any stain on it!"

"I don't want that kind of a dead man to put any food in my mouth," answered Saxon, and he could not be moved in his determination.

When it was found that the hero had left White Water in the night, there was a tremendous commotion. The sheriff and all the rest dashed here and there, making inquiries; only Mary Wilson knew where to go. She had encountered Boots and Creston, searching busily, and they asked her what she knew, but she only shook her head.

Then she got on the trail that led toward the old ranch and, sure enough, she found John Saxon under the shade of a tree, with his back against the trunk, looking over the blackened site of his house and the old sheds. His horse was grazing near by, hobbled, saddle and bridle off.

She was off her mustang and down at the side of Saxon before he could rise to prevent her.

"You knew I'd be here, eh?" he said.

"I hoped it," she answered.

He pointed to the blue nakedness of the upper mountains.

"It's a cold winter up here," he told her.

"It'll be a happy winter, though."

she said. "If only—if only you don't grow restless, John."

"I'll never be restless again," said Saxon.

He took off his hat. His face showed pale and drawn, and years older, and the bandage around his head was now a thin strip of white.

These months had left many scars, more in the spirit than in the flesh.

He pointed to a small spot of newly turned ground.

"The restlessness is buried there," he said.

"What is it, John?" she asked.

"Daniel Finlay's gun," he said.

THE END.

UNCLE SAM WANTS HIS UNFENCED

THE fight over wire fences which disturbed the Western cattle country a quarter-century or more ago is reverberating to-day in the mountains and canyons of New Mexico.

Secretary of the Interior Ickes decreed several months ago that unlawful fences on the public domain must be removed. The cattlemen protested that tearing down the fences in New Mexico would mean ruin to the industry in this State, which barely has survived the economic slump of recent years. Their cause is championed by many, including the State government.

At the present, all is quiet on the battle lines of drift fences while the cattlemen are of the opinion that Ickes will not force them to remove any fences until Congress has had an opportunity to pass legislation that will forever settle the issue.

Fences have been an issue in the cattle industry since barbed wire was invented. Forty or fifty years ago cattle could be driven from the Rio Grande to Montana without encountering a fence on the "trail." Although attempts were made to herd the cattle on the open ranges at that time, all the herds became intermingled more or less, and required much handling. During the late '90s the big syndicates began inclosing their lands to keep their cattle from "drifting" during storms, but also in order that their herds might be improved—an impossibility on the open range.

Disgruntled cattlemen who found fences a nuisance and water scarce protested even to the point of using arms. Modern ranchers divide their lands into several small pastures in which it is not necessary for a cow to walk more than a mile to water. On public lands in this State, however, only such fences as are needed to keep herds separated have been thrown up.

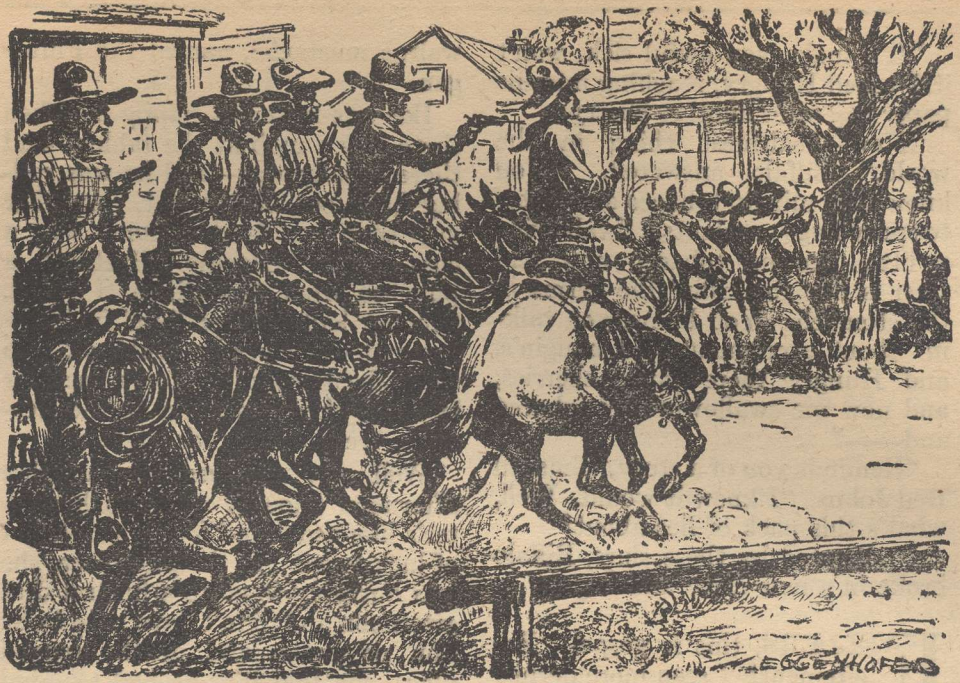
Carl Livingston, assistant State land commissioner and former rancher, has summed up the cause of the cattlemen as follows:

"It is almost imperative that stockmen have their cattle in inclosures before they can hope to mortgage them.

"If the fences are removed, control of disease is patently impossible.

"With the fences gone, cattle would drift into alkali flats and die from eating goldenrod, which is poisonous when grown in alkali soil. . . .

"There are approximately sixteen million acres of United States government lands in New Mexico. The State owns thirteen million and it is all mixed up together. Our State laws encourage fencing to protect against trespass in grazing, while the Federal laws prescribe a penalty for fencing."



BIFFALO BULL'S SWALLOW TALE

By ROLAND KREBS

Author of "Saddle Sore," etc.

IT was a sleepy, warm Sunday afternoon, and the punchers of the R Bar R had surrendered willingly to the laziness that was in the air.

Old "Biffalo Bull," the dean of the outfit, sat on the ground in the shade of the bunk house and mechanically worked his hard jaws on a gigantic chew of tobacco. "Shorty" Nolan watched a fly crawling on his right knee and decided it was too much bother to swat at it. "Hungry" Hosford nibbled on some newly ripened dark-red cherries that he'd

bought the day before in town. "Red" Johns occasionally blinked when a mild surge of energy went over him, but most of the time he just stared aimlessly.

"Gosh, I wish we had some excitement," grumbled Shorty Nolan. "I'd like to see a good hangin' or something."

Biffalo choked, swallowed very unexpectedly, gurgled and gulped several times, and then exclaimed:

"Umph! I swallowed my chewin' tobacco. That's the second time since Tuesday."

"It'll make you awful sick, won't it?" asked Hungry, reaching into his paper bag after another cherry.

"Naw—healthiest thing in the world," Biffalo answered. "You know they mix up tobacco and water to spray bugs on plants. Swallowing a little chewin' tobacco now and then is fine for killin' the germs in the stomach. You know, you talkin' about excitement and hangin's, and Hungry there eatin' cherries, and now me swallowin' my tobacco and——"

"Reminds you of a story," finished Red Johns. "I knew it would. Well, what's this pack of lies about?"

Undaunted by these slurs, Biffalo broke in a new chew and began:

FELLERS, this is gospel. Excitement? I seen more derved excitement in one spot in the shortest time than I ever seen in the rest of my life. And it was all caused by a baby less'n a year old—and in a saloon, dance hall, and gamblin' house. Shootin'? Hand-to-hand fightin'? A near hangin'? Yes, sir! All caused by a infant baby.

This house was called the Ace-deuce-trey, which was a nice way of sayin' that anybody that came in and started a rumpus got the one, two, three out into the street. It was in the town of Tomascado, which back in them days was known all over Colorado and Kansas as "Tomcat."

There was every kind of a gamblin' game that they knew of runnin' in the Ace-deuce-trey, and if you knew of one that they didn't know about, they'd be glad to start it for you—provided there was a kitty in the picture, of course.

There was a big keno game that was very popular, and it was presided over by the owner, a big, good-natured but tough hombre, with a

walrus mustache, named Ike Finne-gan.

Ike was never so happy as when there was a mob at the tables—and there usually was—and he was rolling balls out of the pot. Another guy that was fond of keno was a cuss named "Gloomy" Hartnett, a puncher from the Circle S outfit. Gloomy had a sister livin' in Tomcat and whenever he could get into town, he'd work her for a meal or two and then dash over to the Ace-deuce-trey for a crack at keno.

Well, sir; one certain Saturday afternoon Gloomy came to his sister's like usual and found hissself out of luck twice. In the first place, she was hurrying to go to a funeral that afternoon and didn't have time to fix him no lunch and in the second place, she told him he had to mind her baby while she was gone. Gloomy was stuck and he knew it. So he settled down with the kid and a couple of nursery bottles, and she left him cold.

Poor Gloomy stood it as long as he could, but in the end his weakness for keno got the best of him, and he decided there would be nothin' wrong with sittin' in on the game while the baby was sittin' on his knee. So, over to the Ace-deuce-trey he meandered with little Constance, as the kid's name was, in his arms.

He might just as well have waited a little while, because when he got to the gamblin' house, he found Ike Finnegan sittin' alone at the table and idly pouring balls out of the keno jug, waiting for enough of a house to appear to make the game profitable. Gloomy was pretty hungry by then and said so.

"Go next door to the eating house," Ike suggested. "You got lots of time. They got nice fresh

cherry pie. I had a wedge with my lunch, and it was grand."

"Hold the kid for me," Gloomy suggested.

"What for?" said Ike, horrified at the thought. "Take him along with you."

"You know, Ike, I got to use both hands when I eat," Gloomy argued. "She's a nice little baby, and you'll really enjoy the experience."

"Oh, all right," Mr. Finnegan gave in, and took the kid in hand.

Maybe I should have said the baby took Ike in hand. I never seen a kid with busier hands than this here Constance. First crack out of the box she got both fists in Ike's long mustache and pulled for dear life. Then she grabbed his hat brim and yanked it down over his eyes. While Popsy Finnegan was clutching her with one arm and tryin' to unloosen his hat with his free hand, the baby spied "Flytrap" Jackson, of the X O X outfit, asleep in a chair just behind Ike Finnegan's chair with, as usual, his mouth wide open and snoring. Quick as a flash, Constance poked one fist halfway down Flytrap's throat.

Of course, that got Flytrap awake—not very wide awake or for very long, though. He grumbled something about children that weren't brought up right and went back to sleep again with his mouth wide open once more. Flytrap could sleep soundly in a dish-pan factory.

THE baby went right on nosin' around. She fished Ike's watch out of his vest pocket, tried to get it into her mouth, and then dropped it on his foot, probably fracturin' a toe or two, it bein' that kind of a watch. Then little Constance got his tobacco sack out of one shirt pocket and tried to chew it.

"Wonder when the little un grazed

and sluiced last," Ike growled, jerking his arm and getting one of his pink sleeve supporters out of the baby's mouth.

This brought a howl from the baby. She threshed her arms right and left like infants will do. Then she dug a fist into the breast pocket of Ike's shirt and tried to get something out of there.

"Nice baby, sweet baby," Ike said, emptying a couple of balls out of the keno jug and rolling them around on the table. "Look what Uncle Ike's got for you, honey lamb. Git yere hands out of my pockets, you!"

This was something new for Constance. She squealed like she was awfully happy and, with her arms wavin', went after the balls. Quick as a flash she grabbed a red ball and, before Ike could stop her, put it up to her mouth. Ike grabbed her wrist and yanked the fist away from the baby's mouth. I'm tellin' you that Mr. Finnegan's eyes got glassy and his face went pale when the youngster suddenly starts to choke and swallow till its face was sort of purple.

"Good jumpin' Johnson!" Ike roared. "The kid swallowed that keno ball."

"That's all right," said one of his bartenders. "You can get another ball easy enough, boss."

"You idiot; you can't let little babies eat keno balls," Ike said with cold sweat on his forehead. "They're one of the hardest things in the world to digest."

I took one look at that there baby and decided it was in a bad way. There were tears in the kid's eyes; she was holding her arms out with her fists clenched tight and now and again choking and swallowing.

"Are you sure she swallowed it?" I asked Ike.

"Positive," he groaned. "She snatched it, put it right to her mouth, and then choked and swallowed. I'm sure, but count the balls anyway."

I poured them out on the table and counted fast.

"Yeah," I told him, "there's one missin', all right."

"My gosh; her mother will kill me," Ike moaned. "Can't we get a vet'nary or somethin'?"

"Nearest one's thirty-odd miles," I reminded him. "We got to use home remedies of some kind—iodine or Epsom salts or somethin'."

About that time Gloomy Hartnett come back, not suspectin' a thing, and he said:

"You were right, Ike; that was swell cherry pie—and Sadie, the waitress, gave me some fresh cherries to boot."

"Fergit it!" Ike Finnegan snapped. "While you been swallowin' cherry pie, this niece of yours that you wished onto me when you should have been takin' care of her yourself and whose mother will nail my hide to a tan-yard fence when she hears about it—well, she swallowed a keno ball."

"The baby!" Gloomy almost screeched. "Swallowed a keno ball! Ye gods! It's apt to kill her." He stared at the kid, who had started to smile and make goo-goo-gooo-oo-ooing noises. "She don't act like she swallowed nothin' harmful." Then Gloomy stared kind of funny at Flytrap Jackson and asked, "What ails Flytrap?"

WE all looked at him, too, and it was easy to see that somethin' was wrong with Flytrap. His face was the color of wet ashes, his eyes was bugged out, there was cold perspiration all over him, and his body was stiffened out

in the chair he's been a-sleepin' in. He seemed scared to death and hardly able to talk, what with all the gulpin' he was doin'.

"We already got enough trouble," Ike warned him. "What's the matter with you?"

"Th-th-the bb-b-bb-baby," he stuttered, "did-didn't swallow th' k-k-keno ball; I swallowed it."

"Hooray!" yelled Gloomy, thinkin' about what his sister would have done to him. "Flytrap swallowed it. How'd it happen, ol' boy?"

Gloomy sort of beamed on Flytrap Jackson like he'd like to say, "I always knew you was the kind that'd go through hell fer a friend." He was very pleased with Flytrap, indeed.

"Give him a drink to steady him," Ike told one of his bartenders. "It'll steady his nerves and help him talk. Give us all a drink on the house. We all need steadyin'."

Brother Jackson swallowed the straight whisky with a shakin' hand and had to have two more before he could talk.

"I was asleep," he said, "and I guess maybe I must have had my mouth open."

"There ain't no maybe about that," Ike Finnegan corrected him.

"Anyway, I was just comin' out of a doze, and the youngster was threshin' around with her arms and, like she done once before, she bats me in the mouth and, bein' kind of stupid with sleep, I swallered before I could think and here I am with a keno ball in my insides."

"You're positive you swallowed it?" I asked him.

"I remember it plainly," Flytrap swore. "I can still feel it—round and smooth—slidin' down my gullet. Don't you think you'd be sure of it if you swallered a keno ball?"

"I don't know," I admitted.

"Well, try it," Flytrap growled sourly. "There's a whole jugful of them. Help yourself." He looked scared again. "What am I goin' to do? Didn't you say it might kill me?"

"Well, not for a day or two, anyway," Ike told him cheerfully.

"I got an idea," put in a tall, lanky cow-puncher. "Give him vinegar. I remember hearin' once of a woman who swallowed a pearl, and they made her drink vinegar because vinegar dissolves pearls. If it melted that pearl, why, maybe it'll melt this ball."

"Snowball," said Ike to the Negro porter, "hotfoot over to the general store and fetch a gallon of vinegar."

"I won't drink more'n a quart," said Flytrap stubbornly. "I never drink more'n a quart."

When the vinegar arrived, he drank about a pint and then said he knew when he was licked.

"Shucks!" said Ike. "We could have experimented before you swallowed it, by jest droppin' one of the balls from the jug into some vinegar. Let's do it."

"This is a nice time to think about that," Flytrap complained.

"Well, we dropped a keno ball into a glass of vinegar, and it wouldn't melt. We also tried it in a glass of whisky—whisky from the barrel that Ike called his private stock. That took a little paint off the ball, but still it wouldn't melt.

"Fellows, I got a idea!" Ike suddenly announced. "We'll get a rope and hang Flytrap——"

"You will over my dead body!" the victim yelled. "Goin' to put me out of misery, hey?"

"Let me finish," Ike argued. "I was goin' to say we'd hang you upside down by the feet and sift the ball out."

"Sift it out?" Flytrap Jackson was suspicious.

"Sure, the ball is the heaviest thing in your stomach, ain't it?"

"I wouldn't be sure; I had me some biscuits over at the eatin' house at noon."

"Aw, it's heavier than them," Doctor Finnegan reasoned. "Now, we'll take you out to the big tree, hang you upside down, and keep jerkin' the rope a little bit. First thing you know, we'll get the ball shook down and then out of you."

"Sounds reasonable," Flytrap agreed. "I'm game."

SO we got a rope and threw it over one limb of the big tree in the heart of Tomcat from which nine men have been hanged in their time for cattle and horse stealin', murder in the first degree and other misdemeanors. Then we tied one end as comfortably as we could round Flytrap's ankles and carefully drew him up. Then about five men took the free end and with jerky motions began to dance Brother Jackson up and down.

Well, sir; right here was where the hell began a-poppin'.

A bunch of the boys from the X O X gang, Flytrap Jackson's outfit, happened to come ridin' into town at that moment for the usual Saturday night fun and frolic.

From the edge of town, as they turned into Main Street, they seen their pal being jerked around on the same tree on which nine men had give up their lives. They just naturally jumpd at conclusions like anybody might a-done. They knew derned well that Flytrap was really a grand feller and not apt to do anything that was deservin' of hangin', and guessed that everybody in town had their pal wrong about somethin' and was tryin' to torment

a confession out of him, and they said to their selves there won't be no hangin' till everybody has heard all sides of the story.

So they started in shootin' as they rode down on us.

Now it developed later on that they was aimin' to shoot over our heads unless we put up some gun play, too, but in the gallop down the street two horses bumped each other, and the riders got jostled up and shot lower, and Harry Atwater, the town blacksmith, and Jeff McGill, a puncher, got wounds from which they almost died. Two other innocent bystanders got slight flesh wounds, and the Crescent Hotel at the end of the street had a lot of windows shot out.

Most people had ducked for cover. Ike Finnegan, though, was anxious to explain and ran out when the X O X boys arrived. One of them promptly yelled:

"He was directin' it all; I seen him!"

Whereupon, he shot a right to Ike's chin and knocked him cold. Me, tryin' to act as peacemaker, interfered with the puncher that had socked Ike, and then two of them jumped me. Somebody tried to help me, and then the fight got general. It was the biggest free-for-all ever seen in Tomcat and it was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

That is, Ike Finnegan come pretty near not enjoyin' it or anything else at all. Three of the X O X lads concentrated on him, thinkin' him the ringleader of the supposed hangin'.

Before Ike could blink, they had the rope from which Flytrap had been hangin' noosed around Ike's Adam's apple and they started draggin' him toward the tree.

"Wait a minute!" screeched Flytrap, just getting his powers of

speech back again. "Let him be. He didn't mean me no harm. All these fellers was tryin' to help me."

"Help you? By hangin' you to a tree?" busted out one of the X O X boys.

Mr. Jackson started to explain, but halfway through his story he was interrupted by Gloomy Hartnett rushin' out of the Ace-deuce-trey with his baby niece in his arms and yellin' at the top of his voice.

"Hold everything!" says he. "Flytrap can't have swallered no keno ball. The baby had it all the time."

"You mean the baby swallowed it?" Ike groaned, fearin' we was right back where we started.

"No, the derned little coot had it in her fist all th' time," Gloomy explained joyfully. "Remember the way she had them fists clenched when the excitement started? Well, just a minute ago she loosened up her mitts, and there was the keno ball.

"But, dern it, I clearly remember swallowin' something," Flytrap insisted, "and it was small and round."

"By gosh!" Ike Finnegan roared and started diggin' into one shirt pocket. He yanked out a little sprig of green. There was three stems. At the ends of two of them was cherries, but the third stem had been picked. "Fellers, that solves it. Flytrap swallered a cherry."

"How do you figure?" Flytrap Jackson inquired.

"Remember me recommendin' the fresh cherry pie at the eatin' house to you?" said Ike, turning to Gloomy Hartnett. "And you comin' back sayin' the waitress give you some fresh cherries?"

"Yeah, I et them," Gloomy said.

"Well, she gave me this sprig with three cherries on it, too," Ike said, "only I didn't eat mine, on account

of I was pretty full up. I dropped them into this breast pocket. Your young niece, you know, was goin' through my pockets and pullin' my hair and otherwise actin' like a little Cheyenne when I was holdin' her. She yanked out my watch, and I distinctly remember her puttin' one of her hands in my pocket. It's as plain as day. Keno ball in one fist, one of the cherries in the other fist. When she smacks Flytrap in the mouth, flip! down goes the cherry. Stands to reason it was a cherry. Two from three leaves one. The cherry and the ball were about the same size."

"Gosh!" Flytrap complained. "To think I drank all that vinegar and hung myself upside down for nothin'."

"Well, come in and drown your disappointment in a drink," Ike invited. "Inside, everybody. I'm standin' treat."

"Hooray!" yelled Gloomy.

"Everybody but you—until you take that kid home," Ike finished. "You got a awfully sweet little niece there, but she's too young—and too danged much of a nuisance—for the Ace-deuce-trey. And if you ever bring her around again, I'll person-

ally hang you to that tree. Now march!"

Gloomy marched, but not before Miss Constance had smacked Flytrap right in the teeth for the third time. Flytrap made a face at the kid.

"Fooled you, dern your pink little hide!" He laughed. "I didn't swaller that time."

AS Biffalo Bull finished his story, he suddenly gulped and swallowed hard several times. "Stretch my neck if I didn't swaller my chewin' tobacco again," he spluttered.

"You should complain about swallowin' your tobacco," Shorty Nolan scoffed, "after we've swallowed all your lies."

"Maybe we should hang him upside down and try to sift it out of him," Hungry Hosford suggested.

"Don't!" said Red Johns. "By all means, don't! You'll sift another wild tale out of him if you do. He's full of them."

Biffalo Bull gravely whittled off a fresh plug.

"Fellers," he said earnestly, "it was the truth—every word of it—so help me Hannah."

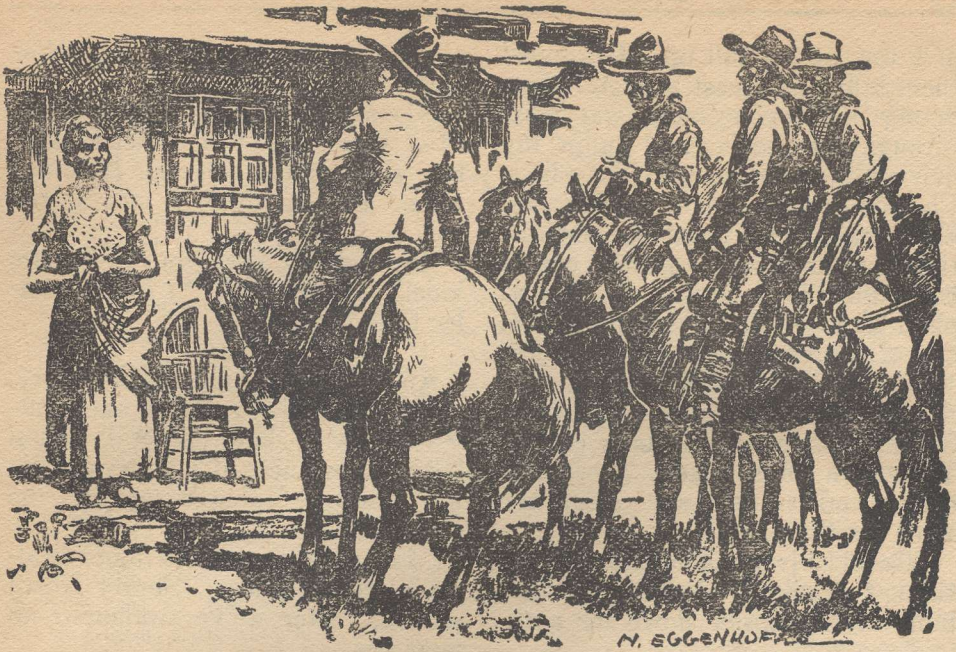
RAISING STIFF-KNEED GOATS

GUS ROOKS, farmer near Mountain Crest, Arkansas, raises "stiff-kneed goats." The only advantage, he says, in owning them is that even at the time of day when they are most nimble, they cannot jump over an obstacle more than eight or nine inches high.

"Most folks," Rooks said, "think the goats' knees will not bend. This isn't so—the knee does bend, but it is not a steady, reliable joint.

"When the goats wake up in the morning, they are so stiff their feet drag. But by night they limber up so you can hardly tell them from ordinary goats."

Rooks says he likes them because they "are easy to catch."



FOOLED TO FORTUNE

By E. W. CHESS

Author of "Killers' Crossroads," etc.

HIDDEN away at the edge of the sand hills north of Palos Altos, was "Killer" Kirby's hideout. The winds and rains had eaten into its muddy walls, until there was little left of them. Two rooms, hidden away, and unknown, they were all that remained of Kirby's dream of a great cattle kingdom. The hills crowded up in back. In front the mesquite stretched out for twenty miles to the south, until it stopped at the side of the muddy Rio Grande.

A kerosene lamp stood on the

table. Its feeble light shone upon the bare walls, a cast-iron stove, and three chairs. The seats of two of the chairs were laced with rawhide. The other had a board across where the rawhide should have been. Upon that chair sat Killer Kirby, the stub of a pencil clutched in his right hand. His bronzed face was thoughtful, his eyes strained. His head was bent low. Slowly he wrote:

DEAR DAD: Things go mighty fine down here. I just got hold of a new shipment of first-rate cows and I stand to make a lot of money. I guess I will add three or four rooms on this here place so you can come.

It will be nice for you. It has been five years since I came down here to home-
stead. I said I would not come back until
I made a—

Kirby's pencil stopped.

"How do you spell 'fortune,'
Blackie?"

"Blackie" was squatted at the side
of the stove. His shifting black eyes
fell upon the bent form of Killer
Kirby, but he held his silence and
puffed his cigarette. The smoke
trailed over his squinting right eye.
He was a nasty mixture of Mex'
and German, a combination that
made him sullen and brooding.

Kirby turned slowly. "How long
we been together, Blackie?"

"Three year," said Blackie
shortly.

"What'd they want you for in
Mexico? Murder, wasn't it?"

"No."

"What was it?"

"I keel a man."

"Blackie," said Kirby, "I wouldn't
trust you from here to Palos Altos."

Blackie smoked calmly on. Kirby
clutched his pencil, and continued
his letter:

fortune. Maybe it might be better for me
to go back up there to see you instead of
you coming down here. See you being sick
it might be hard to travel. That's the
reason I been telling you to stay there. I
got a fine foreman named Blackie. He's a
good hombre and knows how to take care
of the place and the cows. Maybe after I
fatten this new shipment and sell it I will
go up.

Kirby paused and rolled a ciga-
rette. He took a couple of puffs.
Blackie watched him, but said noth-
ing. The smoke curled under the
rafters.

Again Kirby wrote:

What ever happened to Sampson and
that there girl Clara of his he was talking
about? He kept telling me she was coming
back from school, and he hoped we would

kinda like each other on account of you
and him being such old friends. He said
she was mighty purty then. Her picture
was purty.

Kirby's head lifted. A thoughtful
look came into his eyes as he studied
the wall.

"What you writin'?" asked
Blackie finally.

"About a girl, Blackie," drawled
Kirby. "Saw her picture once up
in Kansas City when I was there.
That was before I took the gun
trail. She was mighty purty. Was
away at school. Think about her
every now and then. Her name was
Clara. Purty name." Kirby seemed
not to notice the sneer of contempt
on Blackie's face. "But that was all
before I hit the gun trail, an' they
was looking for me, dead or alive."

He finished his letter then; the
first letter he'd written to his father
in almost a year. But it would have
been just as well had he written
nothing in his hideout, north of the
cow town of Palos Altos. It would
have been just as well if he had not
gripped his stub of a pencil with a
hand that looked more at ease with
a .45. It would have been just as
well, because Kirby's father had died
nine months before.

A HUNDRED miles to the
west, and over the Texas line,
a man lay dying. He was an
oldish man. His face was drawn,
and his eyes had the glazed stare of
approaching death. A gentle breeze
swayed the curtains at his window
and stirred the flowers in a vase on
the table by his bed. The glance
of a girl, sitting beside the bed, fol-
lowed his glassy stare to a picture
of a young man upon the wall—a
young man with a boyish smile on
his face. His hair was parted on the
side, and he stood with one hand
upon the back of a chair. His

fingers were gripped, as if they were clutching the handle of a snappy .45.

"That picture." The dying man's feeble arm stretched out. "That's John Kirby," he said hoarsely. "He's made a fortune here in the West. He's got a big ranch, and men working for him. He always wanted to see you, but he left before he had a chance. Go to him, Clara, and see if he will help us. He can. He's made lots of money. I used to see the letters he sent back home. He must have made a fortune."

"Yes, Dad," she said gently.

"He was a nice boy, and honest," the old man went on. "He was the kind of man who would get along in the West. Started out with five hundred dollars. Made a fortune with his Lazy-K outfit. Not like me! I guess I was too old to start out. I never would have come West if old man Kirby hadn't died the way he did. Let me have the picture."

He held it between thin, nervous fingers, and there was pride in his eyes as he murmured in a hoarse voice, "You, Kirby's son, made a fortune, an' me——" His eyes closed for a moment, then opened. "I always wanted you two to get married, Clara. You an' John Kirby."

Clara Sampson sat quietly by the side of her father. She was a slip of a girl with soft brown eyes, and hair that was almost golden. Day after day she had been there, just sitting.

Soon he'd be gone, and she would be left alone.

It was only a matter of time.

"Clara!"

"Yes?" she whispered.

"Ride over and find John Kirby. Tell him we haven't got much money left. Tell him I never got to be more than a cowhand. Tell him

we'd like to come over to his place. I want you to know a man like him. It's not asking too much. See, Clara, the five hundred his dad give him come from me. It started the Lazy-K."

"He should help us then. I wouldn't go if it wasn't for that," she said.

"Yes, the five hundred he started out with come from me. It started him and his place up north of Palos Altos."

Her father seemed better when she left, three days later. He gave her fifty dollars. It was almost all there was. He told her that any one would know the Lazy-K place up north of Palos Altos. It was a big place. John Kirby had written it was one of the biggest in that part of the country.

"I'll find it," Clara promised, though she didn't want to leave. "I'll be back in a week. I'll tell him you want to be with him there." She leaned over and kissed her father, then ran to the door.

Outside stood a group of cowhands. One of them held her horse as she mounted.

She waved as she rode away. "Good-by!" she called. "I'll be back in a week."

When she faced the crooked road that wound out in front of her tears welled in her eyes. Her father was dying. He wanted to see John Kirby, and she would do her best to satisfy him. The pounding of her horse's hoofs beat against her ears. Fear and loneliness overshadowed her, though the morning sun shone brightly down. The dust rose thickly, behind the flying feet of her mare. Somewhere ahead she must find John Kirby, the man who'd written he'd made a fortune in the West.

THEY had named the town Palos Altos—tall timber—because of two giant cottonwood trees that stood on either side of the main street. There was a post office, and a general store. The fifty or so houses there were dobe. The biggest place in the town was the Silver Dollar Saloon. The next biggest was Mrs. Matthew's boarding house.

Mrs. Matthew was a nice kind of person. She had little laughing eyes, and her hair was tied in a knot on the top of her head. There was something very motherly about her. Her house had a dozen rooms and stood facing the main street. There was grass in the front, and the only flowers that grew in town. She was the only one who would bother to water flowers. She took to the West naturally. She'd seen a couple of shooting scrapes, and had looked on while they had hanged an Indian killer down in Santa Fe. She knew the good and the bad, and she treated them all the same. Everybody liked Mrs. Matthew.

She was watering her few flowers when Clara rode into town. She looked up with a smile. "You're mighty purty," was the first thing she said.

Clara slid from her horse. She felt at ease at once. She said that she had ridden a long way, and that she wanted some place to stay for a night or two. The people at the general store had told her to come there.

"Well, honey," said Mrs. Matthew, "you just come to the right place."

She led Clara to a room in the back of the house. It contained a washstand, a bed, a chair, and a table.

"Now make yourself comfortable

and I'll see your horse is took care of. There's a corral in back."

"Thanks," said Clara. "You're nice."

That night Clara learned that she was the only one staying in the house. She and Mrs. Matthew ate together. Clara told about her ride, the three days it had taken, and of how glad she was the trip was over.

"How long will you be here, honey?" asked Mrs. Matthew.

"I come to see some one, a man that has a ranch out of town. A big one."

"Which one?" asked Mrs. Matthew, smiling.

"The Lazy-K."

The smile left Mrs. Matthew's face. "The Lazy-K," she repeated dully.

"Yes," said Clara. "Why?"

"I never heard of it," Mrs. Matthew said slowly. There was a puzzled look in her eyes. "I been here ten years, honey. I know every outfit in this State. I——" She hesitated. "I never heard of the Lazy-K."

Clara laughed and said, "You must have. It's one of the biggest."

Mrs. Matthew shook her head and said defiantly, "I never heard of it. Never!"

A frightened look came into Clara's eyes. She tried to laugh but she couldn't. Her head drooped as she heard Mrs. Matthew again say, in a little voice, "I never heard of it. An' I been here for ten years. Ten years."

JUST at sundown a man rode a sweat-covered horse into Palos Altos. He drew to a dusty stop in front of the Silver Dollar Saloon. His breath was coming in quick gasps as he walked in and up to the bar.

"Been a bank robbery over at the

Pass," he said, jerkily. "Cattlemen's Bank. Killed the cashier, an' a man along the street. Never got nothing. Killed two men and never got nothing! Kirby's gang they tell me, Killer Kirby's! They was five, an' they never got nothing. Gimme a drink."

The men in the saloon all crowded around, waiting for whatever more the one from the Pass might have to say.

"They never got nothing! Phillips, the sheriff, was out of town. Come back after it was all over. Got a posse——" He gulped the drink, and wiped his lips on the sleeve of his shirt. "Yeah, that man hunter, Phillips, is coming in with his deputies. Riding this way. If anybody'll get Killer Kirby, it'll be him."

"Phillips coming into town?" asked the barkeeper.

"To-morrow, I guess."

"Here?"

"Sure. They been thinking a long time Kirby's got a hideout around here."

The word of the bank robbery traveled across the street to the general store. From there it went from house to house. All anybody could talk about was the bank robbery in the Pass. Two men were dead! When word of it got to Mrs. Matthew she made no comment. Her face paled as she listened, but that was all.

"Who did they say done it?"

"Killer Kirby and his gang."

"Killer Kirby," she echoed.

She turned slowly away and walked into the house. Clara saw her go into the kitchen. After a while she came out again and sat down. Her eyes had a distant look in them.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Matthew?" Clara asked.

"Just thinking," Mrs. Matthew said. "Just thinking the West is the wrong place for some people."

"Yes," said Clara.

"A long time ago a young fellow came up here just like you come. He was going to make a lot of money. He was a nice young man. The next thing I heard about him he'd gotten into trouble over a card game. Shot a man. Killed him. He went bad after that."

Clara's lips moved, and she heard her words as if they came from the lips of some one else.

"Who—was it?" she questioned fearfully.

Mrs. Matthew didn't answer.

"What was his name?" Clara asked again.

Mrs. Matthew raised her gaze. There was a touch of grief in her eyes, even the faintest trace of a tear.

"Did you say something, honey?"

"Yes," said Clara, quietly, "but it doesn't make any difference." Instinctively she was afraid to hear the name of the outlaw spoken.

PHILLIPS and his posse came at sunup the next morning and drew to a halt in front of the general store. There were five of them all together, and as hard a looking lot as ever the town of Palos Altos had seen. Phillips, himself, was different. Mrs. Matthew said afterward that she'd seen the sheriffs of three States, and was beginning to think God had something against the breed.

"Why, they always look worse than the men they're comin' to get," she explained. "But Phillips, he just makes me change my mind."

He was as tall as any man would want to be. His black Stetson was worn at a dashing angle on the side of his head. He wore a blue coat,

and his trousers were outside of his boots. When he rode, it was with that slow easy movement of a man who had spent most of his life in the saddle. Only his eyes seemed to tell of the jobs he had done and still had to do. They were gray and cold as the barrel of a gun. His lips often eased into a smile, but his eyes rarely changed their expression.

At the sound of horses outside Mrs. Matthew looked up and said, "I guess they've come."

When she reached the door, Phillips and his men had just pulled up.

"You Mrs. Matthew?" called Phillips.

"Why, yes, sir."

"You got room for me an' my boys here? Five of 'em?"

"Why——" Mrs. Matthews hesitated. "Why, yes."

"Corral here?"

"Out in back."

"Oats enough? These here horses need oats."

"I guess so."

She drew back from the door as Phillips came in. Clara was sitting in what served as a sitting room. There were four red plush chairs, and a large kerosene lamp in the center of a table covered with a red cloth. Phillips didn't notice Clara at first. It was a little dark, and coming in the way he did, out of the bright sunlight, it was difficult for him to see. When his eyes finally found her, he stood still. It was love at first sight, and any one could see it without half looking.

"I didn't——" He hesitated.

Clara smiled. "I'm Miss Sampson—Clara Sampson," she said in a low voice.

"Clara Sampson," he repeated, without taking his eyes from her.

"Yes," she answered.

"My name is Phillips. George Phillips. I'm the sheriff from the

Pass. I just come over with my men after some one."

"I hope you find him," she said quietly.

Mrs. Matthew eyed him hostilely from the first. It was evident that she was trying hard not to like him. Only once did she show her feelings, and that was after the rest of the men came in.

"Best man hunters in the Southwest," declared Phillips.

"They look it," snapped Mrs. Matthew. "Look like man hunters and nothing else." Her face was grave, and there was a sadness in her little eyes.

They stayed a few hours, then saddled again, and were gone. Phillips was at their head. The others followed in single file. Mrs. Matthew stood at the door shaking her head.

"Too bad," she said, as she turned her eyes from the street. "Too bad. Some people never was meant for the West."

"Why, he looks like a natural-born Westerner," said Clara.

Mrs. Matthew shook her head. "I wasn't meaning Mr. Phillips," she said. "I was meaning some one else."

ALL that morning Clara Sampson made inquiries about the Lazy-K. Even the barkeeper of the Silver Dollar Saloon could tell her nothing. He puzzled for a moment.

"Lazy-K? Seems to me, Miss, I did hear of something like that onces. I can't just recall right off. I guess maybe I don't know."

"But it must be here some place," she insisted.

He shook his head.

At noon she returned to Mrs. Matthew's, confused and disheartened.

"I couldn't find out anything," she admitted.

"Never mind, honey. Me an' you'll go out an' find out something ourselves some time."

The posse clattered up and came to a noisy stop at the corral in back of the boarding house. Mrs. Matthew ran to the door and questioned them, but they had no news.

She prepared dinner for them, and while they ate she sat listening to their talk of the trip they had made that morning. Phillips spoke in a low pleasant voice, and most of the time he was looking at Clara.

"You live here all the time?" he questioned.

"No, I just came. I came over looking for the Lazy-K place."

"Lazy-K place?" said Phillips. "Never heard of it. You, boys?"

They shook their heads.

"I must be wrong," admitted Clara, almost fearfully.

"I hope you find the people you're looking for, anyhow," he told her.

"We're just about in the same fix. You're looking for some one and I'm looking for some one," she answered.

When Clara went to her room Mrs. Matthew followed. She was nervous and didn't speak until her eyes met those of Clara.

"Listen, honey," she said. "I want you to ride out some place with me. I know you'll think it funny, but I want you to. I want you to tell Mr. Phillips we're going out to look for those people you come here to find."

"Why?" asked Clara.

"Just do it for me. I don't want to go alone."

IT was mid-afternoon when they rode away, leaving Phillips and his men behind. Clara's last glimpse found him standing in the doorway waving farewell.

"He's a mighty nice man," said Clara.

"Too dog-gone good to be a sheriff," muttered Mrs. Matthew.

The two women turned out to the west along a road skirted with mesquite. After four miles or so, Mrs. Matthew swung her horse toward the sand hills and soon led the way into a deep arroyo. For half an hour they followed along its bottom. When they pulled out of it the mesquite was so dense they could see only a few yards ahead. Clara asked no questions until the bush became almost impassable.

"How do you know where you're going?" she ventured then.

"I know, all right," said Mrs. Matthew.

At a little clearing but a few yards wide they reined in to a stop. A long time before some one had built a fire there, for pieces of wood with charred ends lay half covered by the white sand. There were a few rusted cans and a cowbell without a clapper.

"You wait here," said Mrs. Matthew. "Wait here with the horses."

She glanced aver her shoulder as she walked slowly away through the sands. A few more steps and she was hidden in the brush. A little farther on she reached the two-roomed dobe hideout of Killer Kirby. He was seated at a table when she came in. His face was tense, his eyes bloodshot.

"What'd *you* come here for?" he asked almost tenderly.

She stood looking at him. "Maybe I made a mistake by coming," she said, "only I wanted to tell you there's a posse staying at my place. They're looking for you."

"When did they show up?"

"This morning."

"How many?"

"Five. Come from the Pass, along with Phillips."

"Who's that there girl you come up with?"

"Just a girl looking for some one. Staying at my place. She won't say anything. How'd you know she was with me?"

"My boys seen you coming when you dropped into the arroyo. I been waiting for ten minutes."

Mrs. Matthew shook her head. "An' just to think you was the boy what came to my place five years ago—John Kirby. You was so nice then, I couldn't help but tell you about the posse. There was two men killed over there in the Pass."

"My men done it. I told 'em not to shoot. They're getting away from me."

"An' you didn't get anything for it?"

"Nothin'."

"I feel so sorry for you," she said gravely as she lowered herself to a chair and sat staring at the floor. "What you needed was a girl like the one what's staying at my place. She would've made a good man out of you."

"Only one girl I ever heard of I'd like. She's up in Kansas City."

Outside, leaning against the wall of the dobe shack, was Blackie. A slender tape of cigarette smoke moved over his evil, squinting left eye. Deliberately and quietly he leaned there, looking out at the mesquite that closed him in like walls.

Not far away Clara Sampson stood at the side of her horse. She waited, her foot digging into the sands where the fire had once been years before. Suddenly her eyes fell upon a piece of wood that was burned at the end. It had been used for a fire once, long, long ago. Branded across its face, just clear

of the end was: Kirby's Lazy-K outfit.

Slowly the toe of Clara Sampson's shoe covered it with sand again, and there was a silent, frightened wondering in her heart. She started to speak to Mrs. Matthew about it when she came back, but Mrs. Matthew held an almost forbidding silence until they got back to the boarding house. Already the lights shone from the windows of the white houses along the street.

"Somethin's happened," Clara ventured as she loosened the cinch of her saddle.

"Nothin's happened, honey," said Mrs. Matthew quietly.

"I saw something while I was out waiting. A piece of burnt wood, and across it was printed 'Kirby's Lazy-K outfit.' I wanted to show you."

She knew Mrs. Matthew was looking at her. She could feel it. But all Mrs. Matthew said was:

"You never should have come here. You never should have come."

"Why?" demanded Clara.

"I—can't tell you. I can't, so don't ask me."

PHILLIPS and his men were at the table that night. Still no trace had been found of the vanished Killer and his gang of five. They'd try a little longer. One of the men said it was a shame to lose the two thousand dollars that would come to the man who would catch the bad man.

"Two thousand!" said Mrs. Matthew.

"Sure," said the deputy. "Two thousand for Killer, and two hundred for each of his men."

"A lot of money," said Mrs. Matthew.

Throughout the meal she didn't

meet Clara's troubled gaze. What she was withholding, Clara didn't know. It troubled and confused her. She hardly touched her food. Phillips spoke a few words to her, and she answered in monosyllables. As the table was being cleared a thought struck her. She got up and walked out into the street. The post office was a part of the general store across from the Silver Dollar Saloon. A little old man with a nasal voice asked her what she wanted.

"Did you ever hear of a man named John Kirby and a place called the Lazy-K?"

The man hesitated for a long time.

"Lazy-K," he said. "Why, yes. It was a long time ago."

"Do you know where he is?"

The man shook his head. "I got a letter for him now, Miss. Been here over a year. I guess he won't never come for it."

Clara looked at him. Mournfully she turned away, and walked toward the door. The clerk watched her. And as he watched, he repeated the name "Kirby—Kirby." And as he repeated it, it somehow took on a new form. Killer Kirby! I wonder?" He stood gazing blankly at the closed door. He walked out, only to see the retreating form of Clara Sampson as she walked toward Mrs. Matthew's boarding house.

"There's a letter for you," Phillips said as she came in.

Clara tore it open. The words blurred before her eyes. She looked up helplessly and said: "My dad's dead."

Phillips helped her to her room. He stood by the side of her bed and said, "Can I do anything? I'll do anything I can."

She looked up at him. "Dad was the only one I had left," she whispered: "He was badly hurt by a

cow at round-up time. He never should have come to the West. It wasn't the place for him. He wasn't fit for it. I hardly know what to do now."

Phillips knew she wanted to be alone and started out. For a moment he stood at the door, looking at her.

"Don't you worry," he said, then went out, closing the door gently.

PHILLIPS couldn't stay away from her after that. He ran his men to death combing the countryside, but when he came back, he spent all his spare time sitting with Clara. Her liking for him grew deeper and deeper. It came almost without her knowing it, and it came to stay.

Mrs. Matthew was distant and preoccupied. Only once she referred to their trip to the sand hills. She waited until they were alone, then asked cautiously: "You didn't say nothing about our ride?"

"No," said Clara.

Mrs. Matthew took Clara's hands in hers. There were tears in her eyes.

"Don't ever say anything, please."

Clara shook her head. She wouldn't tell. Mrs. Matthew didn't know that Clara was afraid to say anything about it. She had heard the name "Killer Kirby" too often, not to wonder if perhaps he and John Kirby were one. It seemed hardly possible that John Kirby could be a killer. She tried hard not to believe it. They just couldn't be the same. But still Clara couldn't bring herself to speak about it because she was afraid. Then, hearing about her father's death, everything else was forgotten for the moment.

A day passed and another. Clara couldn't stay at Mrs. Matthew's forever. During those troubled

days she learned to depend more and more upon Phillips. He, in turn, became a different man. The look of the man hunter left his eyes. His voice was softer.

On the second day after the news of the death of Clara's father Phillips came in to find her holding a picture in her hands. She handed it to him slowly, watching his eyes.

"That's the man I came to look for," she said.

Phillips had never seen Killer Kirby. He looked at the picture indifferently. All he said was: "Nice looking fellow."

A feeling of relief came over Clara. She sighed gently. He hadn't recognized the picture, so perhaps her fears were groundless.

"Does he look like any one you ever saw?" she asked.

"No," Phillips said.

He didn't know why she asked, and she didn't tell him.

"I don't know what's happened to him," she said.

Phillips somehow didn't care. He didn't understand about the picture, about her holding it the way she did. He told her it was too bad she didn't know where he was, but his voice didn't ring true.

Phillips took his worry out on his men that day. He put them through the hardest ride they had had until then. They came in on sweating horses, wishing that they had never gone on the hunt of Killer Kirby.

"You're riding us to death," ventured one of them.

"I want to get this over. If he's here, we'll find him. Besides, I can use that money," Phillips answered.

IN the middle of the afternoon of the third day the posse was stopped in front of the general store by the little old man with the nasal voice.

"I been thinking," he said as he looked up at Phillips, "long time ago a fellow named John Kirby was in these parts. Had a place up at the edge of the sand hills. Two-roomed hut, I remember he told me. Don't know, but maybe he's the same fellow as Killer Kirby." He waved his hand in the direction of the killer's hideout.

"Exactly where?" snapped Phillips.

The little man blinked his eyes and coughed. "Out thataway. I been trying to remember. See it's been five years since he come. Seems to me I remember him having a shooting scrape with a man over in Hope one night. Killed him, as I remember. Man was dealing crooked cards."

That was hardly enough information to help Phillips.

"Ask Mrs. Matthew what she knows," said the little man. "She was right fond of him when he come. Been five years. Don't know that's goin' to help you none."

"Much obliged," said Phillips, and he rode on, his men trailing after him, along the street of Palos Altos, until they pulled up to a halt at the corral in back of Mrs. Matthew's boarding house.

Phillips found Clara in her room.

"Listen," Clara told him when he appeared. "I'm going to make one more attempt to find the man I'm looking for. I can't stay on like this. Please get one of your boys to saddle my horse."

Phillips went to the window and called. One of the men singled out Clara's horse and saddled it.

"Where's Mrs. Matthew?" Phillips asked.

"I don't know. There's been something strange about Mrs. Matthew," said Clara. "She hasn't talked to me for three days. I just

see her at meals. When you see her tell her I'm going out to the place we went before."

"Where is that?"

"She'll know," said Clara.

Phillips helped her to the saddle and waved to her as she rode off. She hadn't been gone long before Phillips told his boys to make a trip up to the north and look over the edge of the sand hills. He was staying behind. He wanted to talk to Mrs. Matthew when she came. They grumbled as they saddled their horses again. They had had half an hour rest, but they didn't think that was enough. They trailed out along the road, taking their time, and thinking about little or nothing as they turned to the north, through the mesquite. From the moment they started, they didn't move faster than a walk.

ANOTHER half an hour passed before Mrs. Matthew came back from one of the neighbor's houses. Phillips met her as she came in.

"What do you know about John Kirby?" he asked her.

"Me?" Her eyes held to his. "Nothin'."

"He stayed here five years ago."

"Five years?" She hesitated. "That's a long time. I guess maybe I've forgotten."

"Think! Try to remember."

Mrs. Matthew tried to change the subject. "Where's Clara?" she asked.

"She's gone."

"Gone? Where's she gone to?"

"Up where she went with you once. She said you'd know. She's looking for the one she come to find."

"Oh," gasped Mrs. Matthew. She went to Clara's room and came back.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Phillips.

"Nothin'," she said shortly, "Nothin'."

They sat in the same room. For a long time neither of them spoke. Phillips smoked one cigarette after another. He got up and went to the window and looked out at the corral. He had done that two or three times when Mrs. Matthew bent over, and started sobbing in her open hands. Suddenly the sobs broke off, and she looked up.

"You know where Clara went?"

"No."

"She went to see Killer Kirby."

Phillips jumped to his feet.

"Killer Kirby!" he threw at her.

"That's the man she came to find."

"My God!" he said. "Why didn't you tell me you knew where he was?"

"Because I liked him."

Phillips stood stiffly before her. His arms were rigid. The look of the man hunter came into his eyes. He didn't speak at first. His lower lip trembled.

"Where is Killer Kirby's hideout, Mrs. Matthew?" he asked hoarsely.

"Up at the edge of the sand hills," she said coldly. "You'd never find it. Never!"

He made an effort to control himself. "Tell me, Mrs. Matthew," he said quietly.

She broke suddenly. It had been too much for her. And the memory of the young man who had come five years before was almost dead. "About four miles along the east road, then up an arroyo, north about two miles maybe, then to the right. You'll never find it. Never!" She collapsed into a chair, sobbing.

Outside it was growing dark. Phillips saddled his horse while Mrs.

Matthew looked on, catching her breath in a sob now and then.

"Why don't you wait for your men," she pleaded. "Anyway, it'll be dark. You won't never find it."

"I'm going after Clara," he said as he swung up.

THE darkness fell heavily over him as he trailed along the east road. He found the arroyo without difficulty and turned north for about two miles. He stopped and his eyes tried to pierce the blackness about him. All he saw were sand hills and bushes everywhere. He turned to the right and let his horse pick his way through the mesquite. He didn't know how far he had gone when he saw the light of a fire ahead. He rode up cautiously. He could see men around it. He slid down from his horse to investigate. He was approaching silently when he felt the pressure of a gun at his back.

"Hands up, queek, senor—or maybe I shoot!"

"Who are you!"

"Dey call me Blackie." The man pressed the gun into Phillips's back. "Geet on," he said.

As Phillips turned and walked toward the fire, he felt his gun jerked from its holster. A moment afterward he heard his horse whirl in fright and tear off through the dark.

At that moment, but a little over a mile away, Killer Kirby sat at his table in his hideout. The dim light from the kerosene lamp shown upon his drawn face. His brow was knit, his eyes calculating. His days of the gun trail were over. Grasped in his hands was a piece of paper. He had read it three times, but three times seemed not enough.

We're leaving you, Killer. You done things up bad in that bank thing over in

the Pass. We're finished with you. Blackie is the new Boss.

DALE
FINLEY
ED SKINNER
PETE SKINNER
BLACKIE

The Killer's boys had left him. He had failed when he shouldn't have failed, and he was finished. He sat staring at the wall, and as he stared, he mumbled to himself:

"Finished! Done!"

He couldn't believe that he was deserted. He got up and walked to the door. Before he opened it he drew out his gun.

"Blackie!" he called. "Dale!"

There was no answer, because there was no one to answer Killer Kirby.

He walked back to his table. Again he gazed at the wall. Suddenly the thought of Kansas City came into his mind. He'd go back. He could say that he went broke suddenly. He could say that his cows got sick and died overnight. He'd leave everything behind. There wasn't much to leave anyway. He fumbled for the stub of a pencil he had. He clutched it and slowly wrote:

DEAR DAD: I'm coming back. My cows are dead. It's too bad, but that's the way things go. I want to see you, anyhow. Tell Sampson and Clara. I want to see her too.

He stopped then, for he heard the sound of a horse outside. He gripped his gun, and backed into the other room, leaving the door open. Some one was approaching. The sound of footsteps in the sand came to a quiet end. Some one stood at the door. Kirby waited. His grip tightened upon the handle of his gun. His breath caught. He crouched.

There was a knock. It confused him. He waited, and then he said: "Come in."

CLARA SAMPSON stood just inside the door. Her hair hung loosely about her face. Her eyes were frightened, and her breath was coming fast. A look of bewilderment came over Kirby's tortured face. Clara had an impulse to run away. Yet, as she looked at him, she saw faint traces of the one she'd seen in the picture of John Kirby.

"I've been lost," she said hurriedly. "I thought—I thought I'd never find my way—I'm looking for——" She hesitated, then said quickly: "I'm looking for John Kirby."

He drew up until the light from the kerosene lamp shown upon his face. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Clara Sampson."

"Clara," he repeated. He took a step forward. His gun hand relaxed, and his 45 fell upon the table. He lowered himself to a chair and put his head in his hands.

"Never heard of him," he said, in a cracked whisper. He didn't look up.

Clara stood tense, her hand fumbling for the knob in back of her. Muttering a confused "Thanks," she ran out into the open, until she was stopped by the darkness that stretched out in front of her. As she stood there she heard her name called, and she turned. Kirby was standing in the open doorway. His massive shoulders were spread out, his hands upon the jambs.

"I am John Kirby," he said.

He backed in as she came to the door. He pointed to a chair. She sat down and watched him nervously roll a cigarette. The match flared.

"Funny," he said. "I was just writing home."

"Your father's been dead almost a year."

He drew the cigarette from his mouth and watched the smoke rise. "Dead," he repeated.

"I wrote you a year ago. The letter is still at the post office here."

"I didn't go to the post office," he confessed. He watched the smoke rise from his cigarette. Only a slight twitching of his mouth gave any evidence of what he was feeling. "Where's your father?"

"We came West. He got a job on a cattle outfit in the panhandle, but he was too old. He'd always wanted to come over here. It wasn't far. He just kept putting it off. Last round-up time he was gored by a cow. He——" Clara hesitated a moment, then added, "He's dead, too."

THE hands of Killer Kirby fumbled for the page of the letter he had written to his father. He folded it carefully twice, then he deliberately tore it into small bits, and scattered them over the table in front of him.

"He was a good hombre, your old man. He give me the five hundred what started me West. Maybe he was thinkin' I didn't know, but I did. Five hundred was a lot of money to him. I don't guess he had much left when he give me that. He was a good hombre. Shame they wasn't more men like him." His lips shut tight and his piercing gaze sought hers. "What do you know about me?" he asked.

"Nothing," she told him. "Why?"

After a pause he said, "Clara, the West wasn't any place for me. I told everybody I was getting along good, but I wasn't. You can't blame me for sayin' that. Things didn't

go so good from the first. I tried for a little while. I tried as long as I could. Then things started happenin'. I'm not tellin' you any more than that. There's no reason for tellin' any more." There was a touch of despair in his voice.

She felt that she should say something. She fingered the picture of John Kirby that she had brought. She put it on the table in front of him.

"That John Kirby has been dead a long time," he said bitterly. "He failed in everything he tried. Some time, maybe, you'll find out how bad he failed. This is the great cattle ranch he had. This is the fine house. I don't know why I'm telling you all of this, Clara. I thought about it plenty of times. But now it's worse than it's ever been. It's got me inside, havin' things go wrong. See, they think I'm a failure. And they think I can't do anything. I can still do plenty. I'm the best of any of them. I'll take chances where none of 'em will. See these hands. When things get in my way I strangle 'em. And the things I can't strangle I can shoot. Maybe you think I'm going loco, talking the way I'm talking. But Kirby don't go loco. He knows what he's doin' most of the time."

Fearfully Clara listened. She didn't understand the words that filled the room, bitter, feverish words that had no meaning to her.

"And they think this is the end of my trail," he rushed on. "Why, it makes me laugh. I got plenty left. I got more'n anybody thinks I got. I don't suppose you believe me neither. I wouldn't blame you I guess. But I'll show you." His voice was becoming feverish, his eyes burned with a fire she didn't understand. He bent forward, his hands gripped the ends of the table.

"An' I suppose you need money, Clara. I'll get it for you. It was five hundred. That isn't so much. An' you need it. You wait. You stay here. I'll show them I got something left."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Clara cried out.

He hardly knew what he was saying himself. Within so short a time everything had finished for him. He was making his last effort to show he had something. If it couldn't be done with cattle, it could be done with a gun. He had power, and he had to show it.

"Wait!" he told Clara. He walked out.

"John!" cried Clara. "John Kirby!"

She ran after him. He stood at the side of his horse. "Wait! Wait!" he said again, and disappeared out into the darkness with a suddenness that left a torment of fear in her heart.

THE holdup that night happened so quickly that no one in the Silver Dollar seemed to know what was going on until it was all over. Those in the saloon heard the sound of hoofs along the single street of Palos Altos. A horse drew up to the hitching rack. Its rider dropped to the ground, and ran to the door. When those inside looked up Killer Kirby was standing there with a gun in his hand.

"Line up, fast! The hombre what makes a bad move gets a hole through him."

There were twenty there, and they lined up. The barkeeper held his hands in the air. Kirby went from one to the other. He took everything they had. The barkeeper was the last of the lot. His nervous hands fumbled in his change drawer.

"Fast!" shouted Kirby.

The barkeeper handed over all he had.

"Not a move," warned Kirby. He backed to the door, and was gone as suddenly as he had come. Half of those who were left behind drew their guns and fired after him. Whether any of the slugs hit, no one in the Silver Dollar knew. They ran out into the street, shouting at the top of their voices, and firing at the racing figure that galloped madly away.

Down at Mrs. Matthew's the posse had just got in. Mrs. Matthew, wringing her hands, was telling them to go help the sheriff, when the sound of shooting was heard. The barkeeper came running down.

"Holdup!" he shouted, waving his arms. "Got everything I made in a month. That way! That way!" he shouted, pointing frantically.

The posse ran for their horses, and they were soon on the heated trail of Killer Kirby. Watching them from the doorway, Mrs. Matthew moaned:

"Poor boy, they won't never find him! Never!"

A strange woman, Mrs. Matthew. She only remembered a youth who had stayed with her for a few weeks, a boy who had once dreamed of owning a great cattle kingdom in the West. And now that same boy was galloping with all the speed of his frightened horse. He was watching the road behind him. He held his gun, and he would have killed, had anybody stopped him before he got to his hideout at the edge of the sand hills.

CLARA heard the crack of mesquite as he came through, long before she saw him. She heard the sound of his frantic horse and the spongy beating of the hoofs as horse and rider came

quickly out of the darkness. The halt was sudden. Kirby dropped to the ground, and walked into the room, into the light of the lamp. He threw the bills he had in his hand upon the table.

"They thought I wasn't any good," he said. "Count five hundred. Your ol' man give me five hundred. Take it!"

Frantically Clara counted them. She hardly knew why. And, as she counted, she looked up. "Five hundred, and there's some more."

"I showed you I could do something," he boasted. "I showed all of them."

Upon the face of one of the bills there was a spot of blood. Clara's eyes fell upon it.

"Look!" she cried. "That's blood."

"Blood?" he said.

"Blood."

He bent over it, and she saw there was blood on his arm. "Why, you're wounded!"

"Ain't nothin'."

She forced him to a chair and jerked back his coat. Under his arm there was more blood. She drew back.

"That's a bullet hole!" she cried out. She forgot everything then, but the crimson spot. She tore away his shirt and bound his wound. "It isn't as bad as I thought," she said.

"It's nothin'," he answered. "Just clipped me. An' that's nothin'. I got the five hundred. I showed myself I wasn't finished, and I paid back a debt. I done everything I wanted to do."

"What did you do?" she hurled at him.

A bitter smile came over his face. "It's the end of a twisted trail," he said. "I've paid back the five hundred what got me here, and I'm

hittin' the trail again. Killer Kirby's movin' on."

"Killer!" she gasped.

"Killer Kirby," he said. He got up. "Look at him. His men left two dead on the street at the Pass. And here he is!"

Clara drew away. Her clenched hand was forced against her mouth to keep her from screaming. She hadn't wanted to believe it. She had dreaded seeing him, for fear it might be true. And there he was, standing before her, shoulders stooped, his hair falling over his eyes. He had told her himself who he was. She felt the blood pounding in her veins.

His voice seemed to come from a distance. "Killer Kirby has paid his debt," he said dully.

"Outlaw," she cried, "murderer—Why—why? Where did you get that money?" she demanded.

"The Silver Dollar Saloon," he answered defiantly.

She couldn't move, and her hands were still clenched at her sides.

"Killer Kirby," she said sadly.

A STRAINED silence fell over them as they stood facing each other in the Killer's hideout, on the edge of the sand hills north of Palos Altos. Minutes passed. Neither of them spoke. Clara, by the window, stared into the darkness. Twice she turned and looked at Kirby. He was again seated at his table, his eyes fixed on the wall.

"I better go," she said.

"Here! The money."

"Wherever it came from, I'll take it back."

He got up, and his gaze met hers. "I don't suppose I'll ever see you again. I'm taking the trail."

"I guess not," she murmured.

His eyes moved over the dusty walls of what had once been his

homestead. "Been five years since I first come here," he said. "An' now it's good-by."

Clara felt pity for him then. Things might have been so different. Her head shook slightly, and her eyes blurred.

"You poor boy," she whispered. "Well, I guess it's good-by."

"We'll ride as far as the road together. You might get lost." He paused to bid his last farewell to all that was left of the dreams he once had. "The Lazy-K. A great ranch, and cows are fattened each year. Adios. Why, I'm not even a good gunman any more. I'm finished! Even my men left me. They had a right to, I guess." He didn't move. His eyes closed, and almost tenderly he repeated, "Adios—adios!" His eyes opened, he turned quickly, and walked out into the moonlit night.

Clara's glance trailed after him. Hurriedly she picked up the bills from the table. She blew the lamp into darkness, and followed him outside. They were about to ride off, when they heard the distant whinny of a horse.

"Which way was that?" asked Kirby.

"Over there," she said, motioning to the left.

KIRBY picked his way cautiously through the mesquite, and Clara followed. He drew to a halt at the edge of the arroyo and listened. They moved on, along its sandy bottom.

"Look!" said Kirby.

A riderless horse stood in front of them. Kirby drew his gun. Clara saw the reflection of the moon upon its barrel.

"Hello!" Kirby challenged.

Cautiously they approached. They were at the side of the horse when Clara spoke.

"Looks like Phillips's horse," she remarked.

"Phillips? That's the sheriff," Kirby said.

"Yes, the sheriff."

After a pause, Kirby said: "You sure?"

She looked closely, her hand moved over the saddle. "Sure," she said.

A sudden feeling of loss came over her. "Phillips!" she gasped.

"Sh!" warned Kirby.

"Something's happened to him."

Clara paused and her eyes swept the sides of the arroyo. I don't want him—— He——"

"You like him?"

"I guess so."

The sense of loss got greater and greater. She found herself pleading to Killer Kirby to find him. He must find him. She clutched Kirby's arm, and looked up at him.

"Please, please! I don't want anything to happen to him."

"Phillips!" he shouted.

But the only answer was the echo of the sheriff's name as it struck the side walls of the arroyo.

"Do something," she pleaded.

"All right," said Kirby. "I'll try. I'll do anything to-night you want me to." He paused a moment. He shouted the name of Phillips again, but there was no answer. He told Clara to go back to the hideout. "You can find it. You wait there."

She pulled herself to her horse. Kirby watched as her shadow was lost in the moonlight. As he stood there, he turned things over in his mind. Phillips must have come after Clara. He had met Blackie. Phillips was with Blackie and the men that had once been the Killer's men.

"Funny as hell," he muttered.

He was going out to find Phillips.

Killer Kirby, with a little hole through him, was looking for the sheriff from the Pass.

FAR up and to the right of the arroyo the Killer's men were having their say. Blackie Peterson, the breed, with ten years to do in a Mexican jail, was doing the talking.

Facing the fire, was "Lulu" Dale with three killings and a memory that wouldn't allow for more. And seated with the flame in their faces, were a left-handed gunman named Finley, and the last two of the Skinner boys. The Skinner boys had done a little killing at the cross-roads south of Gila one sultry night when the moon was at the quarter.

Blackie's shadow was lost in the creviced rock behind. With scorn in his voice he was having his say. Kirby had gone sour. They'd missed the money when they'd held up the bank in the Pass. Whose fault? Kirby's fault. Who was Kirby, anyway? Nothing to his credit save one killing over a deck of cards, and maybe a couple of more that didn't mean anything. Things would be better now with Blackie as boss. Blackie didn't make mistakes. Look at the way he'd handled Phillips, the sheriff. Why, he had the gun on Phillips before he could think. He had him tied and safe. He had a nose for trouble—could smell it coming. The gang sat around and listened to Blackie Peterson tell how he would run things hereafter.

In the shadows Phillips lay tied. He watched every movement and heard every word. On and on, Blackie talked, his narrowed eyes glittering in the light from the greasewood fire in front of him.

Suddenly and quietly Kirby

stepped out of the darkness. "Sit down, Blackie!" he snapped.

Blackie drew his gun and whirled toward him.

"Put up that gun, or I'll kill you!" warned Kirby.

Face to face, the outlaws stood, Blackie's eyes flamed defiance, but Kirby's eyes bored piercingly into those of his enemy.

"You mean I keel you," threatened Blackie in a whisper.

The left-handed gunman moved nervously as he squatted before the fire. The two Skinner boys sat tense waiting for the shot to come. Lulu stared at the moonlit sky. Slowly Blackie's gun hand dropped. The stillness was broken by the evening wind in the dry mesquite as it blew south over the sleeping town of Palos Altos and over that muddy creek that has been called the Rio Grande, the Great River, for a thousand years.

Kirby still stood crouched before the fire. "Let Phillips loose, or there'll be a killing to-night—maybe two."

He waited, but not one of them moved. "I could easy kill three of you before you could get me," he reminded. "One of you Skinner boys untie Phillips." He knew his men when he talked to the Skinner boys. He knew that they feared him. "Untie Phillips, or I shoot!"

One of the Skinner boys dragged himself up. None of the others moved. He bent over Phillips. Not a word was spoken. The only sound was the untying of knots of a Mexican hair rope.

"Where's his gun?" Kirby asked. "There it is, in Blackie's belt. You're free now Phillips; get it! And if you make a move to stop him, I'll kill you, Blackie."

They backed out together, Phillips and Killer Kirby. On the same

horse they rode away through the mesquite toward the hideout in the hills.

"Thanks," said Phillips, and not another word was spoken until they reached the Killer's hideout.

CLARA heard them coming for some time before they dropped to the ground in front of the hideout. She stood in back of the table when they entered. Phillips had a perplexed look on his face. Clara was frightened. She backed toward the wall.

"Phillips," she whispered.

"Went looking for you, Clara," said Phillips.

She made no reply and he felt something was wrong. He shot a hurried glance at Kirby, and then at Clara. She tried to speak, but couldn't.

"Kirby's men took me off guard," Phillips explained.

"They got a way of doin' that," Kirby said slowly.

Phillips turned to him. "Who are you?" he asked.

"The name's Kirby. Used to be John Kirby. They——"

"Don't!" gasped Clara. Her back pressed against the wall. Terror shone from her eyes.

"Clara came down to these parts looking for me. She didn't know when she come, she was lookin' for Killer Kirby," Kirby said.

Phillips watched him. "Killer Kirby," he said finally.

Clara hadn't moved from her place by the wall. Her terrified eyes gleamed in the light from the lamp.

"I guess you know who I am," Phillips went on after a moment. "I'm the sheriff from the Pass. Me an' my men came out to get you and your outfit."

"Yeah," said Kirby dully.

Neither of them moved.

"Don't seem to be very popular with your boys," Phillips said.

"They're all right," said Kirby. "A little loco, that's all."

"Yeah, a little loco," agreed Phillips. A feverish silence followed.

Face to face they stood, each man waiting for the other to make a move. The sickly lamp sputtered and smoked. Nervously Phillips pulled out his sack of tobacco.

"Makings?" he said.

"Much obliged," said Kirby.

"Light?"

The flame of the match flared, and the smoke of cigarettes filled the room.

"Never thought Killer Kirby would ever have a chance to save me," said Phillips reflectively. "Funny!"

"Mighty funny!" agreed Kirby.

"Puts me in a bad spot," said Phillips quietly. "I come to get you, and you save me from your men."

"Wasn't nothing."

They puffed their cigarettes, while Clara looked searchingly from one to the other. The smoke grew dense in the little room.

KIRBY," said Phillips, after a long and thoughtful pause, "you don't know it, but I've been knowing about you since your first shooting. I know more about you than any man except yourself. You never was as bad as they painted you. I know, Kirby. I've trailed plenty of bad men, and I've got plenty, and I know." He hesitated a moment, then went on. "The Mexican line isn't so far. The river's pretty shallow this time of the year."

Kirby made no answer.

"Better go, Kirby. This isn't the

thing for a law man to do, but I'm doing it. You stay across the line."

Clara's eyes were closed, her hands clenched at her sides.

"Adios," said Kirby.

As he moved toward the door, he paused and listened, his eyes piercingly alert. Suddenly he leaped to the window, and peered out. He turned back and stood facing the other man and the girl, his hands braced against the sill, his massive shoulders spread out.

"What is it?" asked Clara.

He shook his head. Phillips leaned forward.

"There's some one moving up through the brush," Kirby whispered.

"I hear them," said Phillips. "I hear them!"

"I should've tol' you, Phillips, my boys would follow me to-night. They'll finish you, if they see you here."

"Maybe they're my men," Phillips answered, "but mine wouldn't kill *you*, Kirby." He drew his gun. "Better have your gun ready, Kirby. May need it."

A look of understanding passed between the two men. A doubtful smile spread over Phillips's face. He wasn't sure whose men were outside. Neither of them was sure. The look in Kirby's eyes had become almost listless. His voice had dropped to a deep whisper.

"I'll go out an' see," he said quietly. He drew his gun and started out of the door when Phillips stopped him.

"They're my men, Kirby. I bet-ter go."

Clara's eyes flashed first to one and then to the other of the two men—the law man and the outlaw. In some remote part of her mind she felt that she was to blame. A little cry passed her lips.

"I'll go out," she said with a quivering voice. "They wouldn't shoot me. They wouldn't dare."

Killer Kirby shook his head. "No! It's between us two men."

Clara drew back. "No! Please!"

Phillips reached for the latch. He was ready to go when she caught him. She held to him with all the power of her frail arms. It happened so quickly, she hardly realized it. A strange look came into Kirby's eyes as he watched her. He took a step forward. The muzzle of his gun struck Phillips's side.

"Get away from that door, Phillips, or I'll shoot you." Kirby's voice was hard and metallic, the voice of a killer.

Phillips didn't move. "You wouldn't shoot me, Kirby."

Clara screamed. "Look!" she cried, pointing toward the window.

Kirby wheeled and leaped for the lamp, and in an instant, the room was plunged into darkness. A shot shattered a windowpane, and the slug of a .45 buried itself in the wall.

They kept perfectly still for a moment, then Kirby spoke:

"Lucky I made it in time," he whispered. "That there was Blackie. I'll go out. It's only Blackie and my men. I'll take 'em away. Adios!"

He opened the door and dashed out.

"It's me, Blackie," he called in a very strained voice. "It's Kirby. Where——"

Clara heard a shot ring out. She heard Killer Kirby fall. Phillips held her close to him.

"They shot him," he whispered.

"Shot him!" she echoed.

They heard a slight cry, the moan of a dying man.

"Drop on the floor. Drop down! Safer," whispered Phillips.

She sank down. Her face pressed

against her crossed arms. Her eyes closed. Another shot was fired. Another pane in the window shattered, and glass scattered over the floor. A voice outside shouted:

"Come out, Phillips! You're next!"

Some one hammered on the door. A flash brightened the room as Phillips answered with gun fire. The heavy odor of burnt powder followed. Phillips fired again, but there was no answering shot. The movements outside became less distinct.

"They've gone away, I guess," said Phillips. "They'll wait for sunup. Listen!"

Some one was moaning outside.

"Sounds like Kirby," whispered Clara.

"Yes, it is. If I get a chance, I'll bring him in."

"Don't go out," she pleaded. "Please!"

"If that's Kirby, we can't leave him out there like that."

"No, we can't leave him out there."

Phillips listened at the door. Everything was quiet but the occasional pitiful moaning of the wounded man who lay somewhere just outside the door. Slowly Phillips lifted the latch. Cautiously, he moved toward the sound.

OUTSIDE, Blackie Peterson had run back to the horses fifty paces through the brush. Kirby's men followed all but one—one of the Skinner boys. He had done his last shooting. With arms outstretched, and his head against the door jamb of the dobe shack, he lay still in death.

"We wait here," said Blackie to the rest of the gang.

"Where the devil's my brother," whined the second of the Skinner

boys as he searched the darkness with his eyes. "Where is my brother?" he asked again.

No one answered. One Skinner boy more or less didn't make much difference. They didn't care that he was lying dead. Their chief concern at the moment was the rising of the sun.

As they all stood there they heard the sound of a movement far to one side of them.

"Who's there?" one of them called.

"That must be your brother now," one of them answered.

They all thought it was, and the second Skinner boy said hoarsely: "We're over here with the horses. Blackie and the bunch of us!"

Instantly five men were upon them. Some one fired a shot. The horses went wild with fear. They ran madly over the sand hills, beating their hoofs into the earth. They, who had been Killer Kirby's men, lost their nerve then, along with their horses. Reason fled. Their shots stabbed high into the air. They were caught before they realized it, and they were done for. Only one of them ran, but a shot brought him to his knees.

Phillips's men had them.

"If any of you men move, we'll shoot you in your tracks!" shouted one of the deputies, a hawk-faced man. "Keep your guns on 'em!" he snarled.

He turned away and walked toward the dove shack. He almost stumbled over the body of the first Skinner boy who lay at the door in the darkness. A voice inside shouted:

"Who's that?"

"The Law!" cried the hawk-faced man. He knew it was Phillips who had called to him, from the voice. He walked in. "We got 'em all, I reckon."

He didn't know what else to say. The light from a kerosene lamp fell upon the pale walls and upon a girl who sat upon the floor. Lying with his head in her lap was a man, his eyes dulled with approaching death.

"That there's Kirby. I guess he's goin' to die," said Phillips.

"Who done it?" asked the deputy.

Killer Kirby opened his eyes and stared into the lighted room. "He done it," he said weakly. "Phillips got——" But he got no further. He sighed slightly. His eyes closed. Killer Kirby was dead.

The hawk-faced deputy looked around, and said: "Lucky we heard them shots. We was trailin' Kirby after the holdup in the Silver Dollar. We lost the trail in the brush, and we'd been trying to pick it up when we heard the shots. We came over here and got the men. An' me, I had a feelin' you'd get Kirby all along. I guess you just got brains, Phillips."

The deputy glanced at Clara. He didn't understand why she was there. He shook his head and walked out.

"Kirby gave me the money he got," Clara explained. "It's in the drawer there in the table."

The hawk-faced deputy shouted that he was going then. He was taking the rest of Phillips's men along to take care of Kirby's gang. The first of the Skinner boys was thrown over his horse, his feet hanging on one side and his head on the other. And all of them trailed toward Palos Altos, and the jail that was there.

Mrs. Matthew met them when they finally got to the boarding house.

"The Killer's dead," the hawk-faced deputy told her.

When they turned away she hid

her face with her hands. She sat down in one of the red plush chairs, and cried quietly. She cried for John Kirby, a boy who had been dead for five years.

BACK at the dobe shack at the edge of the sand hills Phillips and Clara sat in the dim light which flickered upon the still face of Killer Kirby.

"He never did look like a killer," said Clara.

"No, he never did. Only there are times when a man just is. Shame he ever came to be one."

They bent over him. The slug of a .45 had passed through the pocket of his shirt and on through the body of Killer Kirby. Sadly they looked at him as he lay there, an overwhelming sense of loss weighting their thoughts.

They dug a grave in the clearing in the mesquite where Clara had waited for Mrs. Matthew not many days before. They put Killer Kirby inside, and Phillips said a short prayer before they covered him over. At the head of the grave they stuck the burnt piece of wood upon which

had been branded: "Kirby's Lazy-K outfit."

The sun came up over the horizon. "Look! It's morning," said Clara.

They walked back through the brush toward the dobe house.

"He knew he was going to die last night," said Phillips thoughtfully.

"Yes," Clara said sadly. "He said it was your fault he was dead, but he said that so you could get the two thousand dollars reward for catching him."

They grew sad as they walked into the shack. For a long time they were silent. Finally Phillips said:

"Do you mind if you don't marry a sheriff, Clara?"

"Sure, I mind," she said suddenly.

"I mean, I don't guess I want to be a sheriff any more."

"Then I don't mind," she whispered. "I was fooled into coming here, but I won a fortune in you in the end."

The sun came through the window and fell upon them as they stood there in each other's arms. Outside it was quiet, and quieter still around the newly filled grave of Killer Kirby.

In Next Week's Issue, "MORTGAGED DOGS,"

by ROBERT ORMOND CASE.

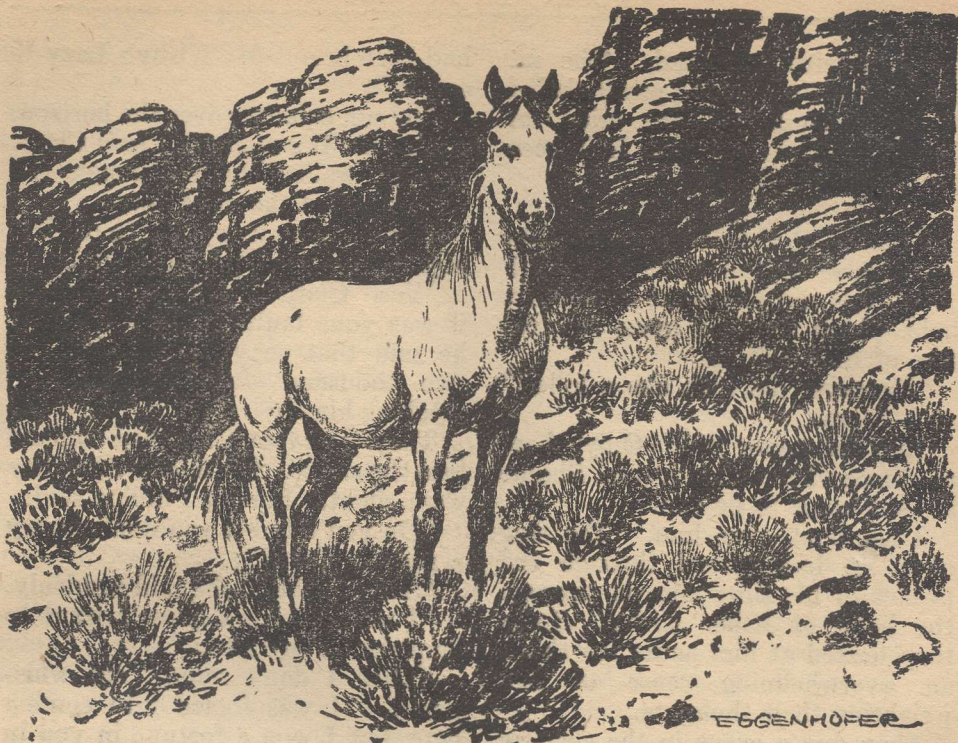
SUNLIGHT RUNS BEACONS

BEACON lights which flash their signals for more than six months without being attended have been installed on islands off southern California to aid the navy in its maneuvers.

The flashing lights are operated automatically by sunlight, ceasing operating when it becomes daylight and then turning themselves on again when darkness falls.

Lighthouse tenders have placed the lights on the islands off southern California, establishing them on San Clemente, San Nicholas, Santa Barbara, and Catalina.

Their visibility ranges from fifteen to twenty miles on clear nights.



NO COW PONY

By H. FREDRIC YOUNG

Author of "The Marshal's Magic," etc.

OLD Bill Cravens tethered his droopy roan to a mesquite stump and crawled up a brush-cluttered slope for a hundred yards.

The dawn was breaking clear and sweet, with the tang of distant sage mingled with that of the sweeping pine on the higher parapets of the darkly looming Bluerocks. Stars on the brink of the westerly horizon were valiantly blinking their last, while, between the cleft of two soaring mountains to the eastward, a growing red smudge indicated a simmering sun on the rise.

With infinite caution lest sound be made, old Bill moved the last few feet to the sharp ridge of the rise with scarcely a breath drawn.

Dimly on some yonder peak, a coyote lifted its mourning wail, and like a weird echo, came the answer from some other far-away peak.

Bill waited until the morning was again bathed in a hollow silence, then, with battered sombrero removed, cautiously veered his head a trifle over the ridge crown.

His faded blue eyes swept anxiously into the deep purple of the narrow, straight-walled canyon below him. And then, catching that

flowing movement of white down yonder, anxiety swept clear of his eyes and a light of sudden exultation seemed to skim over the surface of his blue eyes.

"Purty," he muttered. "Plumb purty!"

And well he might. For, gingerly cropping the dew-strewn grass of the little valley, below him was a stallion as wild as the sleek grass on the cliff sides that embraced the animal's sanctuary.

Like a white Arabian, he stood in pale magnificence, then suddenly he stiffened, his head flung high and the pink of his nostrils flaring. His powerful neck was like a white marble arch. The first red rays of the sun just tipped the cleft in the Blue-rocks. The sleek hide glistened in the splash of the darting beams.

Bill Cravens ducked down, and moved fifty feet to his right. A white hair reata was coiled in his hand. He eyed a bulky canvas sack lying there poised on the canyon brink. It was full of sand that he'd hauled the night before from the river bottom.

He lay flat on his back, reached out and drew the free end of his lariat through the thick leather loop that was stitched and riveted to one end of the sack. He looped the end of the rope around and around in several tightly drawn half hitches. He tested their sureness by jerking back on the rope, and peered slowly over the edge to the ground which he judged was little more than thirty feet below him. He grinned sheepishly at the pile of oats he'd thrown there the night before for bait, then settled back with obvious satisfaction marking his countenance.

The white stallion in the cleft below was slowly munching its way up-canyon toward Bill. Suddenly the

animal threw up its majestic head and sniffed that luxurious scent of oats. He stamped his sharp forefeet into the turf impatiently, then walked briskly toward the spot over which Bill hovered with tense face, hands quivering a little, and reata laid behind him in a neat loop.

In a few more moments the pink nose of the stallion was snorting its pleasure deep in the oat pile.

Bill drew himself stealthily to his knees and held the reata in readiness. Then the animal reared up its head and a light whinny rippled down the canyon.

And then Bill acted.

WITH a deft and nerveless hand he cast the lariat over his head and it swooped downward like a hawk charging its prey. Gleefully Bill saw it circle the arched neck below, and he jerked back with all his strength to insure its security. He leaped over to the bag of sand, dug his heels in the clay, and the weighty bag went hurtling over the embankment.

As the noose struck and tightened around the stallion's neck, the startled beast reared and struck out viciously with its front hoofs. Then he pirouetted and was away down the canyon at a dead run.

The sixty-foot lariat was taut against the weighty projectile before it hit the ground. It was jerked through the air for a dozen feet by the madly plunging stallion before it settled to the canyon floor with a resounding thud.

Bill now stood up and watched the fight.

As the sandbag hit the turf, the stallion staggered back, but by sheer power and balance managed to retain his footing. He wheeled, spied the sandbag, and was upon it in a

flash with demolishing hoofs. For a breathless instant Bill's jaw dropped as he visioned the sand pouring from the split bag. But the give of sand was sufficient to withstand those sharp, driving forefeet, and Bill sighed in relief as again the animal turned to flee.

Although the weight of the bag must have been a third of the horse's weight, it went skimming over the gramma grass as if it were greased on the bottom side.

But Bill knew that it would be only a matter of a few hours until the stallion would be exhausted, so he turned and walked down the slope to his roan.

It was an easy trail to follow. Bill chuckled in admiration as he nudged his mount closer and closer to the trembling, exhausted beast, and finally dropped a halter over its drooping head.

Bill felt his heart sink as he saw how the strength had been sapped from those rippling muscles. "Purty," he muttered slowly. "Plumb purty. I kinda hate to do it."

IT was a long ride into Bluerock, but by sunup the next morning, the stallion, freshened by a few hours' rest, was vigorous and lively there in the high pine-log fence behind the livery.

Already word of the capture had spread to the four corners of the little town, and people were bunching around the circular corral, following the beauty of those flowing muscles with awe and admiration.

As Bill walked up, he was greeted with various: "You old hawgback, how'd you ever——" "Must be nigh worn out, hustlin' that beauty."

Along with Bill was Cliff Braley, bronc buyer for rodeos. In two

weeks' time the annual Bluerock rodeo would begin with a flurry of dazzling flags and bloodcurdling yells from powerful lungs of the range. Braley was packing the bronc pens with the most vicious horseflesh that money and brains could gather. Already his corrals out at the rodeo grounds were bustling with a collection of wild bronchos such as had never been seen before in that part of the country. Excitement ran wild at the prospects of the oncoming battle between horse and man.

Braley, however, could scarce refrain a low whistle as his eyes eagerly devoured the white stallion as it circled the small inclosure with eyes snapping insane hate and head tossing nervously.

"Kinda purty, huh?" quizzed Bill with an undercurrent of eagerness in his voice.

"Uh-huh! Think he can be forked?"

Bill shook his head. "Not less'n it would be a leech," he predicted after a long hesitation. "I saw him fight too long. He's got a spirit."

"How'd you catch him?"

Bill swallowed twice and said: "Oh—I just—roped him and let him fight it out."

"On that?" quizzed Braley, jerking a thumb back over his shoulder at Bill's roan sleeping on its feet in the adjoining corral.

At this Bill chuckled but failed to make a rejoinder.

"Point is," said Bill, "how much is he worth?"

Braley again took in the white animal bit by bit. Withers, hocks, smooth leg muscles and barrel chest.

"One fifty," he said without looking at Bill.

Cravens snorted.

"I may look like Santa Claus, but 'tain't Christmas," he said. "Come

again." He turned to look at the stallion, swallowed dryly, and cursed himself for being a sentimental old fool.

"Two hundred."

"Huh?" Bill scratched his head, and his forehead wrinkled into a brown washboard. "Three hundred I reckon he's worth."

"All right!" said Braley suddenly. Bill's heart fluttered a little as he saw Braley draw a large roll of greenbacks from his pocket. Up at the hotel, Bill's hand quivered a little as he signed a bill of sale.

"I call him White Twister," said Bill in a mumbling voice as he stalked wearily out of the hotel.

Riding out of town, Bill's thick-skinned fingers felt the blister of the roll they clutched.

It was a glum snack that he ate that night in his shack yonder on the black range. The beans were flat somehow, the sowbelly worse, and the black coffee as bitter as his thoughts.

"The closer the critter is, the purtier," Bill soliloquized, as he dropped into his hard bunk.

Early sunup caught him in its gold-flecked fingers riding back through the hills on his shuffling mustang. He rode along the lip of a small canyon, and saw the hoof-churned turf there on the lower level.

Suddenly his eye wrinkles deepened, and his teeth clicked sharply. He wheeled his mount, and was heading back toward Bluerock, the long lope of his mustang eating the miles with a surprising rapidity.

Once in town, he sought out Braley.

"I'd like to buy back that hoss," Bill explained a little sheepishly. "Here's yore money—every dollar of it."

Braley laughed and shook his head.

"Not for sale, old-timer," he said.

SULTRY days and wind-swept nights came and were gone. The grand opening of the Bluerock rodeo was one day distant. The better part of Bill's days in town were spent with his leathery forehead pressed against a pine pole of the corral out at the rodeo grounds.

"Plumb purty," he muttered this last day before the opening, and rode back into town with a bright idea swirling around under his floppy sombrero.

Bart Collins, the banker, said "Sure, Bill," when the old puncher asked him for a hundred-dollar loan on his coming crop of yearlings.

And Bill was away again happily searching for Braley.

"But," said Bill a little astounded at the man's refusal, "you're makin' a hundred clear."

And again:

"Not for sale!" Braley answered flatly.

Old Bill was hanging around the corral on the morning before the afternoon opening. Suddenly his eyes met those of White Twister. Revulsion seemed to surge into those two large eyes. Bill suddenly turned his attention to the other horses.

His heart leaped in his bosom as the first rider sailed from the Twister's back and rolled like a log in the dust. Twice the white stallion was mounted that afternoon, but never ridden for more than three jumps. But Bill saw as the horse was again in the high inclosure that there was something amiss in the proud arch of that neck.

He turned to walk away, and

came face to face with Braley and a group of the rodeo performers.

"Still want him, do you?" said Braley.

Bill's head nodded eagerly.

Braley laughed and turned away. Suddenly his eyes shone with queer amusement. He turned back to Bill.

"I'll give you a chance at him."

Bill waited.

"If you can ride him for five—no, I'll say three minutes—he's yours."

"Just for that?" Bill asked a little huskily.

"Just for that!" Braley laughed softly.

"I'll see you—I'll see you, come morning," Bill promised, and the group strode away toward town laughing at the old puncher's apparent seriousness.

That night, in a back room of the hotel, Bill sat up to a late hour. He paced the floor. He sat down on the edge of the bed, rose and was again at his pacing. He ran his calloused fingers through his mat of twisted hair a thousand times.

Ideas came, were dourly hashed over, and thrown in his mental scrap pile.

But, with midnight gone two hours, his room palely lit by the spread of the yonder moon, old Bill Cravens was actually trying to go to sleep, yet he smiled as broadly as his thin dry lips would allow.

EARLY morning found him at Ben Hargus's harness shop at the far end of Main Street.

"Sew her hard and fast, Ben," Bill advised the harness maker, whose stained fingers were deftly prodding a large needle through awl hole after awl hole.

Bill's eyes sparkled with a fire he seldom showed any more. He felt the sprightliness of youthful effer-

vescence coursing his veins. The baleful eyes of a cotton-white stallion seemed to gleam disdainfully at him, but he shook the apparition off with a quick shrug of his skinny shoulders. Then he drew his belt up tightly, and crossed over to the restaurant and ate the breakfast of a giant.

It was again rodeo time, and the shimmering sun poured its abundant heat upon the crowd, the flags, and the waiting broncs.

Old Bill sauntered over to where he saw Braley conversing and laughing with a group of rodeo contestants. Their vivid shirts, their gaudy, hand-tooled boots, their flowing chap wings and broad beaver hat brims all contrasted sharply the dust-colored outfit of Bill Cravens. His hat was bent awry by wind and soiled by long wear. His denim jacket and Levis were a faded blue-white. The only bright spot in the whole outfit was the spoon-handled spurs hooked to his run-over boots, and even they had mud flakes on the rowels.

Braley's eye caught Bill sauntering up.

"Hi, old-timer," he said, and finished off with good-humored banter. "Ready to make that ride?"

A mixed laughter rose from the high-spirited punchers who formed a half circle around the bronc buyer.

"Ready as a yearlin'," responded Bill with a mysterious significance in his tight-lipped grin.

"Haw-haw!" Braley laughed. "He says he's gonna ride White Twister. You better get back in the grand stand, old-timer, so you can see the show better."

"I'm aimin' to fork White Twister for three minutes by the clock on the town hall," Bill asserted with a little heat.

For the moment Braley seemed on the verge of laughter. Then the deep purpose of old Bill's eyes drew his face into a half-hearted grin.

"Aw, listen, fella, I know you want that horse back. What for, I couldn't say. He'd never be any good to you. He'd never make a cow pony. He's too mean. Charged with blue nitro, that animal is. Now you just go on and forget it. Mebbe after rodeo buckaroos has broken his spirit, you can have him for a song an' whistle it yourself. But right now he's the best rodeo prospect I've laid my hand to in years."

For an instant Bill's face clouded with a dismal disappointment. But he set his jaw tight, took a forward step, and squinted up into Braley's eyes.

Bill's demand was adamant:

"You-all made the proposition yestiddy. You aimin' to stick to it, or are you aimin' to crawfish?"

A jeering laugh directed at Braley arose from the crowd. Cries of "You dealt the hand, Braley; play it!" "You're over a barrel; take it and grin!" and other bantering filled the air.

Braley's features reddened, but at last he grinned good-naturedly: "All right! What I said still stands. Three minutes on the storm deck of White Twister, and he's yours. We'll make it the semifinal event of the evening."

IT still lacked thirty minutes of the hour appointed for the featured contest. Bulldogging finals were in progress now.

Old Bill tried to keep his mind off the grueling ride that he must make. He walked past the high fence where Twister was trotting to and fro, evidently as nervous as he

was himself. The animal gleamed under the nervous sweat induced by the mad, yelling crowd in the grand stand. For a moment Bill eyed the stallion, and those two great eyes rolled again to meet his. Defiant, yes, Bill decided, but despairingly so. But in their bottomless depths, the old puncher could almost read a pleading message. "You got me into this," it read. "You stole my freedom, and in its stead you have given me misery. It's up to you to put me back on soft, green grass for a bed, and where there's sparkling water that trickles over my unbound feet."

Bill suddenly jerked his head around.

"Purty cuss," he mumbled to himself. "I wish he knew why I was forkin' him. He might be a mite easier. Course, even then, I'd want him to put up a good show. 'Twouldn't be right to not give the folks a run for their money. But—aw, shucks! I ain't rid a bronc in ten years, but maybe my bones will manage to hang together three minutes."

He stalked away, and his next remembrance was slipping a boot toe into the stirrup that hung by the distended belly of White Twister. The stallion had on a blindfold, and Bill threw his other leg over in place with surprising agility. He settled himself, leaned hard-pressed against the horn. He slipped his free hand in under his stomach, fidgeted around in his seat, and said:

"Let 'im go!"

The man reached for the blind, jerked it loose, and shouted as he jumped from the chute fence:

"Rake him fore and aft three times, podner! He's yours for the taking after that."

FOR the briefest instant after the chute gate swung open, the Twister stood like a compressed steel spring. Then like a streak of white lightning he shot for the open field.

Bill's head snapped back and his neck cracked, but he hugged the saddle horn with the pit of his stomach for dear life.

Across the field that cyclonic mass of white plunged. Ears laid flat, pink nostrils livid, sharp hoofs pommeling the gravel-strewn earth, he sunfished, reared, and spun, changed ends like a veteran. Old Bill's head was throbbing like a toothache. He felt his bones pried apart, then snapped back together, then jerked loose again as White Twister hit the ground on all fours with legs as rigid as iron bars. Bill heard the challenging squeal as the stallion again swung into a stiff-legged spree of pitching.

Each second was a burning hour. Bill thought he had dislodged a few teeth, for he felt warm blood streaming from the corners of his mouth. And the pain from the horn pressing against his stomach was almost unendurable.

The grand stand went mad, but it was all a droning roar to Bill. Even Braley was jumping around in great strides.

"He's doing it! The old fossil! Who'd 'a' thought it!" shouted Braley in a loud voice. The loss of White Twister seemed unimportant.

The timer's gun barked a loud staccato. The ride was over. The pick-up men raced over the field after the stallion. Bill reached his free hand under his stomach just as he was picked from the saddle by the strong arm of the rider.

He was standing on *terra firma* now. The ride was over—won! Bill was wearily exultant. He looked

down and saw his shirt tail hanging out all around. He grinned weakly and left it so. He staggered over to a bench and sank exhausted upon it.

But the crowd demanded the right to acclaim a hero. So he was carried back and forth before the grand stand on the stalwart shoulders of two punchers. But at last he was free. Knees trembling, he made his way back to the corral where White Twister was standing with heaving withers.

He glanced around, but no one was near. The main attraction was now in progress. He lifted his shirt tail and stuffed it into his trousers top. He felt a stabbing pain in his stomach. The large iron ring that was sewed into the front of his belt he severed with his knife.

He looked up at the white stallion.

"'Twas playing you a dirty trick, hooking this ring around the horn. But I had to do it. You'd a-pitched me first jump outa the chute if I hadn't. I got you into this, and I'm gettin' you out of it."

And then after a moment, old Bill's face clouded.

"But if I turn you range free," he mused tonelessly, "some shorthorn puncher'd wheedle you outa your freedom again. By jiminy! I believe—yup, that's just what I'll do!"

THAT night in the stable yards behind the livery a strange ritual was being enacted.

White Twister was hog tied and lying on his side. He had ceased his vicious strugglings, but his infuriated squeal occasionally sounded through the night silence. Bill Cravens had a sizzling branding iron, and was laboriously drawing it over the snowlike hair. "Shuck" Bowers, the stableman, was holding

high over his head a sputtering lantern, peering with unbelievable eyes at the squatting figure of the old puncher.

Finally Bill's long task was at an end. He waddled backward and stood upright. He looked at Bowers and smiled with a strangely twisting mouth.

"That oughta turn the trick," he said.

He turned back to the stallion and again pondered dubiously over the scrawling brand that effaced the entire left side of the animal. He read aloud:

Property of
Bill Cravens
Don't touch.

In a few moments Bill was astride his roan, leading White Twister si-

lently out of town. Like huge shadows they faded out onto the prairie. For a mile Bill rode thus. Then he pulled the Twister up alongside and with a deft movement whisked the halter from the uptilted head. For a brief instant the animal stood as if electrified. Bill reached out with his toe and nudged it gently on the fore shoulder.

The Twister gave back a step, and with a sudden wild sense of freedom reared and spun in a pirouette.

Bill watched as that streak flashed through the night like a silver bullet. He caught the brief poise there on the crest of a yonder knoll. He nudged his roan toward town.

"C'mon, Mabel," he grunted. "We somehow gotta get this money back to that bronc buyer."

TOMBSTONE LOOKING UP

TOMBSTONE, Arizona, is dressing up now that prohibition repeal has gone into effect.

Mustachioed barkeepers at the historic Crystal Saloon, where more than one hundred men were killed in gun duels during 1880, are polishing the heavy whisky tumblers of other days and shining the big mirror.

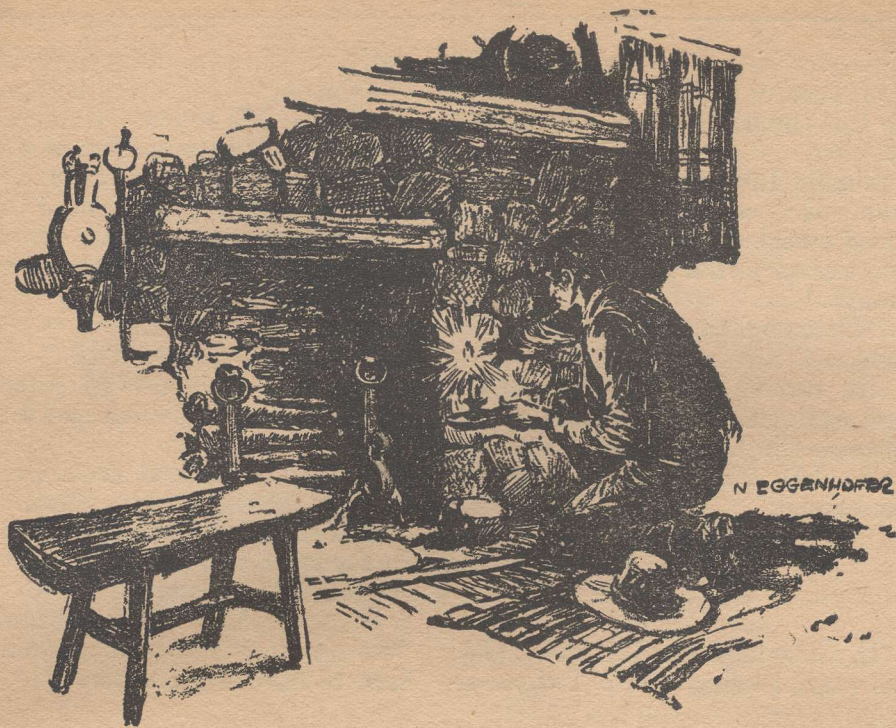
The swing doors, through which stamped some of the West's worst two-gun desperadoes, have been hung again, and bullet holes in the woodwork are being washed out for the edification of the curious.

Boot Hill Cemetery, where Billy the Kid once spat in disdain and swore that "No one will ever plug me and sink me into a hole like this," is being restored to its old glory.

The little wooden crosses over the mounds, where lie faro dealers who weren't quick enough on the draw and rustlers who bumped into hard customers, have been painted, and the grass has been mowed.

Even the Bird Cage Theater, which has been the home of scorpions and spiders for years, is being renovated. The antiquated footlights will shine again just as they did when the famous Lotta Crabtree and other celebrities played the "boards" during the early '90s.

For Tombstone expects the return of alcoholic beverages to bring back some of its pristine glory. More cowboys will flock to town, the old-timers believe, and more tourists will wend toward the mountain-embraced settlement since the thirty-sixth State has ratified the Twenty-first Amendment.



IDAHO'S BIG IDEA

By HUGH F. GRINSTEAD

Author of "Idaho Improves His Mind," etc.

I TELL you I ain't sick," declared Mack Barnes. "When I get sick, then it'll be time to start fussin'," he said, with a subdued groan.

"Maybe you ain't exactly sick, but you're in a mighty bad shape," replied "Idaho" Freeman, placing a jug of hot water against his old partner's aching leg.

"I'm just wore out," said Mack. "Doc Loman says he can't do nothin' for me."

"No, he can't, because he's doctored hosses and jackasses so long that he handles a man the same way," Idaho replied. "But Doc says you'll git well, sure as shootin', if

we could git you out to Orchard Springs, where them two doctors has got a sort of horspital rigged up."

"I reckon he failed to tell you that it would take nigh five hundred dollars to pay them fancy doctors."

"Three hundred, he said, if you didn't have to stay too long."

"Huh," Mack grunted. "Might as well be three thousand, when we ain't got more'n fifty dollars in money, and no way to git it."

"Gittin' the money is what's been worryin' me, but I ain't give up hope yet," Idaho replied.

"I ain't worth three hundred dol-

lars, and I wouldn't go to them doctors if you got the money," Mack declared.

"No, dang your contrary old hide, you ain't worth six bits on the hoof," Idaho retorted. "But I aim to git you to Orchard Springs some way, if I have to hog tie you."

"You might jolt the life out of me on the way."

"It'll be a heap worse on you if I don't take you."

"Ain't no use for us to argue about it," said Mack. "We ain't got the money, and they ain't no way to git it."

"I can't borrow that much, and I'd hate to beg or steal, but I figger they's other ways to git money," Idaho replied. "It does seem like some of them fellers we helped out when our copper mine was goin' good, might give us a lift now."

"Yeah, we give away as much as a couple thousand dollars, first and last, but we give it free, without expectin' anybody to pay it back," said Mack.

"If I had time, I might sell that old Packsaddle claim of ours—if I could find anybody wantin' it," Idaho suggested.

"Uh-huh, findin' anybody that's wantin' it and got the money to pay for it, is all you got to do," said Mack.

I RECKON most folks in this part of the country is hard up," Idaho said after a moment's silence. "Don't seem to be anybody that's got extry money layin' around idle."

"Nobody but old Buck Hensley," Mack added.

"Buck Hensley!" Idaho exclaimed. "I never thought of him. I heard some fellers talkin' about him last time I was down to Burnt Rock. They said he had ten thousand dol-

lars buried somewheres around his place. Now it might be I——"

"Just forgit all about Buck and his money," Mack advised. "We ain't never let him have any money, and if we had you couldn't ever git a cent of it back from that old skinflint."

"N-no, we ain't ever give him anything," Idaho agreed. "That is, we ain't give him anything di-rectly."

"What you mean di-rectly?" Mack asked.

"Well, we staked Joe Franklin to a waggin and team one time, along with grub enough to last him all winter, right after Buck had beat him out of a homestead worth four, five hundred dollars," Idaho explained.

"If you think Buck Hensley is goin' to give up money just because he got it dishonest, you might as well forgit you ever knowed him," said Mack. "I don't reckon he's got a dollar that he earnt by honest work."

"I ain't got much hope, myself, that he'd let me have any money—willin'ly," Idaho replied, the last word under his breath.

"Like as not we won't need any extry money," Mack began, with unusual optimism. "I'll git well. I'm already feelin' better."

"You're a danged old liar," Idaho snapped. "You're gittin' worse ev'ry day, and if you don't git that laig worked on by a doctor that knows how, you're goin' to lose it."

"I've saw fellers git along right well with a crutch," Mack responded with a grim smile.

"If that pizen works up into your vitals, after it gits your laig, you're li'ble to lose your head, neck and ev'rything else," Idaho warned.

"I wish you wouldn't talk about it so much, Idaho," Mack complained. "I reckon what is to be, is

pretty sure to happen, in spite of all you can do. Just as well quit botherin' about money, and let natur' take its course."

"Danged if I do," Idaho exclaimed. "I got a idee I'll git that money to-night, and in the mornin' we'll start for Orchard Springs. We ought to make it in two days and part of the nights."

"Where do you aim to git money?" Mack asked.

"That's one secret I don't aim to tell," Idaho replied. "If you knowed, you might talk me out of it."

"Prob'ly because you don't know it yourself," Mack growled. "But whatever 'tis you got on your mind, I'm warnin' you not to do it."

"And I ain't listenin' to nothin' you say," Idaho retorted, picking up his hat and starting for the door.

ONCE in the sunlight of mid-afternoon, Idaho had only himself to argue with. It was true that the grand idea was not half formed. He went over in his mind all that had passed between him and Mack, the numerous people they had aided, and how these same people were either unable or unwilling to return the favor now that it was needed. Money could be raised in time, but time was the chief factor in this case.

Always it came back to the single fact that Mack must have skilled medical attention within a very few days if he were to pull through. Good old Mack, who had been a faithful, though often obstinate, old partner for these many years. If the tables were turned, Mack would be sure to find a way to help an old friend.

It was an old injury that had troubled Mack for years, and now a deep-seated infection threatened

his life. Only a knife in the hands of a skilled surgeon, and careful nursing, could save him.

Idaho fought the greatest battle of his life as he walked about in the sunshine or sat long on a flat rock, muttering to himself and shaking his fist at an imaginary foe. He struggled with his conscience and a natural weakness.

"I got to do it," he muttered, his fists clenched at his side. "They ain't no other way—and—if it was me, he—he'd——"

He sat there with head bowed dejectedly till the sun touched the western horizon. Then he got up and went back to their little cabin on the slope. Mack asked him petulantly where he had been, but got only an evasive reply.

In silence, Idaho prepared the evening meal for himself and his disabled companion. He finished the evening chores, and when it was almost bedtime, he made preparations to leave again.

"Where you goin' now?" Mack asked.

"I told you once that it was a secret, and I ain't changed my mind," Idaho replied, with a gruffness that belied his feelings.

"I'm agin' it, whatever 'tis you're up to," Mack declared. "They ain't no good comin' of it. I never knowed you to——"

"Shet up, you danged old magpie," Idaho cried. "If you say airy a word, I'll—I'll——"

He didn't say what he would do, nor did he give Mack a chance to say more. He grabbed his hat and bolted for the door. Outside, he turned hot and cold by turns, though it was a pleasant evening. He hurried toward the corral, fearing he might weaken if he tarried. He was glad he had succeeded in cutting off Mack's argument.

"Agin' it, is he?" Idaho muttered as he went. "I reckon he ain't the only one that's agin' it, but it—it's got to be done."

He caught his horse and saddled it, but before he mounted, he drew his old six-shooter from its holster at his side, and twirled the cylinder, making sure every chamber contained a cartridge before the weapon was returned to its holster. A gun carefully loaded was a queer equipment, indeed, for a man setting forth to negotiate a loan!

IDAHO mounted and rode down the starlit trail. Two hundred yards from the cabin, he reined in and looked back. He hesitated a moment, and it looked as if he would have to fight his battle over, but he presently shook his head and surprised his horse with a vigorous dig in the ribs.

Idaho rode almost two hours, following familiar trails. He crossed Dry Canyon, reached the ridge beyond, and in time dipped into a wide valley. He reined his horse in short when the outlines of a house, corral and sheds, loomed before him in the dim light of the stars.

As he sat there in his saddle, peering ahead, he was seized with a fit of ague. His teeth chattered, and a prickly, chilly sensation ran along his spine. The next instant he was mopping his face with hands that trembled, for beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

"Go ahead and git it done, you danged old chicken-hearted cuss," he told himself in a quavering whisper. "It—it's j-just got to—be done—s-some time."

He dismounted and tied his horse at the corner of the corral, then took a step resolutely toward the house. He paused, a feeling of panic engulfing him. It wouldn't have

taken much, even then, to start him on a panicky retreat. He waited till his knees ceased trembling and his teeth had stopped chattering.

"I—I'll go to j-jail—maybe git shot—but I'd hate myself if—if I didn't go ahead," he muttered shakily. "Pore old Mack, if I don't git the money, he—won't—he——"

He broke off suddenly, pulled himself together, and with his jaw thrust out determinedly, crept like a chief in the night toward Buck Hensley's house!

When he was within twenty yards of the house, he saw a dim light shining through the window. Evidently Buck was up late, which fact suited Idaho's purpose admirably. It would save waking him suddenly, a procedure always more or less dangerous.

Strangely enough, Idaho's nerves were under complete control. It was with a firm hand that he tied his red bandanna over his face and pulled down his hat, leaving only his eyes visible.

With the assurance and desperation of a practiced house breaker, he crept close to the window and peered through a crack beneath a makeshift shade. What he beheld inside brought a quick gasp of amazement.

DOWN on the hearth by the side of the wide fireplace crouched a man, evidently Buck Hensley himself. He held a sputtering candle in one hand, while with the other he removed a loose stone from the chimney some two feet from the floor. An instant later, the hand was thrust into the cavity, and when it was withdrawn it was filled with shining coins of gold and silver, gleaming in the light of the guttering flame.

Idaho held his breath as he

watched the removal of the coin from its hiding place. Lucky break, he thought. Just in time to catch Buck Hensley counting his money or taking some of it out. It was also fortunate that Buck burned candles. He was too stingy to buy coal oil. A dim light suited Idaho, and a candle was easily extinguished. His chief fear had been that of being recognized.

While standing there, planning his next move, Idaho made another startling discovery. The door, almost within arm's reach, was slightly ajar. The latch had doubtlessly failed to catch when it was closed hurriedly. Buck had been careless.

Cautiously, Idaho reached out and swung the door back almost noiselessly. The man with his hands full of shining coins was so completely absorbed in his task that he failed to sense the approach of an intruder.

Not until Idaho stepped inside did the man turn his head, as if to listen. Even then, the dim light from the candle revealed nothing, for Idaho was in a deep shadow.

Whatever may have been Idaho's original plan, or however vague, his course was now shaped by quickly occurring events that had no place in his scheme. The situation called for immediate action on his part.

Without hesitation, he leaped forward, his old six-shooter upraised. The heavy barrel of the weapon descended swiftly on the head of the surprised man kneeling on the hearth. He grew limp and rolled over, dropping the candle, which went out.

Feeling about in the darkness, Idaho drew the unconscious man's hands together and tied them securely with his own suspenders. Since it was no longer necessary to

conceal his face, Idaho removed the bandanna and blindfolded his victim.

No longer fearful of being interrupted or recognized, Idaho recovered the fallen candle and lighted it. He could now take his time, count out five hundred dollars from the pile of coins and take his departure, leaving Buck Hensley to be found and released by some of his ranch hands in the morning. If he regained consciousness, he could make no trouble.

But as Idaho raised up, he heard a rustling sound in a corner of the room. Raising the candle above his head, he discovered, to his amazement, another man laying there, trussed up securely with ropes, a gag in his mouth.

Idaho went suddenly weak and dizzy, his jaw sagged and his eyes bulged. The man lying bound and gagged in a corner of the room, was none other than Buck Hensley himself. His eyes were wide open and he stared straight at Idaho, who could only blink and stare back.

It was beginning to look very much as if the fat was in the fire, for it would complicate matters to take Buck Hensley's money while he looked on. Idaho regretted instantly that he had removed his mask. Thoroughly dismayed, he looked first at the owner of the cabin, then at the unconscious man on the hearth and back again. The stranger was slender and much younger than Buck. Only in the poor light from the candle could Idaho have mistaken him for Buck Hensley.

UNDECIDED what step to take next, Idaho stood helplessly watching Buck Hensley make signs with his eyes and fingers, the only parts of him left free

to move. It was evident that he wanted Idaho to cut him loose and remove the gag from his mouth. Idaho decided to restore his means of communication first. His tongue couldn't do any particular damage.

For a minute after Idaho cut the gag loose, Buck could only sputter. Finally intelligible words came from his mouth.

"Good old Idaho," he all but sobbed. "I always did like you, and here you come just in the nick of time to save me from being robbed. Maybe you saved my life. I won't never forget it."

"Wh-what?" Idaho gasped, failing to grasp the significance of Buck Hensley's apparent gratitude. It was out of the ordinary for a man to thank a person who had come with the avowed purpose of taking away some of his money, by hook or crook.

"The thievin' cuss slipped in here while all the boys were gone to a dance over to Satterwhite's. He began to torture me. I had to tell him where my money was hid—five thousand dollars," Hensley hysterically explained.

"You mean he—that he——"

"Yes, sir, he had the rope around my neck—threatened to hang me if I didn't tell," Buck continued, shuddering at the recollection. "I never was as glad to see anybody in my life as I was when you stepped in, and the way you knocked that cuss out was a purty sight. You're the kind of a friend I like to see."

"Why—er—yes, I reckon I am a friend of your'n," Idaho stammered, feeling that he ought to say something.

"I wouldn't've missed seein' you slip in and soak that thief for five hundred dollars," Buck Hensley declared, laughing.

"Five hundred dollars!" Idaho ex-

claimed. "Did you say you'd give five hundred dollars for knockin' that feller cold and tyin' him up?"

"W-well, I didn't exactly say it, but I reckon I would've offered that much right at the time if you hadn't stepped in and saved me the trouble," Buck answered.

"That's lucky for me!" Idaho exclaimed. "I'm needin' five hundred dollars mighty bad."

"I reckon maybe you mistook my meanin', Idaho," said Buck uneasily. "It didn't re'lly set you back none to slip up on that feller and stop him from takin' my money. I'd 've done as much for a old friend."

"Yeah, but you said——"

"Hurry up and git these ropes off me, Idaho! Don't waste time un-tyin' 'em, just cut 'em," Buck interrupted. "When I git loose, we'll talk about that."

"I can talk with you better just the way you are," Idaho replied. "Do you aim to give me——"

"No, I ain't figgerin' on givin' you anything," growled Buck.

"All right then," Idaho responded. "I'll just untie this stranger and give him back his gun, leavin' everything just like it was when I come."

"Don't—don't do that!" Buck Hensley cried in a panic of fear. "I'll give you five hundred dollars soon as you turn me loose."

Idaho pondered the offer a moment, then shook his head. "I reckon I'll git the five hundred first," he said.

IDAHO walked over to the fireplace, where lay a sizable pile of coins by the side of the stranger, who was just regaining consciousness. Buck Hensley fumed helplessly in his corner.

"You—you sneakin' robber," yelled Buck in a frenzy. "I'll have

you jailed! You was in with this other feller! You ain't no friend. It's just a dirty trick to git my money, but you can't——"

"Shet up, you danged old wolf in sheep's clothin'," Idaho put in. "You never got a cent of this money honest. You've beat widders and orphans out of more'n five hundred dollars at one clip. How about Joe Franklin and Ches Whittaker? The way you cheated them out of their homes was worse than stealin'."

"I'll have the law——"

"If you say airy a word, I'll turn this feller loose, and let him take every cent you got," Idaho warned.

"Wh-what you want me to do?" whined Hensley, subdued by the prospect of losing all his money.

"I want you to sign a paper tellin' all them concerned that you give me five hundred dollars for keepin' this robber from takin' all you had," Idaho answered. "I aim to pay it back some day, but it'll go to Joe Franklin. You beat him out of just about five hundred dollars."

Protesting feebly, Buck Hensley wrote as Idaho directed, and signed his name. In return, he was set free, but not until Idaho had counted out five hundred dollars in ten and twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"Don't mistreat your prisoner, Buck," Idaho advised as he backed out the door. "You and him ain't so much diff'rent. You just got diff'rent tricks."

With the money in bulging pockets, and the precious paper absolving him from all blame buttoned

into an inner pocket, Idaho hurried to where he had left his horse, mounted and rode homeward.

"If they hadn't been no dance at Satterwhite's, and if——" he muttered to himself. "Oh, they ain't no use to worry about what could've happened. Whatever is to be, can't be dodged," he added.

It was after midnight when Idaho stumbled into his own cabin to find Mack awake.

"I got it, Mack, I got it!" Idaho confided enthusiastically, displaying a handful of the yellow coin.

"How did you git it?" Mack asked, raising up in bed to look at it.

"Mack, if you don't ask me no questions, I won't tell you no lies about it," Idaho replied.

"Idaho, you—you ain't done nothin' rash, have you?" Mack demanded uneasily.

"Shet up and lay down," Idaho ordered. "We're startin' for Orchard Springs soon's its light, so's we can make it there by to-morrow night."

"But how——"

"If you won't ask me no more questions, I'll tell you how I got that money, the minute we come in sight of Orchard Springs," Idaho promised. "That is if you don't die of curiosity before then."

"You danged old groundhog," Mack growled. "You couldn't kill me till I've found out how the Sam Hill you ever got five hundred dollars from anybody."

"Whatever is to be, is dang nigh sure to happen," Idaho repeated, half to himself.

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CLUES

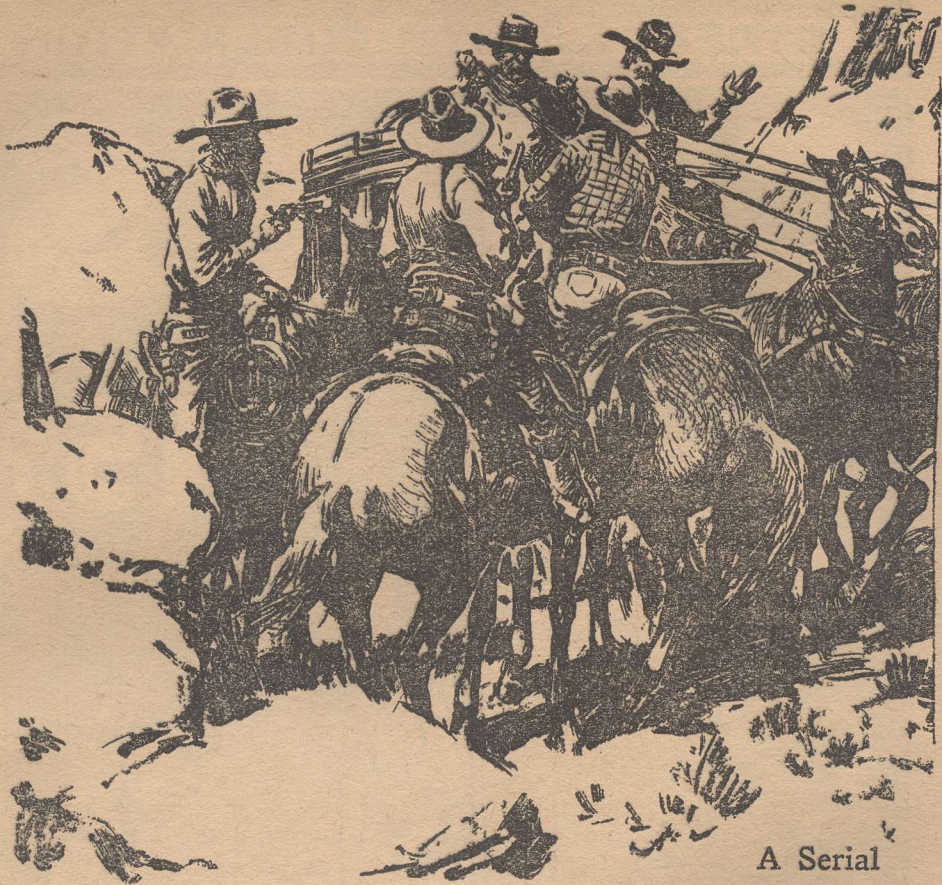
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The BARKING DOG

By CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

CHAPTER I.

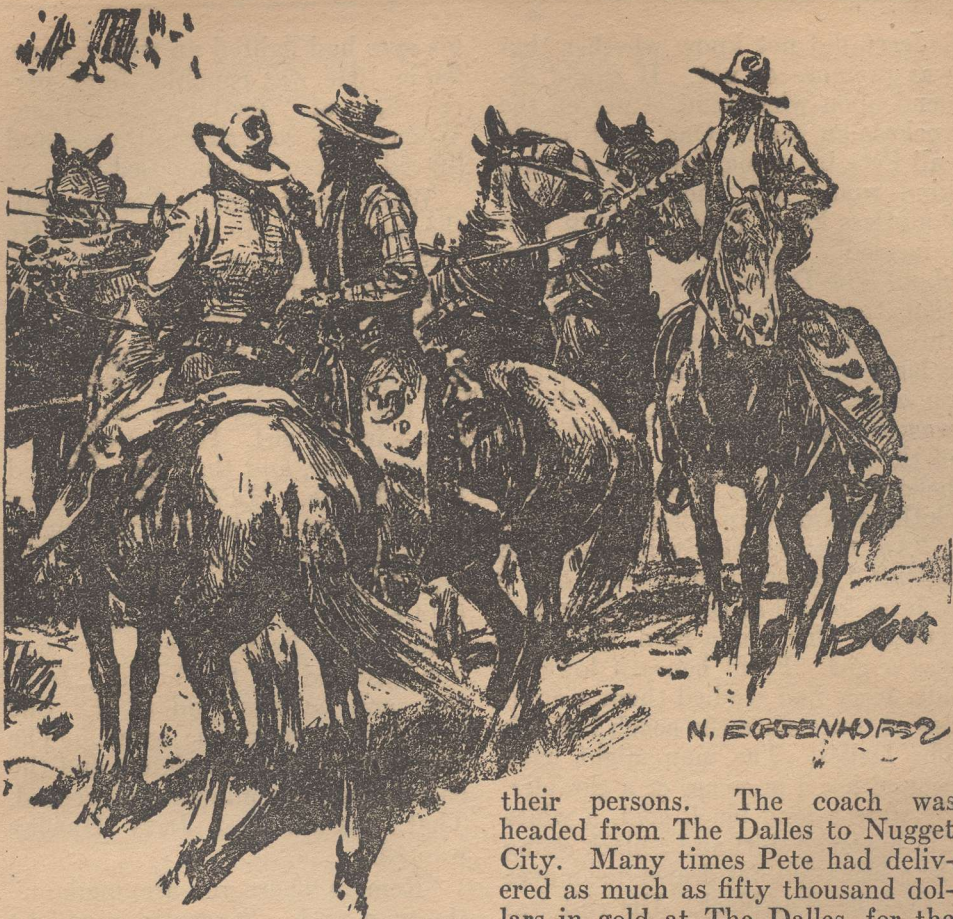
ONE SHOT.

WHEN the command to the stagecoach driver was given, Jerry Hawley went rigid in his seat. That command, gruffly delivered, had been to halt. Since the four horses had been taking a rise at a walk, the driver had only to gather up the slack of the reins to bring the animals to a stop.

Though Jerry Hawley's body was

so very still, his mind was not. This, he swiftly reflected, was an ideal place for a holdup. The rise was rather steep. Just here, there was a break in the hills through which the coach was passing. Glancing through a window, Jerry saw six masked men, armed with six-guns, sitting their horses within the break. All the men had their guns trained on the driver and the messenger.

Jerry knew that both the driver and the messenger had been caught napping. He had entered the coach



at The Dalles just before it had been started, and he had observed the two old men closely, just as he had observed every other man he had encountered in the twenty-four hours he had spent in the river town.

He surmised that the shotgun of Pete Colby, the messenger, had been across his knees, its muzzle pointed beyond the driver, Sam Talbot. That had been a fact, and it had been a further fact that Pete had been hunched forward, his toothless gums nursing a chew of tobacco. Sam had been looking at the top of the rise. Neither man had been thinking of a holdup, for there was nothing aboard the coach to repay robbers, except such valuables as the three passengers might have on

their persons. The coach was headed from The Dalles to Nugget City. Many times Pete had delivered as much as fifty thousand dollars in gold at The Dalles, for the boom at Nugget City was at its height. Any fool would know that gold was not carried from The Dalles southward. There was something queer here.

JERRY HAWLEY knew holdup men. He had had a good deal of experience with the breed. When the coach was brought to a stop and the brakes squeaked against the wheels, he listened intently. More than the words, he wanted to catch the tones of the holdup spokesman. He wanted to determine whether the man was pretending.

"Th'ow your gun away, ol' man," said that spokesman. "Lift your hands, the both of you."

Jerry did not know whether that was pretense or not. It would depend upon what kind of person the spokesman was. One kind would call Pete by name, jovially; another kind would not, though he would doubtless know Pete. Holdup men informed themselves. Knocking about The Dalles, Jerry had learned that the coach had been held up three times in the past few months, a large amount of gold being taken on each occasion. The probability was that the holdup men had been of the same outfit each time. Jerry believed that this holdup man was clothing himself in evasion.

"An' now ev'rybody inside, come outside," the spokesman went on.

Jerry looked at the two other passengers. One was a man, the other was a girl. From beneath lowered lids, Jerry had studied them a number of times since the coach had left The Dalles. The man might have been either a preacher or a gambler. He wore a long black coat, a white stiff-bosomed shirt and a black string tie, a black felt hat drawn down over a sleek head as black. His vest was low-cut, and in the shirt front were two gold buttons. Gold was so abundant that a preacher might have worn those. They were rough-looking as if they had been made by unskilled fingers. A gambler, Jerry knew, would probably have sported diamonds, but this man's fingers were without rings of any kind. Jerry had wondered about that, for the hands were slender and the fingers long, such fingers as diamond rings were meant for.

Yet Jerry was convinced that the man was a gambler. Preachers were mostly sad men, patient, kindly men, grieved by the conduct of men in boom towns, with their easy come and easy go. This man was intense. Even in casual talk with the girl,

his eyes had lighted up with a fierce flame. He was capable, Jerry perceived, of seething emotions. Women and gold stirred those—and hatred of men who opposed him.

While Jerry remained in his seat, the man rose. He rose swiftly. He was not a tall man, and he was able to come nearly erect under the roof of the coach. As swiftly as he had risen, he bent at his slim waist. He took one of the girl's hands. Jerry did not resent that. He had no interest in the girl. He had only one interest now, and that was centered beyond here. He thought the girl would resent it, however, thought, idly, that she ought to resent it. She didn't. While the man briefly held her hand, she looked up at him with steady brown eyes. She was not flustered by the holdup, Jerry saw, and he was glad of it. She would not make a scene. The holdup would be completed, and the coach would be allowed to proceed. That was all that Jerry Hawley wanted.

"Remain where you are, madam," the man said. "Everything will be all right. I'll see to that. These men, I'm sure, have made a mistake. They must think the messenger is carrying gold. He has none."

The girl neither flushed nor smiled. She only continued to regard the man with those uplifted, steady eyes. He smiled thinly and turned away from her toward the door. Jerry was seated nearer the door than he, and Jerry decided to remain where he was. The man had stated that he could fix things up. Let him! Jerry had no wish for prominence in this affair. He didn't wish to bring a glow of admiration to those brown eyes. He wanted the holdup men disposed of; he wanted the coach to roll on. He

would gladly permit that black-garbed man to shine as a hero.

He rather thought the man would order him outside to take his part in whatever might ensue. The man did not. He seemed to have no interest in Jerry. He merely gave Jerry a careless glance, gained the door, and passed through it to the ground. Jerry leaned and looked through the window again. The girl did not have to lean, but she, too, looked through the window.

THE man went around the rear of the coach and along its side till he was at the mouth of the break. His manner, it seemed to Jerry, expressed scorn for those holdup men. He did not even raise his hands. If he had been another kind of man, Jerry would have given him credit for courage for facing those masked, armed men. Jerry gave him credit for nothing. Jerry was convinced that he was showing off before the girl. He expected to convince the holdup men that the coach never carried gold on its southbound trips. Chagrined, the men would ride off. The gambler would return to the girl, having shown her how easy it was to handle holdup men.

"You fellows——" he began in a spirited voice.

"Shut up, you!"

Scorn was here, but the gambler was not expressing it. The holdup man was. The gambler's voice had been clear, high. The holdup man's was husky, harsh. The gambler immediately fell back a step. He seemed to yield a vast astonishment.

"Why——" he tried again.

"Not another word!"

The spokesman's six-gun was now tightly gripped, its muzzle aimed at the gambler's chest. The

gambler, Jerry saw, was trying to summon anger. He was like a man who, secure in authority, suddenly finds his authority disputed. He seemed unable to understand that Jerry, too, was puzzled. What had led this man to believe that he could confront those holdup men and make them do his bidding? Again, Jerry thought, there was something queer here.

The spokesman raised his husky voice: "You two in the coach, come out."

Jerry rose, bending a little because of his height, an even six feet. He stood looking at the girl. He would have to concern himself with her. The gambler had promised her protection but had been unable to give it to her. Jerry, being unarmed, could give her no more, but he felt he ought to try to make her believe he could. What she was about to face would be calculated to shake the courage even of a girl with her controlled nerves.

The girl rose slowly. As she looked out at the masked men, her profile was to Jerry. Immersed though he was in his own business and the business here, he had to confess that hers was a lovely profile. All in all, he added, she was quite a girl as she stood there. She wore a velvet dress, buttoned up under her chin, its flowing skirt dropping to the floor of the coach. On her head was a dark-brown hat with a black plume sweeping along its brim. Beneath the brim her hair was honey-colored. In this situation one kind of girl would have been pale. This girl was not pale. Her naturally high color had increased till it flooded the cheek toward Jerry. Still Jerry believed that she was more impatient than angry. Like himself, she seemed to resent the delay.

And she had no eye for Jerry Hawley. Without even glancing at him, she passed him and stepped to the ground. Jerry followed her. His concern for her grew. She was, he believed, not native to this country. She was not the kind of girl who frequented gold camps. Apparently, she knew nothing of holdups or holdup men. She had no sense of peril here.

THE girl went at once to the gambler's side. Jerry saw the gambler give her an embarrassed look. Jerry's lips curled. That parasite had been trying to impress her and had fallen down on his job. Jerry was convinced that the girl had merely suffered him. He seemed to think she had been interested in him. Hell, said Jerry, the fellow was a vain fool.

"Where you headed for, ma'am?" the holdup man demanded.

"Nugget City."

Jerry could not check the little thrill that went through him. He thought the girl's voice had the velvet quality of her dress. It was smooth—and low. Yet her words were distinct. Those two words were like soft pellets cast into the holdup man's face, but he was so intent upon the business in hand that he seemed not to feel that in them.

"Whatcha goin' to Nugget City for?"

The girl took perhaps five seconds to that. Then her small, square chin went a little higher. She lidded her eyes briefly and then opened them wider than before.

"Why, I've heard that women go to Nugget City," she answered.

It was, Jerry Hawley asserted, a calculated statement designed for this uncouth fellow's especial benefit—to dispose of any question in

his mind about her; but Jerry wished she had not made it. He wondered what great interest had caused her to make it, for he was sure that she had cast herself in a rôle altogether alien to her. She was not one to hang about gambling halls for gleanings from washers-out of gold.

The answer, however, apparently could not have been better. It seemed to satisfy the holdup man. He at once turned to Jerry and regarded him stonily for a moment through the holes in his black mask. Jerry braced himself. He would be compelled to evade, as the girl had evaded. He hoped he would be as successful.

Jerry, though his gray eyes were fixed on the mask, was aware that the girl had slightly turned and was looking at him. Again he was altogether motionless. Still again, his mind was alive. What should he tell this fellow? He couldn't tell him he was a dealer, looking for a job. His tanned face would betray him there. The fellow knew by now that he was a man of the open.

"If you want what we have, why don't you take it and let the coach proceed?" the girl put in.

"Climb into the coach, you, an' keep your mouth shut," the holdup man ordered.

The girl hesitated, then left the gambler's side and started for the coach. She passed close behind Jerry intentionally, he thought.

"Be careful," she whispered. "I fooled him. You can."

Her breathing of the words was like a little, vagrant breeze that arrives and departs without making itself felt except in its immediate vicinity. Jerry was sure that those words had been heard only by himself. He gave no sign that he had heard them.

The girl climbed into the coach.

The holdup man's eyes followed her, then returned to Jerry.

"Nugget City?" he asked.

Jerry nodded. "Heard about the strike," he said.

The holdup man hesitated. Jerry knew that in that moment his life was in the balance. He couldn't guess why the coach had been detained. The object plainly was not robbery. Something was about to be done. Jerry would be a witness to it. Would the holdup man permit a witness to live? He had permitted the girl to live, but he might think differently about a man. The murder of a girl would be calculated to rouse the entire countryside; the murder of a man would be a thing of passing notice only, unless he were a person of importance. Jerry was not a person of importance here. Not yet!

"Why in hell don't you do whatever you intend to do and let us go on?" the gambler demanded.

Before he withdrew his eyes from Jerry, the holdup man said: "Get into the coach."

JERRY did not want to desert even that gambler, but he had to do it. He was helpless before all these men. Even if he had had a gun, he would have been helpless; for, to enforce their leader's order, three of the masked men turned their six-guns on him. He retreated to the coach, entered it, and sat down near the door. He and the girl looked out.

"Drive on."

That order was addressed to Sam Talbot. Jerry had seen that Pete had cast away his shotgun. Both men undoubtedly had small guns, but those were useless here. Driver and messenger were as helpless as Jerry had been.

The driver spoke to the horses. As

the lead horses and then the wheel horses went forward, he released the brake. The coach began slowly to climb the balance of the rise.

"Keep on goin', Talbot," the spokesman called loudly.

So, said Jerry, the fellow did know the driver, and undoubtedly he knew the messenger. He was not, then, a stranger in these parts.

Through the door of the coach, Jerry watched the scene behind him. Just before the coach topped the rise, he felt a stir beside him. Though he did not turn his head, he knew that the girl had sat down so close to him that she touched him. He was aware of a faint fragrance. He moved a little away from her. He had no time for fragrances. He had no time, even, for a girl like this.

Down the rise, the gambler stood alone in the road. His hands were now behind his back. Jerry guessed that he had been ordered to put them there. However, his body was erect, his head was up. He was measurably a defiant figure, but Jerry believed that he did not yet know what was about to happen to him. He was again leaning upon that strange authority which he had briefly leaned upon before.

Jerry believed he knew what was about to happen to him, and Jerry resolved to make one effort to save him. He could not permit even so worthless, so selfish a man to be executed while he himself merely waited.

He leaned out the window and called to the driver to stop as soon as he had passed the summit and was safely out of sight. Sam Talbot had his own ideas about the wisdom of that. He put on his brakes on the slope but not firmly enough to stop the coach. The horses

drifted down, the coach sliding behind them.

Jerry sprang through the door and ran up under Sam. Sam looked down patiently and shook his head. His business was to get the coach through to Nugget City. He was again on his way.

"Give me a coupla guns," Jerry called.

Sam fished under the blanket on the seat between himself and Pete and produced a .45. Jerry took it. Pete, being a messenger, was more eager for gun play. With a .45 in his hand, he put a foot on the sliding wheel on his side and leaped to the ground. When the coach had passed between them, the two men started up the slope together.

Jerry had no idea what he intended to do. It occurred to him that he might pass from the summit to the hill below where the armed, masked men sat their horses. He and Pete might be able to cover them.

Just before the two reached the summit, they threw themselves down and crawled up till they could look over the top. They immediately came erect. The gambler was now standing with his hands above his head. He was staring straight before him. Jerry knew that he was looking at those holdup men. And all the defiance had gone out of him. He had spread his legs and he was having to command them to support him. He was, Jerry said, a picture of despair.

"Come on, we'll get up on the hill," Jerry told Pete. "We've had some time. We may have a few minutes more."

Jerry ran toward the side of the hill, Pete panting after him. They did not reach the foot of the hillside. Below them there was a single shot. Jerry knew that it had come from a

six-gun. He guessed, remotely, that those holdup men had not wanted to mutilate the gambler's body with a blast from a shotgun.

Jerry and Pete stopped, wheeled. The gambler was standing as he had been. Jerry knew that there was a bullet in his body. The bullet seemed to have shocked the body so that it was held where it was. That lasted for only an instant.

The first movement of that body was a slow buckling of the knees. The raised hands dropped. There was a lifeless nod from the head. Then the gambler pitched forward and fell prone.

In the same instant there was the sound of hoofs beyond the hills. Sand quickly killed the sound.

Jerry and Pete ran down the slope toward the motionless body.

CHAPTER II.

SUNLIT EYES.

JERRY easily reached the body first, his long legs carrying him swiftly away from Pete. He dropped down beside the gambler and found him still alive, though death was very near. The man's eyes were closed. There was a froth of blood on his lips. His chest rose and fell rapidly as he took shallow breaths. His face, naturally pale from an indoor life, was gray now.

The front of his shirt, donned that morning and till this dire moment still immaculate, was red from blood. The shirt front was so smooth that the blood flowed across it and sank into the softer garments instead of being absorbed by it. Jerry unfastened the collar and the tie and pulled the shirt bosom free of the two gold buttons. A white silk undershirt was stained with blood. When Jerry had gently unbuttoned the undershirt, he disclosed a round

wound, its edges already black. The bullet, Jerry saw, had missed the heart but had struck the left lung.

Pete arrived and knelt on the other side of the man. In sixty years of living Pete had often looked on death, arriving and arrived. He studied the wound very briefly, then looked up at Jerry and solemnly shook his head.

"I know." Jerry nodded. "Just a matter of a few minutes."

"It's a funny mess," Pete declared. "They's been a gang of outlaws operatin' all through this country an' over to the southeast for a long time. Posses has gone after 'em but never found 'em. We got a trailer in town. Fella brought f'm Idaho by the sheriff. He has went along with the posses but never led the posses nowheres. They say he'd folla the trail good for a while an' then lose it complete. By gosh, if that outfit ain't rounded up afore long, there won't be no use tryin' to get no gold outta Nugget City."

"The gang's just after gold?" Jerry asked.

His tone was flat, as if he merely asked a question to fill in the gap between this moment and the moment of the gambler's dying or his brief recovery of consciousness; but he turned his bent head to one side as if he listened intently.

"Hell, no!" Pete said. "Them fellas is out for anything they c'n lay their hands on. It's my belief they'd steal the pennies f'm a dead man's eyes or f'm a child on its way to buy candy. They been operatin' far an' wide. I hear they been rustlin' cattle over in the cow country. Least, cattle has been rustled over there, an' nobody ain't had no success in ketchin' the rustlers. I hear that five hundred head was drove off to the south in one night.

It takes a big outfit to pull off stuff like that, mister."

"Do you know this man?" Jerry asked.

Pete lifted his head and stared at Jerry out of astonished eyes. His stare seemed to ask where Jerry had spent his time.

"Know him?" he repeated. "Gosh, who don't?"

"I don't," Jerry said.

Pete ran his eyes up and down Jerry's body. Jerry was dressed in a much-wrinkled blue suit, high black shoes, a blue flannel shirt, open at the throat, and a black felt hat, worn, any one could see, only a short time.

"F'm the look o' your clo'es you're a town man," Pete said. "F'm the look o' your face, you ain't. You——"

"Never mind that," Jerry hastily interrupted.

"It ain't none o' my business for a fac'! I wouldn't speak of it if anybody else was here present. Well, you couldn't be a town man an' not have heard o' this here Treece. He's been ever' place, in all the States that has perduced gold or silver. I reckon he c'n smell a strike. He got to Nugget City soon after the first gold was found.

"Soon's she was seen to be a real strike, he had timber brought down f'm the hills an' had a long log buildin' th'owed together. Saloon with a long bar, dance hall, roulette, faro, poker, mos' any game you'd wanta play."

"An' women," said Jerry.

"Plenty. He didn't bring 'em in. His pardner, Virlee, done that. This here Treece is a kind of a gen'leman. Everybody liked him. Good-hearted fella. Helped out many a man. Saved a few f'm puttin' bullets into their heads, I reckon."

"He'd take their gold away from

them in his gamblin' joint an' then stake 'em to a few dollars," Jerry said.

"Some gamblers I've knowed don't even go that far," said Pete evenly. "You gotta give a man credit for what he does do."

"What sort o' fella is this Virlee?" Jerry asked.

Pete had dropped his eyes to Treece's face. Now he started to slant another look up at Jerry, decided against it.

"Treece's eyes is beginnin' to flicker," he said hastily. "I guess he's goin' to have a wakin' minute. His throat'll be dry. Some water in the coach. I'll run an' get it."

Pete stood erect. Jerry looked up at him.

"We'll forget everything," Jerry said softly. "Tell me jus' one thing: This here Virlee is one hell of a fella, is he?"

"You heard o' him?"

"No."

"You better not mess with him. If you're goin' to hang around Nugget City, jus' be perlite to him. He ain't no gen'leman. They say— Well, I'll go get some water."

"What do they say?" Jerry insisted.

"Oh, men that gets to th'owin' out their chests in minin' camps sometimes disappears. I don't know nothin'. I'm on'y a shotgun messenger."

He started up the slope, stopped, and returned to Jerry.

"Sam an' that lady is comin'," he said. "I reckon she made Sam come. He wouldn't leave his horses otherwise. He's a hell of a fella to stick around where his horses is till he gets 'em safe in the stable. That young lady is a kind of a high-step-pin' young lady, but she better not come here. Treece is goin' to open

his eyes in a minute. His dyin' ain't goin' to be no nice sight."

"You go an' meet her an' Sam," Jerry said. "I can't leave this man. Somebody must be with him in his last minutes."

PETE hurried up the slope. Jerry, looking over his shoulder, saw him meet the girl and the driver. He spoke to the girl, placing himself in her path, but she shook her head and stepped around him and continued down the slope, the two men following her. In a moment or two she was leaning over Jerry's shoulder. Again Jerry was acutely aware of her nearness, of that fragrance which so faintly drifted out from her.

"He's not dead yet, is he?" she asked.

"Not yet. Won't be long. Won't you step back, ma'am?"

Instead of stepping back, she sat down in the dust of the road and lifted Treece's head and put it in her lap. The man's hat had dropped off when he had fallen, and she smoothed back his damp, oiled hair. When she found oil on her palm, she made a little gesture of repugnance, recovered from it, and continued to smooth the hair.

Sam and Pete came up.

"Give me the water, driver," she said.

She was, Jerry told himself, altogether a lady. She was used to giving orders. She was used to having people stand around when she spoke. She had spoken the word "driver" with the air of authority with which Treece had attempted to confront the holdup men.

Sam handed a leather flask to her, the top open. She placed the opening against Treece's lips and slightly tilted the flask. The lips refused to accept the water. It ran

away from them, down Treece's cheek. The girl took a handkerchief from her cuff and wet it and bathed the dying man's face. Again Treece's eyelids flickered. The girl looked up at Sam and Pete.

"Stand back," she ordered. "Give him air."

Their eyes blank, the two old men stood back. Air? Great guns, their expressions seemed to say, there wasn't nothin' but air here. Still the girl was not satisfied.

"Walk a little distance off," she said sharply. "This man is dying. He won't want a crowd about him when he passes."

The two men withdrew and stood apart, their eyes cast down. Jerry knew what their experiences with women had been. They had met only two kinds: Hard-working women and dance-hall women. They had never seen a girl like this before.

"You, also," the girl told Jerry.

Jerry withdrew his eyes from Treece's face and looked at the girl. She was looking down at Treece. A little frown puckered her forehead. Seeming to feel his regard, she glanced up, and their eyes met. Hers were very clear. He had thought them wholly brown, but now he discovered that they were gray-brown, flecks of brown overlying the gray. The pupils, however, were intensely black, and their blackness added to the dark impression.

"Did you hear me?" she asked.

Jerry did not answer. He continued to look deeply into her eyes. She would have to get her answer from his. Suddenly her quick color flooded into cheeks made pale by the imminence of death.

"Why——" she faltered.

"You got a fast mind, ma'am," said Jerry quietly. "You wanta hear whether this man has anything

to say just before he passes on. You see that I wanta hear him, too. It just come to me that I oughta hear him. I don't know why exactly."

"Was it because of those holdup men?" she demanded.

"I wasn't thinkin' of them, but mebbe it was on their account. There's somethin' funny here, ma'am. This fella Treece thought he could boss them holdup men. He couldn't do it. They shut him up an' then they murdered him. They stopped the coach, so they could do it."

"That's it," she said. "But I don't want you to hear what he says. I want that for myself."

"An' I want it for myself. I ain't askin' you nothin', ma'am."

"Who are you?"

"Jerry Hawley."

"Where are you from?"

WHERE he was from was Jerry Hawley's own business. He usually kept his business to himself. He had come into this country on a dangerous, a very important errand. He had had no more experience with this kind of girl than Sam or Pete had had. He hadn't the faintest idea what she was, what kind of life she normally led. Perhaps—— He shivered a little at the thought that she might have come here to meet Treece, that Treece might have been taking her to Nugget City after having met her at The Dalles. Men like Treece met women.

"Where," she broke into his silence, "are you from?"

"Where are you from, ma'am?" he asked.

"I don't believe you would usually put a question like that to a woman," she stated. "You're merely trying to silence me. Will you go over there and join those two men?"

Before he could answer, Treece took a long, shuddering breath. They looked at him, almost holding their own breaths. The dying man's lips moved, but no words came. The girl applied the flask to his lips, and he managed to let a little water trickle into his mouth. She took the flask away and bent her head. Jerry knew that she had been going to put a question. It was as if Treece also knew that. Again his lips moved, and now he was able to say faintly: "Don't know who shot me."

His lips quivered. Bubbles of red foam stood upon them. Suddenly his eyes went wide. Light from the mounting sun struck into them. Though the eyes were very bright and clear, blood mottled the cheeks. Jerry lifted the head from the girl's lap. She drew back and got to her feet. He did not need to tell her that Treece was dead. Jerry lowered the head to the dust and stood up.

"If any one asks you whether this man made a dying statement, what shall you say?" she inquired.

Jerry confronted her. Her face, except for the retained scarlet of her lips, was duskily pale. Her skin, naturally, he saw, was almost the color of her honey-colored hair. She was taller than he had thought, as she stood there; she came up almost to his shoulder. She had a rounded body, but her shoulders were square. He thought they were firm beneath her velvet dress. A strong girl, he said. And, he believed, deep down an honest girl.

"I can on'y repeat what he said," Jerry said.

"Yes. Of course. Well, let's get his body to the coach. I must go on to Nugget City."

"You wouldn't have me lie, would you, ma'am?" he asked.

He immediately felt that that was

a silly question. It had grown out of his wish to keep her, for a moment longer, as she had been. He had to confess that she had stirred him. That was unfortunate. He couldn't clutter up his mind with anything of that sort now.

"Of course not," she said.

He had expected her tone to be sharp. It was not.

"If you'll go on with them men, I'll follow with Treece, ma'am," he said.

She walked over to Sam and Pete, and with them started up the slope. Jerry, picking up Treece's slight body, followed them. He placed the body as far forward in the coach as possible, and he and the girl sat in the rear. The road was level now, and Sam struck his four horses into a trot.

The journey was made mostly in silence. The girl seemed busy with her thoughts. Jerry puzzled over the reason for the shooting of Treece. He could think of many reasons, but none was satisfactory. The easiest solution was that the men had borne Treece a grudge, but that was too simple. They could have killed him at any time in town. They wouldn't have had to go to the trouble of holding up a stagecoach.

The thing with which Jerry came to be chiefly concerned, then, was the fact that the killers had been masked riders. He had a good deal of information about riders, masked and unmasked. He had a good deal of information about a far-flung gang of marauders. These men might have been part of that gang; they might not have been. Jerry decided to spend a few days in Nugget City to see what he could dig up. That brought him to thought of the girl's ultimate destination.

"I hear Nugget City is pretty

rough, ma'am," he said. "Somebody goin' to meet you?"

"No! No one knows I'm coming. There's a hotel in the town."

"Won't be much of a place for you to stay, ma'am."

"I can take care of myself, I think."

"O' course, ma'am. I can see you ain't afraid o' nothin', but, ma'am, there'd be a preacher in town or a postmaster or somebody you could put up with. Mebbe the sheriff, if he's married. It's just as well to be kinda cautious."

"I think you're right," she said quickly, and he believed that fear did not prompt her statement. "We'll see when we get there."

NIGHT was falling as the coach drew near the town. Jerry knew that it was a mining town recently come into being at the outskirts of cow country. It had grown with the amazing rapidity of all boom mining towns. Just yesterday, so it seemed, there had been only a tumble of hills through which a number of deep creeks flowed, their waters tearing down from the mountains some miles away. A family in a covered wagon had camped on one of the creeks. Going for water in the morning, the husband and father had started to wash his face. His eyes had lighted on a rough stone that glimmered. He had dug a nugget out of the gravel.

Thus gold again had been discovered.

The town, with a population of more than twelve thousand now, lay between two lines of hills. There were a church and a school. There were board sidewalks. Boarding houses and the one hotel lodged many miners. Every other building was a saloon. On a hillside was a

cluster of shacks. Dance-hall women lived there.

As the coach came, in the winding street, to the first of the buildings, Jerry and the girl looked out. Night was establishing itself now. Lights were beginning to show in the buildings. The sidewalks were crowded. Red-shirted miners elbowed men of better dress and of easier ways of living; stopped now and then to speak to an overdressed woman. Other women, calico-clad, stepped off the walk to pass. From some of the saloons came the sounds of fiddles. If it had not been for the overtones of music and talk, the clicking of roulette wheels could have been heard. Nugget City had worked through the day; now it was ready to play. It worked hard; it played hard. Some who had money now would have none, come morning. One or two, lusty now, might be ready for hillside graves, for men went armed and made their own laws.

Nugget City differed from many mining towns, in that it was easily reached from a vast cow country. Cowmen and cow-punchers had, with wondering eyes, seen the town come into being. Used to villages made up of a handful of buildings or even to a lone saloon set in the desert, they could scarcely believe what those eyes beheld. Many a cow-puncher lost his job because he had gone to Nugget City and had failed to come back till he was penniless.

As the coach made its slow way along the street, Jerry glanced at the girl. He was afraid that even her steady nerves might be shaken by so much life in the raw. Apparently they were not. She was gazing interestedly out of the window, her lashes held rigid.

"You got any baggage, ma'am?" Jerry asked.

"One piece. On top."

"I got one piece up there, too," Jerry said. "I'll look after yours."

"Thanks."

The coach presently stopped in front of a building with a tall false front. Asking the girl to remain where she was, Jerry alighted. Sam remained in his seat. Pete descended and went into the building. Upon one of the windows Jerry saw the lettering, "Express Office." He knew that Pete was going to report the death of Treece and to get instructions as to the disposition of the body. Jerry climbed to the roof of the coach and brought down the girl's bag and his own. He set them down in the street and stood up, turning toward the building again.

He found that, while he had been busy, a man had come to the edge of the sidewalk and was standing there, looking out at the coach. He was as big a man as Jerry had ever seen, standing at least six feet six. He wore dark trousers, a fancy vest, but no coat. In a wide expanse of white shirt front two huge diamonds gleamed. He was smoking a long black cigar, and when he removed it from his mouth, another great diamond glittered on a finger.

PETE emerged from the express office. He was followed by another man, bald-headed, shirt-sleeved, a wisp of whiskers on his chin. At first this little man looked anxiously at the coach. Then he seemed to become aware of the huge man at the edge of the sidewalk. He stopped and plucked at the huge man's sleeve. The man looked down at him.

"Virlee," the little one piped, "have you heard?"

"Heard what?"

Jerry had been prepared for a harsh, heavy voice. Virlee's voice was heavy but it was not harsh. He had been grossly made except for that voice. In that there was an organ note. Jerry wondered that notes so musical could issue from lips so thick and loose, so ugly.

"Why," the little man answered, "Treece lies dead in the stage."

When he had started for this country, Jerry had vowed that nothing, however unimportant it seemed, should escape him. At once he found himself wondering why Virlee had been here when the coach had arrived. Jerry was sure that he was not in the habit of meeting it. He must consider himself the town's leading man, at least next to Treece, now dead.

So Jerry leaned a little and looked and listened. Virlee uttered no word. He did not look down at the little man. Very slowly he removed his cigar from his mouth and tossed it to one side. Then he carefully fastened the lower button of his vest, keeping his eyes on his fingers. At last he stepped from the sidewalk and went toward the coach.

As he reached the step, the girl descended by means of it. Virlee did not move aside. She had to pass within a foot of him. Without turning his head, Virlee let his eyes follow her till she brought up alongside Jerry.

Then Virlee transferred his gaze from her to Jerry. Jerry felt as if he were looking into the large, wet, brown eyes of an ox, except that Virlee's eyes protruded unhealthily. Gray eyes held brown for a space, and then Virlee, stooping, crowding his big body, went into the coach.

Jerry did not wait for him to emerge with Treece's body. He picked up the two bags.

"Come on," he told the girl.

With her ahead of him, he went along the edge of the sidewalk till he came to the post office.

"In here," he said.

They entered. Jerry put down the bags. When he straightened up, he found himself facing the girl.

"What is it?" she asked, somewhat breathlessly.

"Nothin'. I'm just goin' to ask the postmaster if he can tell me where you can stay."

He did not inform her that he had hurried her away from the coach because Virlee had looked at her. She might not have understood that. Jerry continued to have a feeling that she was alien to everything here, to himself. He would not, in any circumstances, have informed her that Virlee had looked at him, too. If necessary, he would shoot Virlee's heart out. Already he profoundly hated the man—and suspected him.

As Jerry started up to a window, he found himself passing a man who leaned against the wall. The man was thin and tall, with a walrus mustache and pale, washed-out eyes. As Jerry looked at him, he quickly averted his gaze. Jerry knew that he had been watching him and the girl. That watching might have resulted from mere curiosity; it might have resulted from something else.

However, Jerry had no time for this man now.

Because of the excitement which Treece's murder had caused, Pete had not yet brought down the mail sack. A man stood idly beyond the window. Jerry had expected to find a dried-up little man like that express clerk. Postmasters were generally such. Instead he found a man as tall as himself and broader of shoulder. He said, coldly, that he was the postmaster.

Jerry explained that he and the girl had just arrived on the coach. He explained what he wanted. The man looked beyond him at the girl. His returning eyes rested briefly on the man leaning against the wall. Jerry did not understand that. Surely two men, so different in every way, could have nothing in common.

"Take the girl down to my house," the postmaster said. "It's the last house on the street. Both of you stay there till I come. Tell my wife I sent you. Don't attract any attention. When you come to the house, dodge in."

Jerry returned to the girl and picked up the bags. A strange town, this—a town of strange men—he thought. The postmaster had spoken so low that the man against the wall could not have heard him, though Jerry was sure he had listened intently.

To be continued in next week's issue.

JUMPING FROG CONTEST REVIVED

AFTER a one-year lapse due to the depression, Angels Camp, California, a noted old gold camp, will stage its world-famous jumping frog jubilee again this year.

The celebration, which will be held May 19th and 20th is based on Mark Twain's fable of the jumping frog of Calaveras County and always is featured by a jumping contest between frogs.

COWBOY LINGO

By RAMON F. ADAMS

(Continued from last week's issue)

THE DRIVE.

In trail work "ridin' 'em down" signifies the gradual urging of the point and drag cattle closer together in preparing to put them on the bed ground, while "squeezin' 'em down" is the narrowing of the width of a trail herd. The expression "standing night guard" is seldom used, but each period of guarding has its own title. The "bobtail guard" is the first guard at night, but in some localities that period from sundown to eight o'clock is called "killpecker guard." The one-o'clock shift at night is the "graveyard shift," and the last before daylight, the one de-spised by all herders, is the "cocktail guard."

These shifts as a class are referred to as "singin' to 'em," and "hymns" were what the cowboy called the songs he sang to cattle.

"Starting the swim" is putting the leaders of a trail herd into the water for a crossing, and when the river is high, it is "big swimmin'." When cattle become confused and start milling in the water, it is often spoken of as a "merry-go-round in high water." No higher compliment can be paid a man than to say of him that "he'd do to swim the river with." A "regular" was what the old-time trail driver called a drive that went as "fine as split silk" to the Wichita and was troublesome from there to the end of the drive.

THE RUSTLER.

An old saying of the range was that all a man needed to start a brand of his own was "a rope, a

runnin' iron, and the nerve to use it." The struggle for existence on a fierce frontier developed nerve; ropes and running irons were cheap. So calves were branded legitimately and illegitimately, and so cow thieves were developed until "rustling" became quite an industry.

An early name of the genuine rustler, one faithful to his illegal art, was "waddy"; later it was also applied to any cow-puncher. The cattle thief is also called a "rope and ring man," or a "long rope," and he is said to "swing a wide loop." It is often said of one suspected of stealing cattle that he is "careless with his brandin' iron," or his "calves don't suck the right cows." When he works overtime, it is said he "keeps his brandin' iron smooth." A branding iron must be smooth and free from rust and scale to give satisfaction.

When he kills the mother cow to steal her calf, he "pins crape on the kid." If he is caught, it is said he "ran a butcher shop an' got his cattle mixed," and he later perhaps spends his time "makin' hair bridles," which is synonymous to being sent to the penitentiary. More than one rustler is said to have "lost his voice explainin' to so many judges how he come to have his brand on somebody else's cows." The bungling of a worked-over brand is said to be "botching," and a botched job is an acute mortification to most rustlers.

GUNS.

In the early days guns were a necessary part of the cowboy's ac-

couterment, but the carrying of weapons by him has given to many people the wrong impression. These guns are not carried for the purpose of killing men. There are many other needs for them, and many a man has carried one all his life, who could hardly be forced to use it upon a man. There is an unwritten law, almost a religion, that a gun should never be used upon any man who does not himself have one on. There are many predicaments wherein a man needs a gun, and in which no other man is involved.

Naturally an object so familiar receives its quota of slang names. As most of the guns upon the range are of a .44 or .45 caliber, they receive the names of their caliber, as ".44s" or ".45s." The "hogleg" was originally the single-action army Colt which made its appearance in 1870; later the name was transferred to any pistol of the frontier. The gun has also received such names as "artillery," "flame thrower," "iron," "shootin' iron," "hardware," "lead chucker," "lead pusher," "smoke wagon," "talkin' iron," "cutter," and "persuader."

The bullet is said to be a "blue whistler," so called because of the pistol's blued frame, and a "lead plum." No cartridges in the cylinder is "no beans in the wheel." The act of drawing a gun is "reachin'" or "diggin' for his blue lightnin'." The act of covering another with a gun is to "throw down," or "get the drop." To start shooting is to "unravel some cartridges," "set his gun goin'," "burn some powder," "come a-shootin'," and "roll his gun."

A person who has been shot has a case of "lead poisoning," or he "leaned against a bullet goin' past," and the shooter "blew his lamp out," or, if he shot his adversary through the head, he "put windows in his

skull." A gun battle was said to be a "corpse and cartridge occasion," while of a killing there was said to be a "man for breakfast." To stand against a wall and execute by shooting, as was so often the case in Mexico, the American cowboy shortened to "dobe-walled." To "dry-gulch" a person is to kill him, and to "bush-whack" one is to shoot him from ambush, while to "pecos" one is to kill him and roll his body into the river.

To be armed is to be "heeled," and it is said of one who goes heavily armed that he "carries enough artillery to make his hoss sway-backed," or he "packs enough hardware to give him kidney sores," while to be unarmed is "caught short" or he "don't carry an ounce of iron." In referring to one who has "packed" a gun all his life, it is said that he "packed a gun so long he stood slanchways," or "packed iron so long he felt naked when he took it off."

A "gun tipper" is one who shoots through the end of his holster without drawing his weapon, and the expression "wears 'em low" signifies that the one spoken of wears his gun low and easily accessible; also that the wearer is ready for a gun fight at any time. A conscienceless killer "ain't got no feelin' in his trigger finger," but of a man who has never shot anybody, it is said that "he hasn't shot nobody in so long his trigger finger has gone to sleep."

When two men get into a gun fight, it is said of the loser to be another "case of slow." A shotgun is called a "scattergun." The rifle, with the exception of the "buffalo gun," was never called a gun, but "Winchester," "rifle," the caliber of the gun, as ".30-30," or by the slang name of "Worcestershire." A "Winchester quarantine" was a barrier by

force of arms, and this was a common occurrence in the earlier days during the fierce struggle for range rights, water rights, and other controversies of the frontier.

VARIOUS ANIMALS.

Animals of the range, other than the cattle and horses coming under the cowboy's care, receive their slang names, also.

Sheep are called "baa-a-ahs,"

"woollies," or "underwears." Hogs are "wooshers," or "rooters." Mules are "hard tails," and burros "desert canaries." Coyotes are "prairie lawyers."

In these examples, which by no means cover the field completely, we feel sure you have gained an insight into the cowboy's talents in giving things strikingly apt names by the use of his unlimited ability to create slang.

In Next Week's Issue of Street & Smith's

WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

A Complete Novel

SPEEDY FROM NOWHERE

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

When Speedy Wright shows up in Cedar City as heir to the Lazy W, it appears that his inheritance consists chiefly of trouble.

MORTGAGED DOGS

By ROBERT ORMOND CASE

Into ten thousand square miles of wilderness, esteem for Caribou Charlie threaded its way. But hidden deep in the fastness of Caribou's soul was a secret vulnerable spot. One man knew it and he played his advantage to the limit.

Also Features by

Charles Wesley Sanders

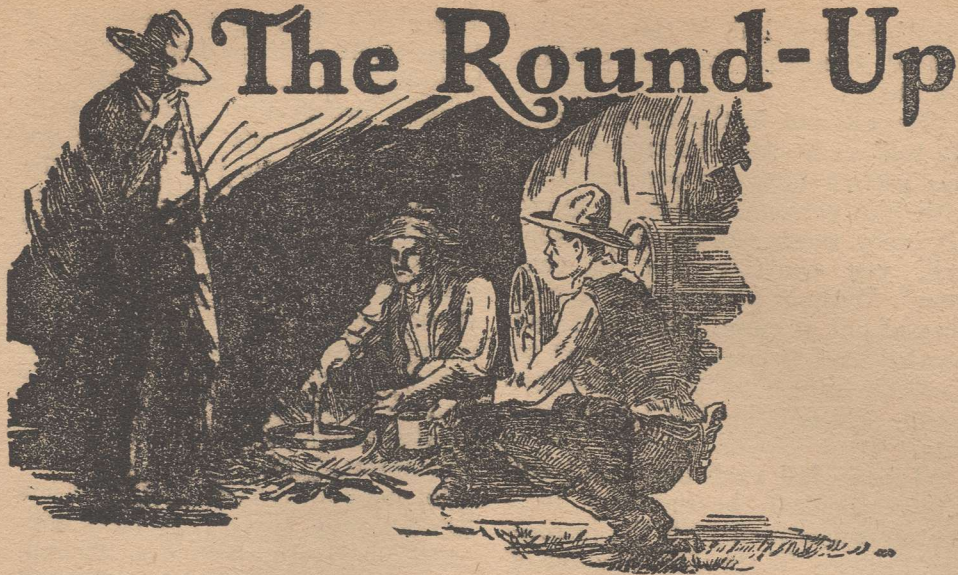
E. W. Chess

And Others

15c A COPY

AT ALL NEWS STANDS

The Round-Up



FOLKS, several meetin's back, Wellington Stutt, of Vandura Post Office, Saskatchewan, Canada, put us a poser. He up and asked us whether we could tell him if Scout Dick Deering, who served with Strathcona's Horse in the Boer War, served with Custer at Little Big Horn. Wellington Stutt said that it was often rumored in his regiment that Deering had served with Custer. Deering, Stutt said, had lost the toes of one foot, and it was said that this injury had come to him in the "Custer scrap."

Well, Hamilton Craigie, a writer, an editor, and a long-standing friend of Western Story Magazine and of ours, heard Stutt's question. He felt sure that E. L. Carson, better known as "Wild-horse" Carson, who now lives in Manette, Washington, could tell Stutt and the rest of us considerable about Deering, so he wrote Wild-horse. Wild-horse sent a prompt reply to Craigie, and Craigie very kindly shot it over to us. Here she is, printed just as Wild-horse wrote it:

WS-9F

"DEAR CRAIGIE: I can sure as hell give you the facts with regard to my old friend and partner, Dick Deering, whose dusky face with the half smile in his kindly brown eyes comes before me as I read your letter.

"He told us the story of the loss of his toes on his right foot when we were in camp one night in the Crocodile Valley in S. A. There was nothing boastful about it; just a plain statement of facts.

"When little more than a boy he had been captured by a bunch of Indians—Sioux, I think—who had him tied to a stake and, preliminary to burning him, were cutting his toes off one by one and stuffing them in his mouth when he yelled, trying to make him eat them. A rescue party saved him before he was crippled for life. He may have told us just where he had this experience, but if so I have forgotten. Two other members of Strathcona's Horse were present, 'Dude' MacDonald and, I think, Frank Newman, of Calgary. That was many years ago, and I lost track of these

boys long ago; but, if they can be located, I am sure they will confirm the above.

"He was not in the Custer fight. He told us he saw the trap Custer was getting into and remonstrated with him personally; but, to quote his exact words, 'Holy old, howlin' hell, you couldn't talk to that man.' Without permission, Deering slipped out of camp that night and hurried back to urge Reno to get to Custer's rescue with all possible haste. He did this but arrived too late.

"I have full confirmation of the Custer incident, having been intimately acquainted with the historical 'Princess' Ti-sto-lah, daughter of Chief Saas and adopted daughter of the great Quamichan, who afterward married Sheriff Jim Cavanagh, the first man to hold that office in Skagit County.

"She knew Reno, Casey, Davis, and other United States officers on the coast in the troubled territorial days and was of priceless service to them in helping to control the Indians. I have been on hunting trips with her, and on one of these she heard me mention Deering's name, for I often spoke of him to others as he was a man to remember. She told me she had heard Reno speak of him and of how he came to urge him to hurry to Custer's relief.

"This would seem to settle the question as to how Dick lost his toes."

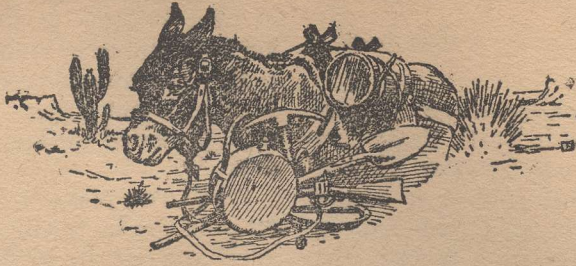
Well, we think that we have our troubles these days, but the Indians don't treat us badly any more. There are some who think the shoe, or should we say the moccasin, is on the other foot.

From shut-ins and shut-outs from all over the world come letters to J. A. Thompson, who conducts the

Mines and Mining Department in Western Story Magazine. We don't know of any one better fitted to advise prospective miners than Thompson. That's the reason we detailed him to the job. One of the qualities we like best in Thompson is that he's absolutely honest in that he doesn't hold forth any extravagant hopes, doesn't intimate that there's a good likelihood, if you wander through "them thar hills," that you can drive your pick into some solid gold without much prospecting. No, nothing wild like that. Thompson, by the way, is a Scotchman, and believe it when we tell you he's a canny boy. He's been winterin' up North with Mrs. Thompson, and those of you who wintered up North during the past winter know that that was somethin'—that it was somethin' in the way of frosty and snowy. Thompson never burned a piece of coal and he kept warm, and that's somethin', although he could have run in a few tons at that. When we asked him why he didn't, he said:

"Well, you know I'm Scotch, and there's plenty of wood around."

While May is not the gunning season, Lieutenant Chapel seems to be able to stir up more interest in shootin' irons than any person who ever conducted a department in Western Story Magazine. We're interested in guns ourselves, and we felt that a lot of the readers were interested; but, frankly, we didn't think there were so many of you who wanted to possess and use some kind of firearm. And does that marine know his stuff? He certainly does. Where to get a gun, how much to pay for it, how to take care of it when you have it, and what's perhaps the most important of all, how to use it and what to use it on, is just Chapel's meat.



MINES AND MINING

By J. A. THOMPSON

This department is intended to be of real help to readers. If there is anything you want to know about mining or prospecting, a letter inclosing a stamped and self-addressed envelope sent to J. A. Thompson, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., will bring a prompt authoritative personal reply.

Letters unaccompanied by a return envelope will be answered in this department in the order in which they are received. But as space is limited, please keep such letters as brief as possible.

HOW big are the pieces of gold found in placer gravel? That's the very interesting question brought up by Bill Gilbert who writes in from Providence, Rhode Island, and admits he is the rankest kind of a tenderfoot when it comes to gold prospecting.

"Mr. Thompson," he asks, "maybe my question will hand you and other old-timers a laugh. I admit I don't know a thing about gold prospecting—yet. But I am anxious to learn, and determined on a trip to the gold country in the West this spring. I'd like to know about how big are the particles of gold that can be washed from stream gravels and such. And about what is their value?"

That's a sensible question, Bill. As a matter of fact there is a wide variation in the size of gold particles found in placer deposits, running all the way from nuggets weighing individually anything from several ounces up to a pound or more to fine

flour gold requiring more than three quarters of a million of the tiny golden grains to make an ounce of metal.

The various size of placer-gold particles have been more or less officially classified as follows:

Nuggets: 1. Coarse gold—gold too coarse to pass through a ten-mesh screen, that is, through a screen with ten openings per linear inch.

2. Medium gold—gold that will pass a ten-mesh but not through a twenty-mesh screen.

3. Fine gold—gold that will pass a twenty-mesh, but not a forty-mesh screen. Average 2,200 colors to the ounce.

4. Very fine gold—gold that passes a forty-mesh screen. Average 40,000 colors per ounce.

Then we have the flour golds further subdivided according to the size of the minute particles as follows:

First class—roughly 314,500 particles per ounce.

Second class—roughly 436,900 particles per ounce.

Third class—roughly 885,000 particles per ounce.

Under the new government regulations pure gold is worth thirty-five dollars an ounce at the United States mint. But gold as it occurs in nature—placer gold included—is usually alloyed with a certain per cent of silver, so the value of the gold you glean from stream gravels and such will probably run around thirty dollars, more or less, per ounce, depending on the amount of silver alloy in the yellow metal. At the thirty-five dollars per ounce figure this brings "medium" gold particles up to about a cent and a quarter per color, and gives "fine" gold as defined above a value of perhaps roughly a quarter of a cent per color.

"Can you tell me where the Creede mining district is in Colorado?" writes B. F., of Wichita, Kansas.

The Creede mining district lies in the south central portion of the State, west and north of Alamosa. On U. S. Highway 450, between Alamosa and Durango, there is a gravel road that leads to Creede.

Some silver facts concerning the Province of Ontario in Canada are just what J. Hennessey is after. Hennessey writes us from Jackson, Michigan.

"Can you give me some information concerning the first discovery of silver in Ontario, Canada?"

The first important discovery of silver in Ontario was made back in 1868 by a Thomas McFarlane on a tiny islet situated in Lake Superior just off Thunder Cape. This latter developed into the Silver Islet Mine which between 1870 and 1884 produced some three and a half million dollars' worth of silver bullion. Silver was also found on the On-

tario mainland some fifty miles west of Fort William at Rabbit and Silver mountains in 1882.

Dry washing desert sand with a blanket is not a gag. It works very well, provided the sand is absolutely dry.

"Will you please tell me how desert gold can be 'washed' with a blanket?" queries B. McM., of Topeka, Kansas. "I understand that dry washing is sometimes done that way."

It is, but it takes fairly rich ground and a couple of chaps with strong arms to make it a paying proposition, B. McM.

There must be no dampness in the blanket. The sand must be powder-dry. Some of the gold-bearing material is placed in the center of the blanket. The two partners, each holding two corners of the blanket, lift it up, snap it taut, sending the sand and dust flying into the air, and after catching the stuff in the slightly loosened blanket, toss it into the air again.

The dust should be tossed up in a good wind. The winnowing action of the breeze blows the light, fine sand away. Coarse pebbles can be picked out of the blanket by hand. Watch for stray nuggets, however, when you are pitching the pebbles overboard. The heavier gold, regardless of the fineness of its particles, it is not blown clear of the blanket, but falls back into it. After a while the concentrate remaining on the blanket can be treated by ordinary dry blowing with a gold pan, using the lungs to blow the sand away from the gold instead of water to wash it away. If there is some fairly coarse gold in the sand being treated, an ordinary pair of tweezers comes in handy for picking sizable colors off the blanket.

The HOLLOW TREE



Conducted by
HELEN RIVERS

It is a natural impulse and it is a good impulse to desire to wander and to roam. Not too much, of course. But the desire to go places and see things should be and is in all of us—in all of us who amount to anything, at least, for traveling educates us, and changing our geographic location often is of great benefit to health, mind, and economic well-being. A wise man once said, "A rolling stone gathers no moss," but a wiser man, we think, added, "but a standing pool stagnates."

If you are one who would travel, it is a mighty good thing to have man's best asset along the way, and at your destination. We mean, of course, friends.

If you would like a friend or friends in a certain section, write to Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, and she will put you in touch with readers who want to correspond with folks in your part of the world.

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.

Address: Helen Rivers, care The Hollow Tree, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y.

TO to the south of the Mother Lode gold country there is a new strike. "Prospector Slim" is back again, folks, to tell you that gold is where you find it!

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

Just recently here in California a big strike of a ledge was made at Porterville, which is *not* a gold country. Which goes to prove the old saying that gold is where you find it! So don't be misled by what others think. And if you're told that there is no gold in your section, just remember that nobody knows exactly where the glaciers traveled in the ice age, or where

they deposited picked-up gold. Of course black sand does not always carry gold, but usually its finding pays one to investigate.

Being interested in all "dirt washers," I would like to try to give some advice to hombres who believe they have found gold in paying quantities in sections that are not considered gold country. And my first advice to the chechahco is not to advertise the discovery until he has a plaster on all available ground. More than likely said chechahco really needs the advice and services of an experienced pocket hunter or "post holer" who will trace up the flake he is finding. For if the flakes are rough, it is pretty certain that they have not traveled far.

I would not advise the expenditure of money to buy a gold-recovery unit just for

an experiment, for it is best to find out if you have any amount of pay dirt first. If any of you folks wish the information, I can tell you how to make a rig that will serve the purpose and that will not cost more than five bucks, or possibly you can pick it up in a dump for nothing. The old method of using a box rigged with Hungarian riffles is just a waste of time, for these old rigs clog and slime, and black sand and gold all go over.

If you chechahcos want to come to me with your troubles, I'll be glad to listen and I'll give the best advice I can give without being on the ground. Explain the formation of your ground—sandy, rocky, or gravel. And tell me what it consists of down to bed rock. Also what the average depth is to bed rock. Draw me a rough sketch of the strata from grass roots to bed rock. I might be able to tell you a heap from a simple pocket-hunting rule.

PROSPECTOR SLIM.

Care of The Tree.

This Oregon ranch girl is inviting you-all to speak up.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am a lonely ranch girl, and I want Pen Pals—lots of 'em. I am seventeen years young.

VIRGINIA MARKLE.

Haines, Oregon.

From Alberta comes this Canadian ranch boy.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am a Western boy and live close to the cattle ranges near the Rockies. I have traveled a bit and will be glad to tell of British Columbia, eastern Canada, or Alaska.

I am fond of riding, shooting, trailing, and ranching in general, and I would be glad to get letters from any one, anywhere.

J. ANSLEY GREEN.

High River, Alberta, Canada.

These lady prospectors, of Montana, are looking for a pardner.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

For several years, we have been working our gold prospects—just the two of us—and we are women. Now we find that we will have to take on a pardner. We are going to work on a larger scale, and we are looking for some good honest person

who would be willing to go to work with us and who could put up a little grubstake and help get some more machinery. We sure do want a square shooter.

We are located in Montana, away up in the heart of the Rockies. Anybody like to hear more about it?

PICK AND SHOVEL PROSPECTORS.

Care of The Tree.



Wear your friend-maker membership badges, folks, and get acquainted with the old-timers of the West. Prospector Slim invites you chechahcos to bring your problems to his diggings.

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to The Hollow Tree Department, Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., will bring you either the pin style or the button for the coat lapel. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.

A Texan is homesick for his old stomping grounds.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

It's been a mighty long time since I've seen the ol' stomping grounds in Texas, and being so far away now, I am somewhat more or less homesick for it. Won't some of you Pen Pals drop me a few lines and tell me all about what is going on back there? I will gladly swap experiences with any one who can wield a pen or pencil. So come on, you rangers, and tell me all about what I am missing.

F. J. GRIFFIN.

U. S. S. Finch, (AM9),
Manila, Philippine Islands,
Care of Postmaster,
Seattle, Washington.

A Pennsylvanian is speaking up to you-all.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am sort of a backwoods man, thirty-two, and am interested in many things. I would like to hear from any one, anywhere, especially the Southern States. Let's talk it over.

GARRIE A. FRONHEISER.

Route 1, Hamburg, Pennsylvania.

Here are a couple of would-be homesteaders.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I'd especially enjoy letters from cowboys, for I am attached to good horses. Just give me a good horse, a lasso, and a cow to chase, and then I'm in heaven.

Folks, I am looking for some hombre who wants to get a half section of land in New Mexico. I would like to hear from some one who could furnish me a grubstake while my wife and I are living out on a claim. I could do all the work and build all improvements. We both love the life of the great open spaces.

If any of you folks know anything about the homesteading laws in New Mexico, please let me hear from you.

JAMES C. BOOTH.

Route 2, Moran, Texas.

A globe-trotter is looking for your attention, folks.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am now attached to a naval transport, and we make two to three trips a year from the East coast to the West coast and then to Hawaii, the Philippines, and various China ports, the main port being Shanghai. I can tell many interesting yarns, gathered from my ten years of service throughout the world. I would appreciate it very much if members of The Hollow Tree would correspond with me. Answers are guaranteed. L. G. LANCASTER.

U. S. S. Henderson, N. O. B.,
Norfolk, Virginia.

This cowboy from Wyoming is looking for a pardner,

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am a cowhand, thirty-six years of age—born on a cow ranch, and I have spent my life on one spread or another. Folks, what I am hankering to do is to stake my homestead rights, my experience, and plenty of good hard labor against a grubstake. We'll pick out a location, preferably in Arizona or New Mexico, and I will file on a grazing section and do the work. We could stock it a little at a time and gradually work up a good layout.

If any one is interested in a proposition of this kind, please write me. I will gladly

answer any questions and furnish references I am looking for a pardner who would like to build up a cow outfit, and who would consider my offer worth the small grubstake needed to get going.

SHORTIE.

Care of The Tree.

You would-be gold hunters, just listen to this.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am a young man of thirty-eight, and have a deformity. Nevertheless, I'm strong and able-bodied. I have traveled quite some and worked on many ranches out West. I have made up my mind to hike out West this coming spring and prospect for gold. I'd like to find three other partners to make it a foursome. I prefer to hear from men who are thirty-five years and older, who are fond of hiking, used to rugged life, and who will stick through thick and thin. I have purchased my hiking outfit and have my grubstake. So come on, you gold prospectors.

BALDY.

Care of The Tree.

From far-off India comes this new member.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

I am a lonely soldier serving in the British army on the frontier of India. I am trying to get some Pen Pals who will help to make the time pass more quickly. I am Scotch, and twenty years of age. I have a good many yarns and snaps to swap, and the only drawback is that I have no one to swap them with, so come along, folks, and let me hear from you.

ALEX TODD.

52 1st Field Brigade, R. A.,
Quetta, India, N. W. F. P.

Here's a little miss from Kansas.

DEAR MISS RIVERS:

An ex-schoolma'am, who is just old enough to vote, wants to join the old Holla. I'm very fond of travel, but being short on funds, can't indulge my taste. The next best thing, I think, would be to receive letters from all parts of the globe. I like to write and would love to exchange yarns full of "local color" with any one who is interested in eastern and southern Kansas.

RUTH BELL.

Potter, Kansas.



WHERE TO GO and How to GET THERE

By JOHN NORTH

We aim in this department to give practical help to readers. The service offered includes accurate information about the West, its ranches, mines, homestead lands, mountains and plains, as well as the facts about any features of Western life. We will tell you also how to reach the particular place in which you are interested. Don't hesitate to write to us, for we are always glad to assist you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THE On-to-Oregon trek seems to be much in favor with our readers these balmy April days. Some are going out to the Beaver State to fish and hunt, others to try their luck at mining, while the members of the third group are looking for government land open to settlement. It is the urge to homestead that is taking Sid P., of Peoria, Illinois, on his westward journey.

"In common with most men, Mr. North, I have a deep-seated desire for a bit of land that belongs to me,

and for some sort of habitation, however humble, that I can call home. It is in the hope of realizing this longing that my wife and I are making plans to migrate to the West. We want to try homesteading and have selected Oregon as the State for our endeavors. Having been brought up on Illinois farms, we feel that we are equipped to make good at this undertaking. However, we know nothing of the West and are wondering if you could persuade some reader of Western Story Magazine who is familiar with the Beaver State to give us a few

tips how to proceed in finding good land?"

We surely can, Sid, and herewith take pleasure in introducing you to that dyed-in-the-wool Westerner, S. P. W., who is temporarily located in California, but is qualified from personal experience to give you first-hand facts about any part of the West, not excepting Oregon.

"I am mighty glad to give Sid P. some tips as to how to pick suitable farming land in Oregon, Mr. North, and will try to let out a few secrets, known only to the old-timers. The first thing for an Eastern hombre coming to Oregon to do is to pick out one special section of the State where he wishes to settle. Some folks will like the Grants Pass region, as it is dry there, with a climate resembling that of California, with little rain and none in summer. It really is a beautiful spot for a man to settle down in and will, in my opinion, some day be one of the greatest mining belts in the United States.

"Other settlers will prefer the Roseburg region with its low wind velocity. They claim there that they can grow anything on earth. This region does have a wonderful soil and a little more rain than the Grants Pass country. Still other hombres looking for land will pick the Albany and Salem regions, and so on all over the whole map of the State.

"Now, here is what I would ad-

vised Sid to do: Pick out his section and then stay there for a spell to see how he likes it. He could find some sort of cabin to live in or in a pinch he could pitch his tent and camp out. At any rate, he should become acquainted with the region and with the natives. These Westerners won't open up much to strangers, but once they know a man, they'll give him all the information he wants. In this way Sid can find out what land is open and what isn't.

Then he can head for the land office at Roseburg. My advice is not to write, but to go in person, armed with information about the section.

"Another way is to look the section over and then buy a section and range map of the State of Oregon. Find out what township or townships the land you

would like is located in and mark them on the map. Then go to Roseburg to the Douglas Abstract Co. and have them make you plat maps of the townships. They will do this for a small amount and will mark all the land that is open to settlement.

"There is still a third way of finding a suitable location, and that is to buy land that is for sale for unpaid taxes. Some of this land is cleared but lies 'way back in the wilderness, abandoned, probably, by men who couldn't bear remoteness and loneliness. Sometimes, of course, you find good land close in, also. Once the land is discovered,

SPECIAL NOTICE

LAKE OF THE WOODS

The Lake of the Woods country in Ontario, Canada, consists of a great chain of lakes and rivers, strewed with thousands of islands, far removed from usual human travel. This great wilderness appeals to the angler, the camper, the hunter, and the man who wants to get away from civilization and have an island to himself in true Robinson Crusoe fashion. For information about the Lake of the Woods country write John North, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

go to the recording office—at Medford for Jackson County, Grants Pass for Josephine County, and Roseburg for Douglas County. Take along plenty of paper, or, better still, before you go draw up fifteen or twenty townships with thirty-six squares in which to mark the open tax land from the recorder's books.

"The officials will be glad to help you in order to get this land off their books. Once you have the section and range numbers, proceed to the sheriff's office and consult his wall map. Then you can find out from the clerks just what this land can be bought for. This often pays a man far better than homesteading or clearing land."

If any other readers would like additional facts about homesteading in the West to-day, S. P. W. has kindly volunteered to answer their letters. Address all communications to S. P. W., of California, in care of John North, and they will be forwarded pronto.

Another hombre who is making plans to settle in a new country is Harold B., of Denver, Colorado.

"I'm one of these roving chaps, Mr. North, and have put in a good many years of my life seeing the world. Now, at the age of thirty-five, I'm ready to settle down, but I want to make my home in a new country where I can lead a sort of pioneer life. Feeling as I do, I figure that Alaska will about fill the

bill, and I'd like you to tell me something about the town of Ketchikan, which somehow appeals to me. I thought I might find a job in the fishing industry or try fur farming. Will you come across with the facts?"

We'll do our honest-to-goodness best, Harold. Ketchikan, the port of entry for over ninety per cent of the vessels entering Alaskan waters, is a city of around six thousand. During the summer fishing season, the population is swelled by a large influx of seasonal workers. Located in the center of a large fishing, timber, and mineral area, fishing and its allied interests is yet the largest single industry. So Harold may be able to find work along this line. If he wants to try fur farming, he will find many ranches where the blue fox is raised, on the islands adjacent to Ketchikan.

This Alaskan port is well equipped with public institutions, such as banks, theaters, hotels, and churches. Communication with the outside world is maintained by means of cable and radio service. We think this town will appeal to Harold for, with its curio shops, fur stores, and many Indians, it is interesting and picturesque.

Lack of space is cutting short our remarks, but we are telling Harold where to write to obtain additional facts. We invite all readers interested in Alaska to write us for information.

TURN IN THE TRAIL

A Short by

GUTHRIE BROWN

In Next Week's Issue

GUNS AND GUNNERS

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL

Lieutenant, U. S. Marine Corps



The foremost authorities on ballistics and the principal firearms manufacturers are cooperating to make this department a success. We shall be glad to answer any letters regarding firearms if accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. Address your letters to Lieutenant Charles E. Chapel, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

ARIFLE-FIRING position seldom seen in the United States, but of long standing in the British Empire is the "back" position, suitable for long ranges where a high elevation of the rifle is required, and for shooting downhill from a steep slope.

To assume this posture, sit on the ground facing the target, holding the rifle across the body; lie on the back, then turn enough on the right side to place the right thigh almost entirely on the ground; the legs are then drawn up, with the left foot on the ground, toe to the right front, the knee almost upright, but bent slightly to the left. The right leg is bent around the left ankle so that the outer surface of the right knee rests against the left instep.

The barrel is held on the right

knee with the left hand grasping the heel of the butt immediately in front of the butt plate, pulling the butt into the hollow of the shoulder, but steadying it between the body and the right arm. Raise the head and grasp a corner of the left coat sleeve between the teeth to steady the head. The right elbow is on the ground, and the right hand is at the small of the stock to squeeze the trigger in the usual manner. Try this on your nearest hillside!

This week's mail is interesting to us; if you have any favorite topics for discussion, let's hear from you.

MR. T. F. V. DE G., Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, British West Indies: To change feet quickly to meters, multiply the number of feet by 61, and divide by 200.

To change meters to feet, multiply by 200, and divide by 61.

Fault of the Minie bullet.

D. A. SIMMONS, Ottumwa, Iowa: The iron cup used to expand the base of the Minie bullet when driven forward sometimes expanded too much, cutting the bullet in two, leaving one half in the barrel where it was pushed down by the next bullet. Sometimes as many as fifteen piled up inside the barrel be-

fore the owner had the wisdom to take his spoiled gun to an armorer for repairs.

Heat treatment of action.

L. R. GRAHAM, Springfield, Illinois: If the action of a weapon has been properly heat-treated, it is almost impossible to scratch it with a file. If the action has not been properly made to withstand strain, the lock may give way when an improperly loaded cartridge gives an unusually high pressure.

Peters's and Colt's have resumed sending free booklets to our readers. If you have not received these interesting pamphlets, write us now, and we will put your name on the mailing list.

The government supply of Krag and Russian rifles is exhausted, but the U. S. Rifle (Enfield), Model 1917, Caliber .30, is sold to *citizens of the United States* for \$8.85, under certain restrictions which will be explained to readers who send us a stamped and addressed envelope.

AN ARMS ALPHABET

C.

CALIBER: The inside diameter of the barrel, measured between lands, and expressed in millimeters, or in hundredths of an inch.

CANNELURE: A groove used for lubrication, expansion, or extraction purposes.

CANT: Tilting a firearm to the right or left, causing it to fire to one side and low.

CAP: A detonating charge struck by the firing pin which in turn ignites the powder charge.

CARTRIDGE: One round, comprising bullet, case, primer, and powder, assembled.

CASE: A cylinder holding bullet, powder, and cap.

CENTER FIRE: Ignited by a blow at the center of the cartridge head.

CHAMBER: The place the cartridge is loaded before firing.

CHILLED SHOT: Lead shot hardened by addition of antimony.

CHOKE: The taper of the shotgun bore toward the muzzle to reduce the spread of shot.

COMB: The part of the gun stock against which the cheek presses.

COMBUSTION: Powder burning in the barrel.

CORROSION: Destruction of the bore from rust or firing residue.

CRIMP: The bending of the case mouth to hold the bullet.

D.

DENSE POWDER: Smokeless powder with same effect as a greater weight of black powder.

DOUBLE ACTION: One trigger pull fires, cocks, and brings new cartridge into line.

DROP SHOT: Soft shot.

DOPE: A coach's advice on wind or other factors effecting elevation and windage changes.

To be continued in next week's issue.

MISSING

This department 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 the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice in a magazine until you see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," or others, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

Address all your communications to Missing Department, Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

WARDEN, JAMES.—Is tall and weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds. Has blue eyes and blond hair. Is always very well-dressed. Was last seen in Waldo, Wisconsin, in 1926. In 1927 he joined the navy. He often corresponded with me while he was in the navy. Since then I have lost track of him. Have written to the navy, but have never received any reply. Any one knowing his present location, kindly get in touch with Hazel Hagner, Route 1, Kewaskum, Wisconsin.

HENIG, WILLIAM A.—Formerly of Havre, Montana. Was employed as a carpenter by Guthrie & Co. for a long time. Later he worked in the Hog Island Ship Yards. He disappeared from there, and his wife never heard from him again. He was a stout, blue-eyed German. Spoke with considerable accent. Any one knowing his present whereabouts, kindly communicate with his daughter, Mrs. F. A. Hill, 1447 East Fifty-fifth Street, Chicago, Illinois.

ZELLA, FRANCES T. C.—I am longing to hear from you. So is little Guy Edward. Mother, at the old address.

LANG, EDWARD.—Has been missing since 1923. When last heard from he had a filling station in Raleigh, North Carolina. Is thirty-five years of age. Has brown hair, gray-blue eyes and fair skin. His feet tall and weighed about one hundred and sixty pounds. Very neat and has very good taste in dress. His mother is anxious to locate him. If any of the readers know anything regarding him, please get in touch with Mrs. J. T. Jolley, P. O. Box 1841, Sarasota, Florida.

NOTICE.—In 1890 I was placed in a Catholic Orphans Home and registered under the name of Ida Foundling. In April, 1893, I was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. John Belledin, City Township, Route 2, Indiana. They named me Edith Belledin. I would like so much to know something of my own father and mother and any other relatives. Any one having any possible information, please write to Mrs. Edith Hawkins, 905 Alabama Street, Mishawaka, Indiana.

SANDS, NORMAN PARKER.—When last heard from he was at 318 Amber Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is, or was, a Frigidaire expert. Has gray eyes, dark-brown hair and light complexion. He is five feet eight inches tall. Would be thirty-three years of age. In February, 1932, he left the Liberty Dairy Co., of Pittsburgh, where he had been employed. Any one knowing his whereabouts now, or since that date, kindly communicate with his mother, Mrs. Viola Sands, Box 44, Trimble, Ohio.

VOLPERT, GLADYS.—In 1930 she lived in Livermore, California. Her father had a ranch at Los Banos, California. It is possible that she is married by now. Any one having any information concerning her or her family, please write to Max Carp, Fort Mills, Philippine Islands.

DUTZEL.—First name forgotten.—He is of German descent. Lived in San Francisco, but moved from there to Hamilton, Texas. The last I heard of him he was in Fort Worth, Texas. Any news of him will be appreciated by his friend, Max Carp, Fort Mills, Philippine Islands.

NOTICE.—All former members of Company A, Ninth Engineers, M. T. D., who made the hike from Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to Fort Riley, Kansas, in October, 1921, please write to their buddy, Max Carp, Fort Mills, Philippine Islands.

STORY, PEARL.—Would like to hear from her or her descendants. She married Oscar Story some time between 1890 and 1896 and lived in Coshen, Indiana. Do not know Pearl's maiden name. Either Oscar or Pearl was related to Mollie Ringler. Heard that Pearl and her husband were separated, and that the boys went with the mother and the girl stayed with her father. Any news would be deeply appreciated by Blue Eyes, care of Western Story Magazine.

PAINE, JAMES GLEN.—Formerly of Los Gatos, California. Was a fruit worker. He would be forty-six years of age. Has blue eyes and brown hair. Is about five feet six inches tall. Has very pleasant disposition. Was last seen at Hutchinson, Kansas. Because of the death of his father, it is necessary that his brothers and sisters locate him in order that the estate can be settled. Address any information to George Guy Paine, 1301 Missouri Avenue, Joplin, Missouri.

PAT.—Log camps, gray mules, and green buggies are not forgotten. Things have changed. An old friend would like to hear from you. If you see this, write to Lonesome, care of Western Story Magazine.

NEVILLE, ETHEL, LILLIAN, and PATRICK.—The children of Nicholas and Nora Neville. Their mother died, and when last heard from the children were living at 77 Bunker Hill Street, Charlestown, Massachusetts. That was in 1927. Their father was employed as motorman on Charlestown and Boston street cars. I am their mother's sister and I am very anxious to get in touch with them. Any one having any information concerning any of them, kindly communicate with Mrs. Maude Fagan, 402 Harrison Avenue, Harrison, New Jersey.

HOOKEE, MRS. FLORENCE.—The only sister of Lillian Wetherell Hoffmann. Your nephew would like to hear from you. Remember about fifteen years ago on the coal barge at Jersey City? Or perhaps it was Hoboken? Remember 337 East Eighty-fifth Street in 1893? Would like to hear from you, your husband, or daughter. Address Charles William Hoffmann, 452 East Seventy-eight Street, New York, New York.

KEANE, JACK and STEPHEN.—These brothers were born in Liverpool, England, and were last heard from twenty-three years ago in Camden, New Jersey. A nephew wants any news possible of them. He is Thomas N. Robinson, 109-54 One Hundred Thirty-third Street, Richmond Hill, Long Island, New York.

MARKS, FRED.—His home used to be in Akron, Ohio. Your old pal wants to hear from you. He has some good news for you. Write to L. G. Skeene, care of Billboard, Kansas City, Missouri.

BLAKSLEY, LEONARD, LUCIOUS, and LOTTIE.—They are descendants of Tobias Blaksley, formerly of Nebraska. A cousin is asking for information concerning them. He would be also glad to hear from any other descendants of Tobias. Please address Henry W. Plew, Hanley Falls, Minnesota.

PORTER, MRS. LIBBIE M.—She was a trained nurse. Her first husband was Daniel Nichols, a Civil War veteran, who enlisted from Cazenovia, New York. He is buried in that place. In 1886, or somewhat later, Mrs. Porter was heard from in Washington, D. C., where it is thought that she was employed in a hospital. Her former home was Hillsdale, Michigan. If living she would be over eighty years of age. Any information regarding her, whether living or dead, would be gratefully received by her daughter, Mrs. Alice Nichols Swift, 135 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

BROWN, ALMA and ELMA.—They are twins. In 1920 they were placed in the Huron County Children's Home at Norwalk, Ohio. In 1921 they were taken in adoption but no particulars are known. They were seven years old at the time. They will be twenty-one years of age on June 3, 1934. Their sister is anxious to locate them. Daddy is dead. Have lots of news for you. Any one knowing my sisters, please write to Mrs. Violet King, 1909 Smith Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

HININ, DORA.—The last I saw of her was six years ago in Fort Worth. She has a sister Ruth and a brother Orvill who live somewhere in California. She went to Houston, then to San Francisco, and I believe that she is now in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Dora, if you see this, write to me at once. I haven't forgotten you and will answer immediately. William F. Thornberg, Box 245, Kilgore, Texas.

DENNIS or BAILEY, LUCILE.—She is somewhere in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Last year she was employed at the Williamson Dickie overall factory in Fort Worth, Texas. Lucile, answer this, if you happen to see it. I missed you while I was in Fort Worth. Tried to locate your folks, but was unsuccessful. Bill Thornberg, Box 245, Kilgore, Texas.

NOTICE.—Want to hear from the heirs of Samuel Halford who died in Salt Lake City, Utah, about ten years ago. This is important. Write, giving names and addresses of all living heirs and all who have died. Address Charles Buss, Room 4, 1771 Acushnet Avenue, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

JORDAN, JOHN LAWSON.—Has been missing since he paid his way out of the army at Fort Bliss, Texas, in 1925. Please write to me. I have an insurance policy that you can cash. My brother, J. C. Jordan, 221 South Olive Street, Los Angeles, California.

KITCHELL.—The relatives of Francis Kitchell who married M. J. Parkey. Two daughters were born of this marriage. When I was nine months old my mother divorced my father. She was living in Boston, Massachusetts, at the time. From then until now I have never heard anything from, or of, my mother. Lately I have been told that she is dead, and that I have one or two aunts—her sisters—living. One is supposed to be married to a Mr. Edwards and living in New York City. Any one knowing anything regarding my mother's people, kindly write to Mrs. Don Hawkins, Box 242, Pennington Gap, Virginia.

HENLEY, K. L.—Generally called Skeet. Was last heard from in the fall of 1923. Was working at Standard Camping Station, Kenosha, Arkansas, just outside of Smackover, Arkansas. He received his mail at Smackover. His daughter is anxious for some news of her father and would be most thankful for any help in locating him. Any one knowing his whereabouts, or what became of him, kindly communicate with Miss Florence Henley, 4123 Avenue G, Fort Worth, Texas.

NEWMAN, ROBERT.—He is my father, and my three brothers and myself have not seen him in twenty-three years. Twenty years ago he was heard from in Hill City, Minnesota. He was born in Howard Lake, Minnesota, fifty-one years ago on either January 6th or 8th. He was fair-complexioned and had blond curly hair which is probably gray by now. He weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds. His three sons are Hector, Edward, and William. I am his only daughter and married now. Any one knowing his whereabouts, kindly address Mrs. Abe Butler, West Haven Add. R. 1, care of Joe Mummell, Mason City, Iowa.

HOWARD.—Have very important news for you. Please communicate with me at once. Frances.

WILLIAMS, H. H.—A year ago he was heard from in Colorado. He is five feet ten inches tall. Has black hair streaked with gray and has piercing brown eyes. Eyebrows are very black and heavy. Would be about fifty-six years of age. Any one knowing his whereabouts, please notify Frances, care of Western Story Magazine.

BRUNO, THOMAS.—He is twenty-nine years of age. Has dark hair and brown eyes. Is five feet six inches tall and weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds. It is five years since I have heard from him, and I am much worried as to what may have happened to my brother. Any one having any information concerning him, please get in touch with Mrs. Mike Petrelle, Box 571, Halliday's Cove, West Virginia.

INFORMATION DESIRED.—Concerning Anders Peterson. He was born at Fulltofta, Skone, Sweden, June 1, 1862. Left that country for America in April, 1886. Has not corresponded with his relatives for many years. Any information regarding him will be much appreciated by his niece, Mathilda Kottell, 635 Boylston Street, Brookline, Massachusetts.

HOLLAND or HUFF, NONA.—It is very important and to her best interests that she communicate with me at once. Any one knowing where she is located, please notify Marjorie Currie, Apartment 2, 2626 Austin Avenue, Houston, Texas.

POTTS, CHARLEY L.—Would be about forty-two years of age. His son would be glad to hear from him. Address Jess W. Potts, Cresford, South Dakota.

HALL, THOMAS CHARLES.—It is possible that his second name is Samuel. He is my father. Due to my traveling rather widely in 1923 I lost track of him. I only know that in the spring of 1923 he left Alberta, Canada, presumably for either Iowa or Kansas. He is about seventy years of age and is probably in good health. Is six feet tall and weighed two hundred and forty pounds. It is possible that he is engaged in the merchandise business somewhere. As my father is getting on in years, and am very anxious to locate him as soon as possible. Should he need help, I am in a position to give it. Any one having any possible information concerning him, please communicate immediately with Charles R. Hall, Box 491, Kirkland Lake, Ontario, Canada.

NOTICE.—To my pals who were with me in South America. Does three or ten ounces look good to you? If so, write at once. I will have boat ready to go as soon as you are. R. Fullenwider, Orland, California.

PROVO, TOM.—Was last heard of in Brooklyn, New York. Any one knowing his present whereabouts, please write to M. B., 1096 Willow Street, Beaumont, Texas.

BRANTLY, PINKY.—Who left for Chicago, Illinois, in 1927. Have lots to tell you. Write to me some time. M. B., 1096 Willow Street, Beaumont, Texas.

DOUGHERTY, JIMMIE and MARGARET.—In 1925 they were living at 11½ West Eighty-fourth Street, New York City. Have lost track of them since then. Margaret came from Rushville, Indiana. Her maiden name was Innis. Jimmie's home was in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I believe that they came to New York from Cleveland, Ohio, in the fall of 1924, traveling by auto. Any news as to their whereabouts would be much appreciated by Lydia Manning, 1665 Jonathan Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

PERCY, or FREEBURG, WILLIAM R.—In 1870 he was a member of the band in the Seventeenth United States Infantry. When last heard from he was stationed in Dakota Territory. He is my uncle, and I would be happy to hear from him or any of his relatives. Kindly address Mrs. M. E. Richardson, 265 Cotton Avenue, Scarboro Junction P. O., Ontario, Canada.

ATTENTION.—Seven miles west of Lincoln, Kansas, the body of an unidentified man was found in a trash heap. Had one dent about two and a half years. Death was the result of violence; the skull was crushed. Man was about thirty-five years of age. Height was probably five feet six or eight inches. Hair was reddish-blond. Teeth were worn. Had one crown on first molar on left side with a twin soldered on, making one tooth missing from upper jaw. His clothes were of winter weight. A volimeter was found in his overall's pocket. Any one knowing of any missing person whose description is similar to this, please notify the coroner, Doctor B. F. Spencer, Lincoln, Kansas.

FIELDING, RICHARD.—Years ago he left England for America, where he engaged in farming, eventually owning his own farm. He used to write to his mother regularly until the World War up to the time he was captured. He was a soldier and visited his grandmother in England during the War. He was about nineteen years of age at that time, and I was a little girl of eight. Richard Fielding is my uncle. Shortly after Dick visited grandmother she died, and I am the only member of the family left in England. I should be so happy if I could hear from my uncle or some of his family. Any one knowing persons of this name, please communicate with Lily, care of Western Story Magazine.

STANHO, JOHN P.—He disappeared from home in September, 1923. After leaving his home he lived at 28 Vine Street, Mechanicville, New York. Then later at 425 Shawmut Street, Boston, Massachusetts. Another address of his was Gay White, York Beach, Maine. The last time we heard from him he was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His family have had no word of any kind for seven or eight years. Any one knowing his whereabouts, kindly get in touch with his younger brother, Anthony Stanho, 5633 Ploverdale Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

COWAN, A. W., and daughter, **MILDRED TURNER.**—They formerly lived in Wallace, Idaho. Were last heard of in California in 1927. Their present address will be thankfully received by Mae, care of this magazine.

SHERWOOD, BRUCE FREDERIC.—Who left his home in Oakland, California, in December, 1927. Was last heard from in Butte, Montana, where he was driving a taxi. He is twenty-six years of age. Has light-brown eyes and brown curly hair. Is five feet ten inches tall and weighed about one hundred and seventy pounds. His father recently died, and his mother longs to hear from her son. Any information concerning him would be deeply appreciated. Address Doolie, care of Western Story Magazine.

WHALEN, JOHN FRANCIS.—He is my brother, and I have been trying to locate him for twenty-six years or more. He was last heard from in West Virginia. If living he would be fifty-three years of age. I am his only sister. John, please let me hear from you. I grieve so for you. Any one able to offer any help, kindly write to Mrs. M. White, 1427 K Street, S. E., Washington, D. C.

APPLETON, CHARLES EDWIN.—Who was last heard of in Toronto, Canada, about thirty-five years ago. He would be eighty-two years of age and was born in Montreal, Canada. Was five feet nine or ten inches tall and fair-complexioned. Any news of him, whether dead or alive, would be thankfully received by his granddaughter, Eva Appleton, 1818 Bennett Avenue, Montreal, Canada.

BRAZELTON, CLARENCE W.—A former soldier of 115th Ammunition Train, Thirty-sixth Division, and stationed at Camp Brown before sailing for France. I last heard from him fifteen years ago when he was at Leavenworth, Kansas. I was in Liberal, Kansas, at the time. He sent me a pass to visit him, but I was sick and could not make the trip. Since then I have not heard from him. He was in home before enlistment was in either Tulsa or Ardmore, Oklahoma. Any information regarding him would be much appreciated. Address M. W., care of Western Story Magazine.

BELLANGER, LEO.—In 1922 he was in Cleveland, Ohio. Any one knowing his present whereabouts, kindly notify Samuel W. Woessner, Buckham Inn, Star Route, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

SANFORD, FRED.—He is my father's youngest brother, and father lost track of him many years ago when his father and mother separated. Fred, generally called Sandy, went with his mother. She is now dead and buried at Red Cloud, Nebraska. He would be around forty years of age. Father wants so much to hear from his brother and would be thankful for any news. Please address Mrs. Pete Canclaware, Theford, Nebraska.

BROWN, HOWARD CLAYTON.—Was last heard from in New York City in 1931. At that time he sent word that he was about to sail for Africa. His home was on Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn. He has a daughter, Daisy Doris. His mother died in November, 1932, and his sister is anxious to get in touch with him. Address Daisy R. Brown, Rural Route, Ludlow Falls, Ohio.



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**Can YOU Find 4 Dogs
 in Picture Above?**

Tell me quick! Some are upside down. Some look straight at you. Hundreds have won big cash rewards in other campaigns conducted by men in this firm. Here are a few. Mrs. Kate Needham, a housewife in Oregon won \$4,705. Ira Burroughs, past 70 years old in a little Texas town won \$2,770. Anna Jacobson in a small New York town won over \$5,000. Sister M. Crescence in Arkansas won \$1,490. Now comes your chance. You are GUARANTEED to win a cash reward if you take an active part. Not a lottery. No luck needed. Hurry—get started quick by finding 4 dogs. Not a cent of your money needed to buy anything. Big cash rewards are being won every day. In addition to giving Buick I will pay

\$1,000⁰⁰ EXTRA
 for Promptness

to First Prize winner. Not only one person, but hundreds will be rewarded. In case of ties, duplicate prizes will be given. All the money to pay prizes is in the Bankers Trust Co. at Des Moines. I invite you to look us up through any bank in Des Moines, any credit agency, business house, magazine, newspaper, railroad.

\$10,000⁰⁰ REWARD will be paid to any worthy charity if anyone can prove that we do not really give away all these thousands of dollars in cash prizes—or that all this prize money is not on deposit in the bank.

WRITE QUICK

Send no money. Mark dogs found, clip picture, mail quick—or write on penny post-card how many dogs you find. For replying I will tell you how you may also win big EXTRA cash rewards and \$2,500 too. Answer NOW! Tell me which you would prefer to win—\$2,500 all cash or Buick and \$1,000.

Merrold Johnson, Mgr. Dept. 41, Des Moines, Iowa.

Classified Advertising

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS—Reasonable terms. Free Book and advice. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

Detectives Wanted—Instructions

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Great demand. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write George Wagoner, 2640-P Broadway, New York.

Mushroom Growing

\$5 TO \$50 WEEKLY. Grow fancy "White Queen" Mushrooms in cellar or shed. Free Mushroom Book tells how. American Mushroom Industries Ltd., Dept. 528, Toronto, Ont.

Song Writers

FAME AND FORTUNE have been made from songs through talking pictures, radio, phonograph, music publishers. "Hit" writers revise, arrange, compose music to lyrics, lyrics to your music. We submit to studios and publishers. Free report. Booklet free. Universal Song Service, 676 Meyer Bldg., Hollywood, Calif.

Business Instructions

NEW WRITERS! Cash for material for publication. Complete instructions furnished. Write National Press Association, 8-3806 Beverly, Los Angeles, Calif.

Finger Print Protection

"SMITH'S FINGER PRINT INSTRUCTIONS". By Willis D. Smith. Book contains 39 pages, 25 illustrations. Learn to take, read, and compare finger prints; how to use finger, foot, and palm prints to protect your interests. Sent prepaid for 25c in coin. National Protective Registry, Sapulpa, Okla.

Story Ideas

STORIES FOR TALKING PICTURES—MAGAZINES bring lucrative returns. We accept stories any form for FREE READING & REPORT. Experienced writers criticize, copyright & revise in professional form. Our Sales Service selling consistent percentage stories to Magazines & Hollywood Studios. Send for FREE BOOKLET. UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CO., 453 Meyer Bldg., Hollywood, Calif.

Typewriters

TYPEWRITER BARGAINS—Genuine late model Underwood, Royals, Remingtons, L. C. Smiths refinished \$100 office models at 60% saving. Fully guaranteed—10 day trial—easy terms—10c a day. Free catalog. International Typewriter Exchange Dept. C311 231 West Monroe St., Chicago.



GEE... I'd sure like to have real HE-MAN muscles!

So would I, but it takes a long while

CHARLES ATLAS
Holder of the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" won in open competition in the only national and international contest held during the past 15 years.

"Bunk!"
—says

CHARLES ATLAS

"I'll Prove in the first 7 days YOU can have a Body like Mine!"

[No other Physical Instructor in the World has ever DARED to make the offer he makes in this announcement.]

DON'T get the idea that it takes a lot of time and hard work for you to get smashing strength and powerful muscular development! And don't fool yourself into thinking that you need dumb-bells, stretchers or any other such contraptions!

Both these ideas are all bunk—and I have PROVED it. All I need is 7 days to prove what I can do for you! And I don't need any apparatus either. In fact, I have no sympathy with apparatus at all—don't believe in it. It is artificial—and it may strain your heart or other vital organs for life!

NATURAL Methods Are All I Need

On this page you will see an actual photo of how I look today. This picture has not been changed in any way. No muscles have been "painted on." This photograph is the camera's honest proof of what I have done for MY body. I myself am ready to prove what my secret of Dynamic Tension can do for YOURS!

To look at me now you wouldn't recognize me as the same man I was a few years ago. Then I was a physical wreck, a 97-pound weakling—flat chested, spindly legs, arms and legs like pipe-stems. I was worried—and I had a right to be. I decided to study

myself, to do something about my body. Then I made a discovery. I found a new way to build myself up. A way that was simple, natural, quick and sure! "Dynamic Tension" is what I called it. I put this secret to work. And in a short time I had the kind of body you see here—the body which has twice won the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

This Secret Has Helped Thousands

Thousands of other fellows now know this secret, too—and know from their own personal experience what Dynamic Tension has done for them. When they turned to me for advice, they were just as frail and puny as I once was. Now they are life-sized examples of what a man can and ought to be—with mighty energy, tireless endurance, and muscles that stand out like bridge-cables all over their bodies.

I have written an interesting booklet, filled with pictures, which tells my story—and theirs. I would like to send you a copy of it entirely free.

Let Me Send You My Free Book

I'd like you to know what Dynamic Tension has done for me—what it has done for others—and what it can do for you! This little coupon will bring you my free book, which tells all about it. There is no cost or obligation of any kind—and no one will call upon you. I just want to put into your hands proof that I can do for you what I have done for so many thousands of others: give you broad, powerful shoulders, biceps that bulge with smashing strength, a chest which stands out solid, and muscular, and an evenly-developed body that will make others look like dwarfs next to you.

Will you gamble a stamp to win a

body like mine? Then mail this coupon TODAY!
CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 38-D, 133 East 23rd St., N. Y. C.



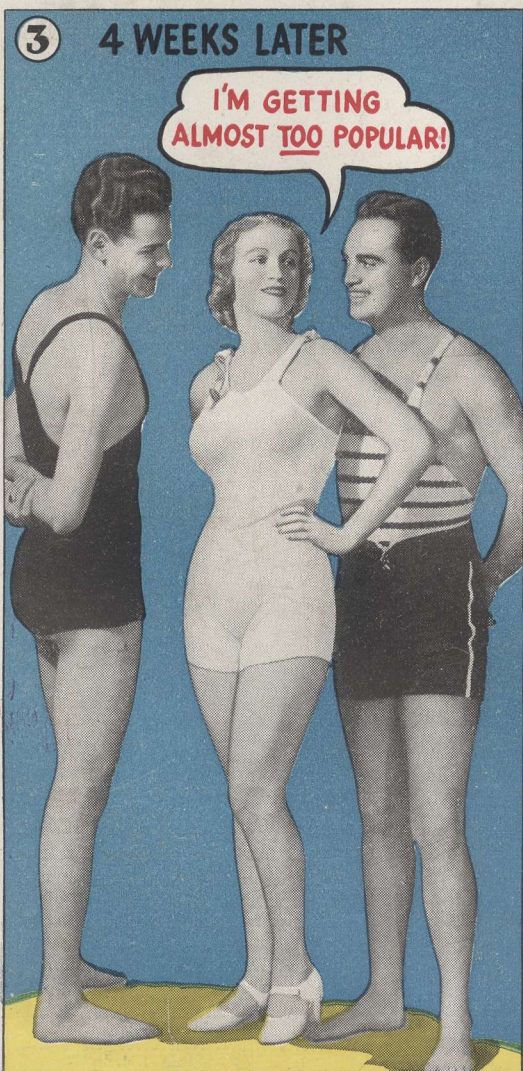
CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 38-D
133 East 23rd Street, New York City

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic Tension will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name
(Please print or write plainly)
Address
City State

WINNIE'S WORRY

—by Gil



New pounds for skinny figures —quick!

Thousands gaining 5 to 15 lbs. and lovely curves in a few weeks with amazing new double tonic

DOCTORS for years have prescribed yeast to build up health. But now with this new discovery you can get far greater tonic results than with ordinary yeast—regain health, and also put on pounds of firm flesh—and in a far shorter time.

Not only are thousands quickly gaining beauty-bringing pounds, but also clear, radiant skin, freedom from constipation and indigestion, new pep.

Concentrated 7 times

This amazing new product, Ironized Yeast, is made from special *brewers' ale yeast*, imported from Europe, richest yeast known, which by a new process is concentrated 7 times—made 7 times more powerful.

But that is not all! This marvelous, health-building yeast is *ironized* with 3 kinds of strengthening iron.

Day after day, as you take Ironized Yeast, watch flat chest develop, skinny limbs round out attractively, new health come—you're a new person.

Results guaranteed

No matter how skinny and weak you may be, this marvelous new Ironized Yeast should build you up in a few short weeks as it has thousands of others. If you are not delighted with the results of the very first package, your money will be instantly refunded.

Special FREE offer!

To start you building up your health *right away*, we make this absolutely FREE offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body". Remember, results are guaranteed with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists. Ironized Yeast Co., Dept. 735, Atlanta, Ga.