Western Story Magazine

Every Week — Nov. 10, 1928 — 15¢ 20¢ IN CANADA

Features by ~ ~ George Gilbert ~ A. E. Apple
Max Brand ~ Christopher B. Booth

WESTERN STORY
MAGAZINE
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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXXII Contents for November 10, 1928 No. 3

ONE NOVEL

TWO SERIALS

FOUR SHORT STORIES

ONE ARTICLE

MISCELLANEOUS

DEPARTMENTS

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All manuscripts must be addressed to the Editors.

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"I'm Going to Raise His Salary"

"I'VE had my eye on him for some time and I know he can handle bigger work. He studies those I. C. S. textbooks every chance he gets, and I want to tell you it has made him a valuable man for this business. I'm going to raise his salary and give him that new job we were talking about. I wish we had more men like him."

How do *you* stand when your employer checks up his men for promotion? Does he pass you by as just a routine worker, or does he think of you as a man who is ambitious to get ahead? Won't you be far more likely to get the promotion if he knows you are studying at home and are really preparing yourself to handle bigger work?

Every mail brings letters from students of the International Correspondence Schools telling of increases in salary due to spare-time study.

"At the time I started my I. C. S. course I was working in a paper mill," writes A. J. Hutchins, Chief Draftsman of the American Strawboard Co. "Before I had completed the course I was called upon to make drawings in one of the company's largest mills and was appointed Superintendent of Construction at a 300 per cent increase in salary."

Jesse G. Vincent was a toolmaker before he enrolled with the I. C. S. He is now Vice-president of the Packard Motor Car Company. Walter Chrysler, President of the Chrysler Motor Corporation, is also a former I. C. S. student.

An I. C. S. course enabled Fred W. Southworth to leave a poorly paying job that he had held *for twenty years* and get a position as a salesman. In six months he also had increased his salary more than 300 per cent.

George A. Grieble was a stone cutter earning $15 a week when he enrolled with the I. C. S. He now has his own engineering business in Cleveland and his income is "between $10,000 and $15,000 a year."

If the I. C. S. can help these men to get out of the rut and make good, it can help you too. If it can raise the salaries of other men, it can raise yours! At least find out how.

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
"The Universal University"
Box 4903, Scranton, Penna.

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

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Management	☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
☐ Accounting and C. P. A. Coaching	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Cost Accounting	☐ English ☐ Civil Service
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Secretarial Work	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Spanish ☐ French	☐ High School Subjects
	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Architects' Blueprints
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Civil Engineer ☐ Mining	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Plumbing and Heating	☐ Agriculture ☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

Name.....

Street Address.....

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

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

RUSH-Absolutely FREE

☐ "The World's Most Useful Small Tool" and the 125-Picture PLIERENCH Circular.

Name..
R.F.D.
No., St.......................................
P. O.
City, Stt.....................................
☐ Intrstd. in Big Factory Repr. Proposition

CLIP HERE

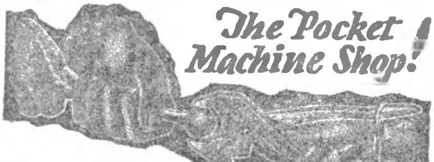
Mail today to THE FLASH SALES CORP'N
BK-4809 N. Ashland Ave., CHICAGO, ILL.

FREE ON COUPON—an E-F ANGLE SCREWDRIVER—

Of tempered crucible Spring steel. It has 7 powerful driving edges for large and small screws and 101 other uses—works under obstructions where others won't. Carries like small pocket knife—often more valuable.

Also **FREE**—the "$5,000" Circular giving amazing 125-Picture story of

The Pocket Machine Shop!

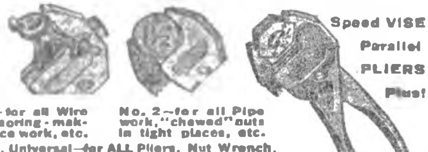


with its
1-TON
POWER-GEAR it
Outgrips a 40-LB. Vise!

The "hand-grip" of a tiny Rubber band holds a Bearing Ball—the Hardest-to-hold thing known—against a 300-lb. Pull!

IT IS AN AUTOMATIC LOCK-GRIP RATCHET WRENCH

All In One



Speed VISE
Parallel
PLIERS
Plus!

No. 3—for all Wire chain, spring-making, fence work, etc.

No. 2—for all Pipe work, "chewed" nuts in tight places, etc.

No. 1, Universal—for ALL Pliers, Nut Wrench, Vise and clamp, Spring-making Work, etc.

EIFEL-FLASH PLIERENCH KIT

(Say "*Eye-fel—Flash*") "The T.N.T. of Tools"

You get the amazingly Quicker, Better, Easier, Universal Tool Service of Nos. 1, 2 & 3—Convertible in 1/5 second—in the new 24-Ounce Master Tool Kit—for the Price Of One Good Tool; yet it Does the Work of the best other tools Weighing 60 Pounds and Costing $30.00! It is Incomparably Superior!

Hundreds of Thousands of Men and Women are using these wonder Kits to make their Homes and Estates more comfortable—Farms, Shops, etc., more profitable! to get more and better service from Automobiles and all mechanical devices; with an enormous saving in money, time and energy! Used by the U. S. Army and Navy. Just Try a PlieRench Kit Once, and you would no more go back to other tools than to the ancient Ox-Cart!

With each Kit is a 64-page Manual of Mechanics

A GUARANTEED SUPER-QUALITY PRODUCT (©'28-J.E.)

A Great Fall and Winter Money-Maker

for PlieRench Fact'y Repr's—Full or Part Time. Amazing PlieRench Demonstrtn. sells at sight—makes $75 to $200 Weekly all year 'round. Holiday-Gift Sales Double Profits—Ga. Repr. made $97.50 in 20-Minute Group Sale. Mich. Repr. made $368.50 in 12 Days. L. M. E. made $379.00 in One Week!

MAIL the Valuable Coupon above—NOW!

Both GIVEN

Hawaiian Banjo Uke

Big Phonograph

Most wonderful new Banjo-Uke and big up-to-date phonograph. Either one given for selling 12 boxes famous **WHITE CLOVERINE SALVE** at 25c each (beautiful art picture **FREE** with each box) and remitting as per plan in catalog. **Send no money, we trust you.** Write quick. Our 32nd year. We are reliable. Be first in your town.
THE WILSON CHEMICAL CO. Dept. 75M TYRONE, PA.

Most Amazing INVENTION in 25 years

"Cleans Up" for Agents

FREE MACHINE FOR AGENTS

$90 WEEKLY IN SPARE TIME!

Men, here is a wonder—the most sensational invention of the age! If you're looking for a rapid fire seller—an item that nets you 100% profit—an item that sells itself to 7 out of 10 men on demonstration—I've got it in Ve-Po-Ad, the amazing new vest pocket adding machine!

Sells for $2.95—You Make $1.65

This most remarkable invention does all the work of a $300 adding machine, yet fits the vest pocket and sells for only $2.95! It sells on sight to storekeepers, business men, and everyone who uses figures—and makes you over 100% profit on every sale! Ve-Po-Ad does any kind of figuring in a jiffy, yet weighs but 4 oz. Counts up to a billion. Shows total visible at all times. Perfectly accurate, lightning fast. Never makes a mistake or gets out of order. Over 100,000 in daily use!

Get Your Machine FREE

Live wire salesmen are dropping everything else and flocking to Ve-Po-Ad. Ve-Po-Ad brings them quick money and lots of it. Shapiro out in California made $475 in one week! You can "clean up" too! Only 10 sales a day in spare time will bring YOU over $95.00 a week! You need no previous sales experience—Ve-Po-Ad sells itself! If you are really interested in earning a steady, substantial income, write at once for full details of my MONEY-MAKING PLAN and FREE VE-PO-AD given to new Agents. Do it NOW—TODAY!

C. M. CLEARY, Dept. 578
173 W. MADISON ST. CHICAGO, ILL.

Bladder Weakness

If Bladder Weakness, Getting Up Nights, Backache, Burning or Itching Sensation, leg or groin pains make you feel old, tired, pepless, and worn out why not make the **Cystex** 48 Hour Test? Don't give up. Get **Cystex** today at any drug store. Put it to a 48 hour test. Money back if you don't soon feel like new, full of pep, sleep well, with pains alleviated. Try **Cystex** today. Only 60c.

I Want 700 Agents at $90 a Week

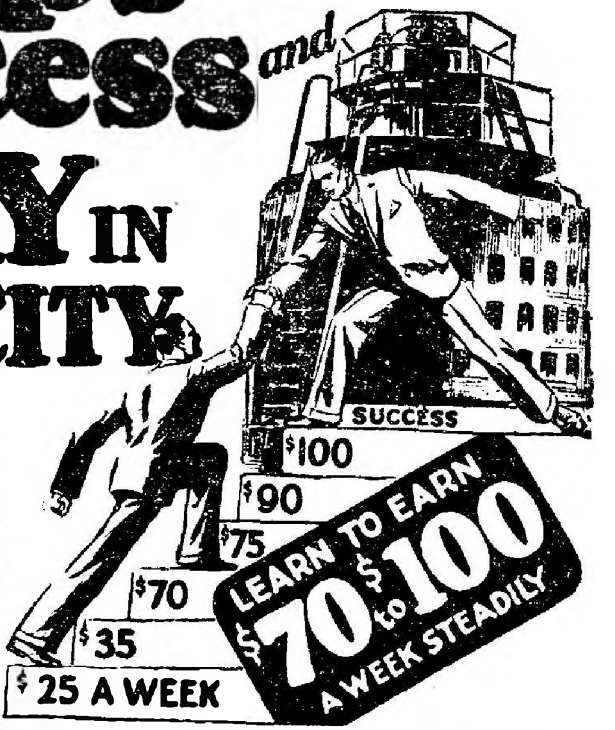
Men and Women! Write me today and by this time next week I can place you in a position to make $2.00 to $5.00 an hour in your spare time, up to $15 a day full time. Thousands of our representatives are making that and more with our **New Plans**. Simply introduce and take orders for famous **World's Star Hosiery, Underwear and Rayon Lingerie** sold direct from Mill to Home—a complete line for whole family. Permanent customers and repeat orders. No investment needed. Complete selling equipment furnished **Free**. No C.O.D. No deposit. It's a chance to make thousands of dollars. Exclusive territory. Extra Service Awards. Cash Bonus. Promotion. No experience needed. Write today for all particulars.

Write Quick

Estab. 30 Yrs.

WORLD'S STAR KNITTING COMPANY
861 Lake Street Bay City, Mich.

2 steps AT A TIME TO 2 success and BIG PAY IN ELECTRICITY



Join the big parade of young fellows who shook the dust of "no future" jobs off their shoes! They are making more money every year in electricity than their old jobs would have paid them in six years.

Men without much schooling who used to earn $20 to $25 a week have jumped right into jobs at $50 a week and more. Many of them knock down $75 a week in a few short months. They need never be out of jobs. Their Cooke Training is like a lifetime guarantee of steady work and real big money.

The field is wide open! It's getting bigger every day! Thousands of opportunities are waiting for men with Cooke Training in every branch of this tremendous industry. Power plants, automobile shops, radio manufacturers, service stations, railroads and hundreds of others are searching constantly for men who have had training in electricity. They are willing to pay for these men—and pay big.

You will be amazed when you see how quickly you can qualify for one of these big jobs without the loss of a single moment from your regular job. Within a short time you can change from your present job to one of your own choice in any city or town you wish to live.

No matter what kind of work you are now doing, give Cooke Training a chance to do for you what it has done for thousands of others—change the entire course of your life and help you take *two steps at a time* to success, to big pay and greater independence.

A few weeks after you start you are ready to do odd electrical jobs in your own neighborhood that ought to pay you up to $30 a week extra. Hundreds of my students are doing this now. *I furnish you free of any extra expense Six Big Outfits of Tools and Apparatus to work with.*

DO YOU EARN LESS THAN $70 A WEEK—THEN INVESTIGATE

Your name and address will bring you a free book, telling all about the great electrical industry, complete details of Cooke Training, the small monthly payment plan and the money-back agreement. You will enjoy reading this book—it is free—send for it now!

L. L. COOKE, Chief Instruction Engineer

THIS COUPON WILL BRING TO YOU THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN ELECTRICITY. MAIL IT NOW! FREE

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR FREE COPY OF THIS BOOK

L. L. Cooke, Chief Instruction Engineer,
L. L. Cooke School of Electricity,
Dept. 578, 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

I would like to know more about electricity. Without obligating me in any way, send me "Secrets of Success" and details of your training.

Name .....

Address .....

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

(Residents of Canada send coupon to H. A. Farrow, Special Representative, 7 Medbury Lane, East, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.)

Do You Want Pep, Punch and Power?

WITHIN every man are oceans of power floating aimlessly around. Tons of energy lying asleep. Gather these forces together and utilize them. I will show you how. I will convert those inert muscles into fighting machines.

Within 90 Days I Will Make You a Miracle of Muscle

I will give you nerves of steel and husky shapely muscles as strong as iron and as pliant as a whip. You must realize that nowadays men win their jobs by the spread of their shoulders and the trimness of their waistline. Those are the vital men. Let me show you how it is done. I guarantee to put inches on your chest and give you a man-sized arm.

A Purely Personal Course

My course is a purely personal one. Every pupil is separately and confidentially taken care of. YOUR COURSE IS LAID OUT TO SUIT YOUR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS AND YOURS ONLY. You are trained on the basis of

The Twelve Principles of Life

No other course teaches them. Each week every Jowett pupil gets a separate course dealing with one of the TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF LIFE along with a new order of exercise. This course has won the indorsement of the world's leading authorities. THAT IS WHY I CAN SATISFY YOU. With each enrolment is given

A Pair of the Jowett Grip Disk Dumbbells

They are an unequaled form of apparatus for body building. Can be used by anyone. The strong and the weak alike. I stand behind them with my guarantee that they are the best in the world for CREATING HEALTH and BUILDING MUSCLE.

Send for My Free Booklet

This booklet explains all about the JOWETT SYSTEM OF HEALTH AND MUSCLE BUILDING. Beautifully illustrated, it is an example of my course which is the finest and most elaborate ever produced.

DON'T WAIT FOR TOMORROW. FILL IN THE COUPON AND MAIL IMMEDIATELY.

THE JOWETT INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Dept. 14-L, 422 Poplar St., Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Jowett:
Please send me your free booklet explaining the Jowett System of Health and Muscle Building.

Name.....

Street.....

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

One Full Ampoule of my amazing hair fluid which I discovered myself and which grew hair on my head. This ampoule is absolutely free. Don't send any money. There is No C. O. D. No charge whatsoever. All I want is an opportunity to show you how easily I grew hair on my own and hundreds of other men's heads.

Here is How I Looked When I was Bald

I was just as bald as this photo shows —But I grew my own hair with my wonderful fluid. I can grow your hair, too.

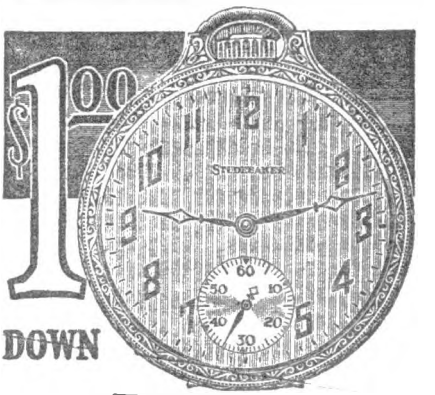
Bald Men Grow Hair Quick!

What I accomplished on my own head and other heads I can do for you, provided you are under 45 years of age and less of hair was not caused by burns or scars. Anyhow, I must succeed or you pay nothing. No apparatus. My home treatment is simple, quick, inexpensive.

WRITE FOR FREE AMPOULE

Write today. I will send you immediately, one full ampoule of my marvelous fluid which I discovered, of which I hold the secret and which grew my own hair on my own bald head. Besides the Free Ampoule of Fluid, I will send photographs, names and addresses of men and women who successfully used my Wonder Fluid for Dandruff, Falling Hair and particularly for Baldness. Write for free Ampoule.

VREELANDS— 27-78 EUCLID-WINDSOR BLDG., CLEVELAND, OHIO



Brings a

21 JEWEL-*Extra Thin*

STUDEBAKER

Just $1.00. The balance in easy monthly payments. You get this famous Studebaker 21-Jewel Watch direct from factory at a saving of thirty to fifty per cent.

Your choice of 80 new Art Beauty cases and dials. Latest designs in white gold, yellow gold and green gold effects. Adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and five positions. Insured for a lifetime. Ladies' Bracelet Watches, Men's Strap Watches, Diamonds and Jewelry, too. All sold on easy monthly payments. Your credit is good! Write today for free book of Advance Watch Styles or Jewelry Catalog.

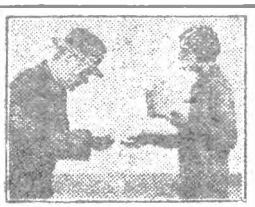
Watch Chain FREE! For a limited time we are offering a beautiful Watch Chain free. This special offer will be sent to anyone who writes at once. Don't delay! Get this free chain offer today—while it lasts.

STUDEBAKER WATCH COMPANY
Directed by the Studebaker Family—known for three-quarters of a century of fair dealing
Dept. P908 South Bend, Indiana
Canadian Address: Windsor, Ont.

MONOTONY ROUTINE LONG HOURS LOW PAY

Human cogs in a great machine. No chance to meet people, travel, or have interesting experiences. A long, slow, tiresome road that leads nowhere.

The Time Clock—a badge of hawk-like supervision and The Rut. A constant reminder that one is "just another name on the pay-roll."

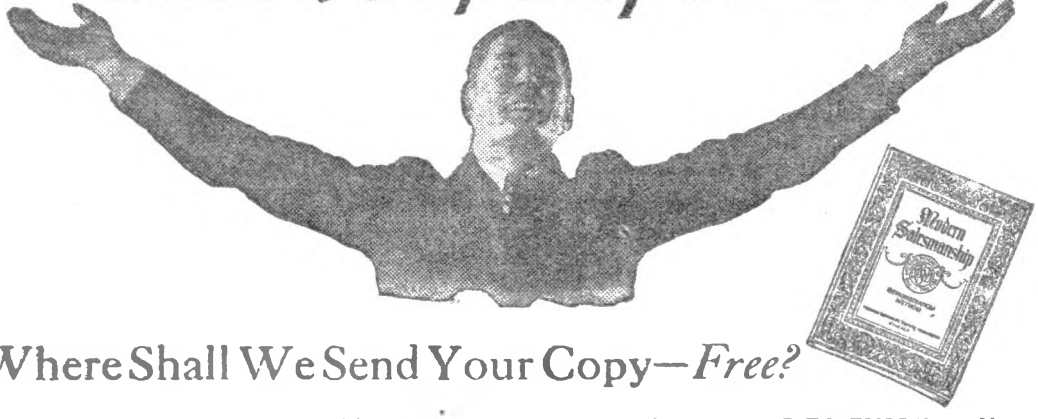


Always worrying over money. Always skimping and economizing—going without the comforts and luxuries that every man DESERVES for his family and himself.

Always wondering what would happen in case of a "lay-off" or loss of job. No chance to express ideas and ability—no chance to get ahead. COULD there be a way out?

"I Said "Good-bye" to It All After Reading This Amazing Book—

Raised My Pay 700%!



Where Shall We Send Your Copy—*Free?*

WHEN a man who has been struggling along at a low-pay job suddenly steps out and commences to earn real money—$5000, $7500, or $10,000 a year—he usually gives his friends quite a shock. It's hard for them to believe he is the same man they used to know . . . but such things happen much more frequently than most people realize. Not only one, but HUNDREDS have altered the whole course of their lives after reading the amazing book illustrated at the right.

True, it is only a *book*—just seven ounces of paper and printer's ink—but it contains the most vivid and inspiring message that any ambitious man can read! It reveals facts and secrets that will open almost any man's eyes to things he has never even dreamed of!

Remarkable Salary Increases

For example, R. B. Hansen of Akron, Ohio, is just one case. Not long ago he was a foreman in the rubber-curing room of a big factory at a salary of $160 a month. One day this remarkable volume, "Modern Salesmanship," fell into his hands. And from that day on, Mr. Hansen clearly saw the way to say "good-bye" forever to low pay, long hours, and tiresome routine! Today he has reaped the rewards that this little volume placed within his reach. His salary runs well into the 5-figure class—actually exceeding $10,000 a year!

Another man, Wm. Shere of Neenach, California, was a cowboy when he sent for "Modern Salesmanship." Now he is a star salesman making as high as $525 in a single week. O. D. Oliver of Norman, Oklahoma, read it and jumped from $200 a month to over $10,000 a year! C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, raised his salary to over $10,000 a year and became President of his company in the bargain!

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about any of these men when they started. None of them had any special advantages—although all of them realized that SALESMANSHIP offers bigger rewards than any other profession under the sun. But, like many other men, they subscribed to the foolish belief that successful salesmen are born with some sort of "magic gift." "Modern Salesmanship" showed them that nothing could be farther from the truth! Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet.

City and travelling sales positions are open in every line all over the country. For years, thousands of leading firms have called on the N. S. T. A. to supply them with salesmen. Employment service is free to both employers and members, and thousands have secured positions this way.

FREE TO EVERY MAN

See for yourself WHY "Modern Salesmanship" has been the deciding factor in the careers of so many men who are now making $10,000 a year. Learn for yourself the REAL TRUTH about the art of selling! You do not risk one penny or incur the slightest obligation. And since it may mean the turning point of your whole career, it certainly is worth your time to fill out and clip the blank below. Send it now!

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. S-581

N. S. T. A. Bldg. Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Assn.,
Dept. S-581, N. S. T. A. Bldg.,
Chicago, Ill.

Without cost or obligation, you may send me your free book, "Modern Salesmanship."

Name.....

Address.....

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

Age.....Occupation.....

New Discovery Offers "No-Frost" $15 a Day PROFIT!

Here's an absolutely new money-making idea. Brings big profits—easy profits—quick profits. You can make $50 a week in spare time—$100 a week in full time—helping me handle orders in your territory for No-Frost. No-Frost is a new scientific preparation that is absolutely guaranteed to keep steam, frost, fog, rain, sleet, mist, and snow off auto windshields, windows, eyeglasses. Think of it! Keeps glass clean, bright and clear in all kinds of weather.

Anyone, Anywhere, Can Make Big Money

All you do is demonstrate to housewives, automobile owners, stores, garages, etc., and take the orders. We don't sell to dealers. All business from your locality must come through you. *You alone get the profit on every order.* Every demonstration brings you 2 to 4 orders. Just put a little No-Frost on the glass. It doesn't show. It won't streak, smear, mar, or scratch. Yet keeps glass clean and clear as crystal. A necessity for every auto owner, storekeeper, street car conductor, locomotive engineer, housewife, and everyone who wears eyeglasses. Prevents accidents and takes the place of mechanical devices that don't work half the time.

Vaughn Clears $125 in One Week

C. Vaughn, Ohio, cleared $125 in one week and says he has more money and friends than ever before. Men and women everywhere are making amazing profits with No-Frost and my 350 other fast-selling products. H. Heintjes, N. J., cleared $30 in 1 day. Mrs. K. R. Roof, S. C., made $50 the first week in spare time. Mrs. B. L. Hodges, N. Y., averages $18 to $20 a day—day in and day out. H. C. Hanson jumped his pay from $25 a week to $75 a week—*and he works only part time.* You can make these big profits too.

SEND NO MONEY

Just put your name and address on the coupon. Give me a chance to *prove* that you can make $50 to $100 a week. You don't need capital, training, or experience. I furnish everything and tell you just what to do and say in this easy pleasant work. You don't risk a penny. Yet it's an opportunity to pocket hundreds—yes, *thousands* of dollars in clear cash profits. You can make $10 to $20 a day—*right from the start.*

JUST MAIL COUPON

Introduce No-Frost in your territory while it's new before imitations are put on sale in the stores. Skim the rich cream off the profits. Clinch a big permanent, repeat business. Make more money than you've ever made in your life before. Get the facts and read the proof. Mail coupon to-day—*NOW!*

Albert Mills, Pres., American Products Co.,
661 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Without cost or obligation, send me full details about the money-making possibilities of your amazing new product NO-FROST.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

(Print or write plainly)

TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"

$158 to $225 MONTH

Men—Boys 18 or Over

See Your Country
Mail Coupon Today Sure
Many Gov't Jobs Open to Women

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. J 195 Rochester, N. Y.

COUPON

Rush to me free information telling how I can get a U. S. Government Big Pay Job. Send list of jobs and sample coaching.

Name .....

Address .....

A PERFECT LOOKING NOSE
Can Easily Be Yours

Trados Model No. 25 corrects now all ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly, permanently and comfortably at home. It is the only adjustable, safe and guaranteed patent device that will actually give you a perfect looking nose. Over 90,000 satisfied users. For years recommended by physicians. 16 years of experience in manufacturing Nose Shapers is at your service. **Model 25 Junior for children.** Write for testimonials and free booklet, which tells you how to obtain a perfect looking nose.

M. TRILETY, Pioneer Noseshaping Specialist
Dept. 31-G Binghamton, N. Y.

Play the Hawaiian Guitar like the Hawaiians!

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

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

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

GIVEN *when you enroll* **—a sweet toned HAWAIIAN GUITAR, Carrying Case and Playing Outfit—Value $18 to $20**

No extras—everything included

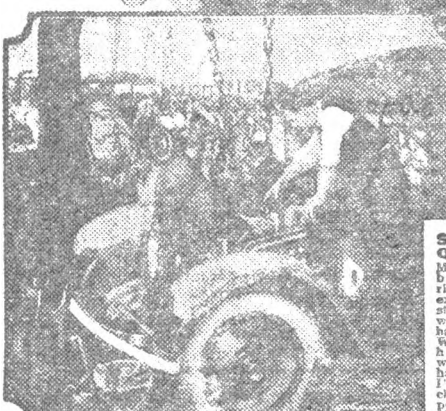
WRITE AT ONCE for attractive offer and easy terms. You have everything to gain. A postcard will do. ACT!

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

FIRST HAWAIIAN CONSERVATORY of MUSIC, Inc.
9th Floor, Woolworth Bldg. Dept. 238 New York, N. Y.
Approved as a Correspondence School Under the Laws of the State of New York—Member National Home Study Council

Be a B.W. Cooke-Trained AUTO EXPERT

Train You at HOME



EARN up to $5000 A YEAR

Start to Make Money Quick Like Morriston

M. J. Morriston, Parkersburg, W. Va. (photo at right), never had a day's experience on cars before starting my training. Read what he says when less than half-way through his "JOB-WAY" course. "What I have already learned is worth over $500 to me. I have gone into business and I'm making over $50 a week clear, with wonderful prospects." And what Mr. Morriston and hundreds of others have done I will help you to do!

M. J. MORRISTON, Parkersburg, W. Va.

Clip this Coupon Now for my BIG FREE AUTO BOOK

3 repair & testing OUTFITS INCLUDED

The World's biggest, most fascinating business needs you!

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Ten agreements in my big free Auto book. No. 1 is "I will refund every cent of your money if after receiving my training you are not absolutely satisfied." This and nine other wonderful agreements make my "JOB-WAY" course the training for you! Be sure to get my book and read all ten agreements.

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2400 pages, over 2000 illustrations, wiring diagrams, equipment charts, etc. DeLuxe edition with gold-stamped flexible binding. Sent FREE for 15 days' use. If not wanted return express collect. If kept, send only $2. after 15 days, then $3. a month until special advertising price, $24.80 is paid.

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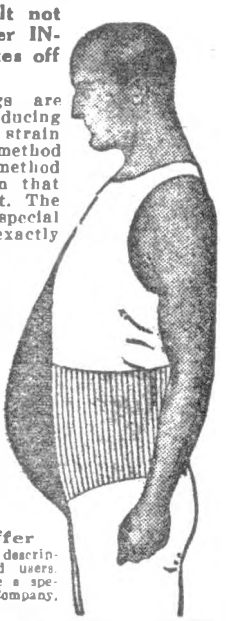
This new self-massaging belt not only makes you look thinner INSTANTLY—but quickly takes off rolls of excess fat.



DIET is weakening—drugs are dangerous—strenuous reducing exercises are liable to strain your heart. The only safe method of reducing is massage. This method sets up a vigorous circulation that seems to melt away surplus fat. The Weil Reducing Belt, made of special reducing rubber, produces exactly the same results as a skilled masseur, only quicker and cheaper.

Every move you make causes the Weil Belt to gently massage your abdomen. Results are rapid because this belt *works for you every second.*

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From 4 to 6 inches of flabby fat usually vanish in a few weeks. Only solid, normal tissue remains. The Weil Reducing Belt is endorsed by physicians because it not only takes off fat, but helps correct stomach disorders, constipation, backache, shortness of breath and puts sagging internal organs back in place.

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With Each 2 Tires

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Size	1 Tire	Tube
30x3	$2.35	$1.25
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32x3½	3.45	2.00
31x4	3.95	2.25
32x4	4.25	2.25
33x4	4.75	2.25
34x4	4.85	2.50
32x4½	5.25	2.75
33x4½	5.55	3.00
34x4½	5.95	3.00
30x5	5.95	3.00

32x5	$6.35	$3.50
34x5	6.95	3.50
36x5	6.95	3.50
BALLOON TIRE PRICES	New	
Size	1 Tire	Tube
29x4.40	$2.95	$2.25
29x4.75	2.95	2.25
30x4.95	4.25	2.50
31x4.95	4.50	2.50
30x5.25	4.75	2.75
31x5.25	4.75	2.75
30x5.77	4.95	2.95
33x5.00	5.00	3.50

Volume Sales—Satisfied customers enable us to Share Profits with you.

A New Tube Free with each 2 tires. These Goodyear, Firestone, Fisk, U.S. and other Standard slightly used tires under our process give wonderful mileage. Customers reorder year after year. **TRY US!**

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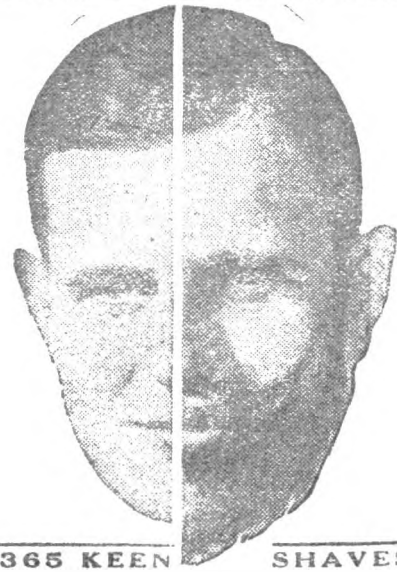
No More Razor Blades To Buy!



365 KEEN SHAVES
A YEAR WITH ONE SINGLE BLADE

"I want to say that KRISS-KROSS Stropper is the best thing I ever saw. I have been using one blade continuously for one year and nine months and have no idea how much longer it will last."
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Inventor Discovers Amazing New Way to Shave! —*Without Buying Blades!*

KEEN, velvety shaves forever; and no more blades to buy! That's what the astonishing invention of a St. Louis man offers the great army of American shavers today.

KRISS-KROSS is destined to revolutionize all existing traditions of shaving. Its performance is so sensational that it seems hardly fair to call it a stropper. Rather it is a super-stropper or blade-rejuvenator. Almost literally it makes a new blade out of an old one every day. No longer do you find that your blades "die" after five or six shaves. KRISS-KROSS "brings 'em to life" a surprising way, week after week and month after month—and endows them with a keenness that they never possessed when brand-new! Actually you can take a blade right out of a fresh package and improve it as much as 100% in eleven seconds with KRISS-KROSS! No wonder experts pronounce it one of the greatest inventions ever patented.

Mystery Razor FREE

Magic Diagonal Stroke

Until you've seen KRISS-KROSS fitted, its sturdy, nickeled smoothness into the palm of your hand and tested its uncanny dexterity yourself, you never know how amazing it really is! It employs the famous diagonal stroke, same as a master barber uses. Never before has anyone captured the secret of reproducing it automatically. Eight "lucky leather grooves" do the trick in 11 seconds with a precision it takes a master barber years to attain.

But that's not all. KRISS-KROSS embodies still another feature that has hitherto baffled mechanical reproduction. It strops from heavy to light. It's absolutely uncanny the way the strokes start with strong pressure and grow lighter and lighter until an adjustable automatic flip flies up and notifies you that your blade is ready—ready with the keenest cutting-edge that steel can take!

Fits All Makes of Blades

KRISS-KROSS produces unbelievable sharpness and prolongs the life of any razor blade for months and even years. Fits all brands and makes except Durham. Eliminates 83% of shaving costs. No more "raking" and scraping with dull blades. No more stinging and smarting that has to be relieved with messy lotions and harsh astringents. KRISS-KROSS solves your blade problem for all time and gives you keen, velvet-smooth shaves forever!

Sensational Offer

And now for my surprising offer. To introduce KRISS-KROSS, I am giving with it Free a new kind of razor. Possesses remarkable features. Instantly adjustable to any shaving position. A flip of the finger makes it (1) T-Shape; (2) straight (old style); (3) or diagonal (new way). Gives a sliding instead of pulling stroke. Simply zips right through the toughest crops of whiskers. Made of rustless metal. Comes with 5 special-process blades and is entirely unlike anything you ever saw before!

Get Free Offer

Send for full information on these surprising new inventions today. KRISS-KROSS products are never sold in stores. You deal direct with me or my authorized representative. Write for illustrated description and full details of free razor offer. It's even more remarkable than I can tell you in this short space. Clip the coupon now. Mail it today.

Agents $30.00 a Day and Up

Make big money with KRISS-KROSS. Giving away FREE razor boosts your profits amazingly. H. King made $68 in one day. N. C. Paige made $104 in 3 days! Others average $250 and up to $750 a month! Spare-time workers, Office and Factory men make $6-$12 extra a day showing KRISS-KROSS to friends and fellow employes. S. Kantola made $54 extra just working evenings 3 weeks. Get details at once. Check bottom of coupon and mail it tonight!

Rhodes Mfg. Co., Dept. S-3293,
1418 Pendleton Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Without obligation, please send me illustrated description and full details of your special introductory offer on KRISS-KROSS super-stropper and FREE 3-way razor.

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Address .....

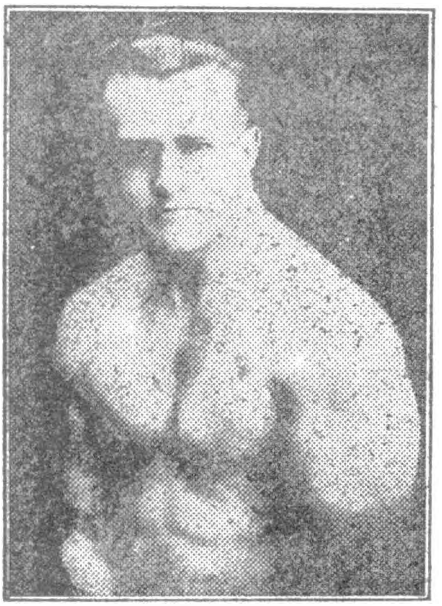
Town ..... State .....

( ) Check here if interested in making money as authorized KRISS-KROSS representative.

Rhodes **KRISS KROSS STROPPER**

RHODES MFG. CO.
Dept. S-3293 1418 Pendleton Ave. St. Louis, Mo.

Largest Manufacturers of Mechanical Strappers in the World



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

Muscles 5¢ apiece!

Wouldn't it be great if we could buy muscles by the bag—take them home and paste them on our shoulders? Then our rich friends with money to buy them sure would be socking us all over the lots.

But they don't come that easy, fellows. If you want muscle you have to work for it. That's the reason why the lazy fellow never can hope to be strong. So if you're lazy and don't want to work—you had better quit right here. This talk was never meant for you.

I Want Live Ones

I've been making big men out of little ones for over fifteen years. I've made pretty near as many strong men as Heinz has made pickles. My system never fails. That's why I guarantee my works to do the trick. That's why they gave me the name of "The Muscle Builder." I have the surest bet that you ever heard of.

What I'm Going to Do

In just 30 days I'm going to increase your arm one full inch. Yes and add two inches to your chest in the same length of time. But that's nothing. I've only started; get this—I'm going to put knobs of muscle on your shoulders like baseballs. I'm going to deepen your chest so that you will double your lung capacity. Each breath you take will flood every crevice of your pulmonary cavity with oxygen. This will load your blood with red corpuscles, shooting life and vitality throughout your entire system. I'm going to give you arms and legs like pillars. I'm going to work on every inner muscle as well, toning up your liver, your heart, etc. You'll have a snap to your step and a flash to your eye. You'll feel the real pep shooting up and down your old backbone. You'll stretch out your big brawny arms and crave for a chance to crush everything before you. You'll just bubble over with vim and animation.

Sounds pretty good, what? You can bet your old ukulele it's good. It's wonderful. And don't forget, fellow—I'm not just promising all this—I guarantee it. Well, let's get busy, I want some action—So do you.

Send for My New Book

"Muscular Development"—It's Free

Take it and read it. It's the peppiest piece of literature you ever flashed your eyes on. And 48 full-page photos of myself and some of my numerous prize-winning pupils. This is the finest collection of strong men ever assembled into one book—Look them over—Doctors, lawyers, merchants, mechanics, and every line of trade you can think of. I swear you'll never let this book get out of your hands again. And just think—you're getting it for nothing. Grab it.

Take your pen or pencil and fill out the coupon—But do it now—before you turn this page.

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Dear Sir:—I lease send me absolutely FREE and without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

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Buy for Less this Easy Way

Sent for $1.00 — NO C. O. D. TO PAY

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Send $1 with order and your choice comes to you prepaid **no C. O. D. on arrival.**

10 Days Free Trial
After examination and 10 days free trial, pay balance in **12** *equal monthly payments.*

A Full Year to Pay
No interest. No extras. **All transaction strictly confidential.** You take no risk—satisfaction absolutely guaranteed or money back.

FREE
New catalog of genuine diamonds; Bulova, Elgin, Waltham, Hamilton, Howard, Illinois watches; fine jewelry. Write for copy now.

CC1 $37.50
Exquisitely hand engraved and pierced 18K Solid White Gold lady's ring. Finest quality, genuine blue white diamond. $3.04 a month.

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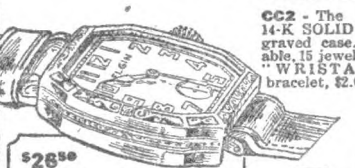
CC2 - The **"Princess Pat"**, 14-K SOLID WHITE GOLD, engraved case. Accurate, dependable, 15 jewel movement. Genuine "WRISTACRAT" flexible bracelet, $2.00 a month.



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CC3-Nationally advertised, **Elgin** or **Waltham**, gentleman's strap watch. Handsomely engraved, Green or White Gold filled case. Warranted 20 years. Radium dial, accurate and dependable. Specially priced, $2.12 a mo.

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Dazzling cluster of 7 perfectly matched, finest quality blue white diamonds, 18K Solid White Gold mounting. $3.96 a month. $48.50

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You need no license or permit to own this 6 shot Automatic. Use for fun or self-defense. Keeps away tramps. Frightens thieves, scares away dogs—a real home protector. Fool your friends. Same as an expensive automatic in construction, finish, appearance, durability; automatic magazine loading and ejection of cartridges, instantly and powerful report. Guaranteed absolutely safe. Send no money. Pay expressman $4.38 for automatic with box cartridges. JENKINS, 621 Broadway, N. Y., Dept. 212-H-11

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Stop Using a Truss

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STUART'S ADHESIF PLAP O-PADS are entirely different from the truss—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic "PLAPAO" applied continuously to the affected parts, and to minimize painful friction and dangerous slipping **No straps, buckles or spring attached. Soft as velvet easy to apply—inexpensive.** For almost a quarter of a century satisfied thousands report success. No delay from work. Process of recovery natural, so no subsequent use for a truss. Awarded Gold Medal, Grand Prix, etc. Trial of "PLAPAO" will be sent to you absolutely FREE. Write your name on coupon and send TODAY.

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"Every 3,000 Miles This Amazing Little Device Buys Me a New Tire...FREE"

"THE money I save on gasoline more than keeps me in new tires. Figure it out . . . I was getting 13 miles per gallon on my Nash. With gas at 18c plus 2c tax it cost me $46 to drive 3,000 miles. Now I'm getting better than 26 miles per gallon. It takes just half the gas and I save $23 to $25 every 3,000 miles—more than the price of a new tire."

No matter what make of car you drive, the Stransky Vaporizer is unconditionally guaranteed to give you 50% to 100% more miles per gallon or it costs you nothing. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon for the Stransky Vaporizer to more than double gasoline mileage!

43.8 Miles Per Gallon

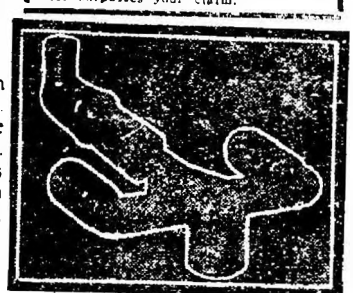
Mr. M. E. Miller, Kansas City, Writes: "You people claim a saving of 25 to 50% of Gasoline. I have quite proved the Vaporizer to a severe and thorough test. After installing one on a Chevrolet, I found I was obtaining 43.8 miles to a gallon whereas formerly I had been getting only 19.5. That is not a saving of 25 to 50% but 124%, so you see that the actual test surpasses your claim."

Note These Records

Forty-three miles per gallon from a Chevrolet, reported by F. S. Carroll. Fifty-seven miles on one gallon in a Ford, reported by J. T. Jackson, Michigan. Forty miles per gallon in a Dodge from Brownsville, Tex., to Tampico, Mex., reported by T. L. Brown.

Proved by Two Million Owners

Records like these are reported in every mail for every make and model car . . . from 72 different countries . . . the world over. More than two million Stransky Vaporizers have been installed.



FITS ANY CAR IN 5 MINUTES

Anyone can install this device in 5 minutes. Simply loosen one connection to the intake manifold with a wrench. You can do the rest with your fingers!

Easily Installed

No bigger than a dollar coin—no more expensive than a good wrench—no more trouble to attach than a fan belt! Attaches to the intake manifold of any car in five minutes. Anyone can do it.

Less Gasoline—More Power

The Vaporizer supercharges your gasoline after it leaves the carburetor. Completely vaporizes the gasoline. Under this ideal condition you get more compression out of less gasoline and a more complete explosion. Both power, pickup and speed are noticeably increased. Starting is not interfered with, as the Vaporizer automatically shuts itself off when the motor is idle.

Make This Test

Test the Stransky Vaporizer on your car—and expect results that will amaze you! Double your mileage—get flashing pickup and power—forget carbon troubles, sluggish motor and fouled spark plugs from over-rich mixture and save enough on your gasoline to more than keep you in tires. These results are guaranteed or the test costs you nothing.

Mail the coupon below for full details, guarantee, and amazing trial offer, which is even more remarkable than we can tell you here. There is no obligation whatever.

$4 an Hour for Salesmen, Agents, and Spare Time Workers

Men are making wonderful earnings showing the Stransky Vaporizer to car owners in spare time and full time. Sells fast under our guarantee. Foster made $357 in two weeks. G. E. Fuller earned $114 in 5 days. Eberlein sold 23 Vaporizers in 35 minutes! J. W. Cronk actually earned $51 in an hour. You should be able to earn at least $3 every hour you put in. We offer demonstrators one Vaporizer FREE, under our unusual offer. Get full details. Simply mail coupon at once.

J. A. STRANSKY MFG. CO.
P-2000 Stransky Block, Pukwana, So. Dakota

J. A. Stransky Mfg. Co., P-2000 Stransky Block, Pukwana, So. Dakota.

Without obligation send me full details of your free trial offer.

Name .....

Address .....

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

( ) Check here for Distributor's Sample Offer and the selling plan.

30 Selections

$11.25 worth of high grade 75c records included in this offer. 30 selections—15 double face records. Made by the *new electric process;* more life like, more volume, less surface noise. Play longer. Very latest popular songs, dance music, band and instrumental pieces. Read our wonderful offer.

with this

Portable Phonograph

$1.00 down brings it on 30 Days Trial

Folds Like a Suitcase with snap locks and carrying handle. So light and convenient — easily carried wherever you want it.

Plays any standard 10-inch disc record. Plays two ten-in. records with one winding. Weight 17 lbs. Waterproof imitation leather case, with hinged lid. Size 15 x 12 x 8½ in. Records inside of lid are secured so they will not rattle or break. Holds 15 records. Has quiet spring motor, tone arm and reproducer with indestructible diaphragm and wide throat for full sound volume. Outfit includes 15 double face 75c New Electric Process Records—30 selections. Shipping weight packed about 25 lbs.

Order by No. W3126WA—only $1.00 with coupon, $2.50 monthly. Total price, $24.95

Yes, only $1.00 with coupon below brings you this portable phonograph with a special assortment of 15 latest double-face 75c *new electric process* records—30 selections in all. Think of it—$11.25 worth of brand new records included on this sensational offer! Use this wonderful portable as your own. See what a wonderful convenience it is to have a phonograph that you can carry wherever and whenever you want it.

***New* Portable Phonograph**

Light and easy to carry. Ideal for every purpose. Plays all records with wonderful tone and volume. Beautifully covered in red Rayo Alligator genuine DuPont Fabrikoid (absolutely waterproof.) This portable is equipped with many new, exclusive features, including a long air column horn of the newest type, the finest reproducer on the market, a strong pulling, even running motor, double nickeled hardware throughout, self contained album to conveniently carry 15 records.

We guarantee: that you get everything in this phonograph so far as concerns music reproduction that a $250 phonograph can give you, also exact reproducer, exact style of tone arm and the same grade of records. That's why you get, on this wonderful offer, **absolutely the best in music that any phonograph ever gave.**

Send Coupon Now

$2.50 a Month

If within 30 days you decide not to keep the outfit, send it back and we'll refund your $1.00 plus all transportation charges. If you keep it, pay only $2.50 a month until you have paid that sensational price on this special sale—only $24.95.

Free Catalog of home furnishings sent on request with or without order. See coupon.

Think of it, a first class high grade phonograph and 15 latest double face Records (30 selections) a complete outfit, ready to play, only $24.95! Seize this opportunity while it lasts! Send the coupon NOW!

Straus & Schram, Dept. 4728 Chicago

Straus & Schram, Dept. 4728 Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $1. Ship special advertised Puritone Portable Phonograph with 15 Double Face 75c *New Electric Process* records—30 selections. I am to have 30 days free trial. If I keep the outfit, I will pay you $2.50 monthly. If not satisfied, I am to return the phonograph and records within 30 days and you are to refund my dollar and express charges I paid.

Puritone Portable Phonograph and 15 Double Face Records, W3126WA, $24.95.

Name .....

Street, R.F.D. or Box No. .....

Shipping Point .....

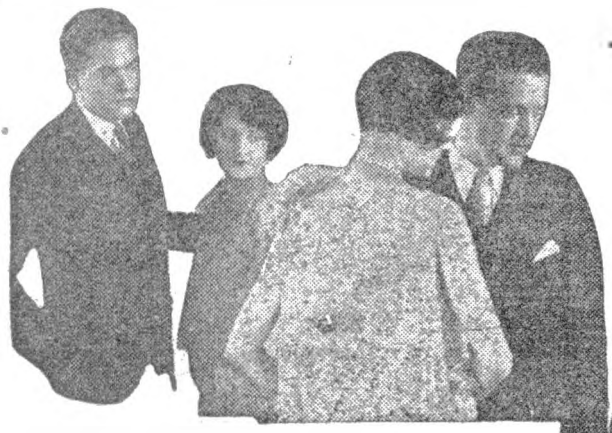
Post Office ..... State .....

Married or Single ..... Nationality or Color .....

If you want only our free catalog of home furnishings, mark X here ☐

"Don't spoil the party"

.. someone called when I sat down at the piano



—a moment later they got the surprise of their lives!

WAS just about to enter the room when I overheard Bill saying, "It'll seem like old times to have Dan with us again!"

"You'd better lock the piano!" came the laughing rejoinder.

"Nonsense! He won't have the nerve to play after what happened the last time!"

"That was a shabby trick. I almost wish we hadn't pulled it. . . .

How well I knew what they were talking about!

At the last party I had attended I had sat down at the piano and in my usual "chopstick" fashion started playing some popular numbers.

Before long, however, I had noticed an unusual stillness. I stopped playing, turned around, and saw—the room was empty!

Instead of entertaining the party, as I had fondly imagined, my halting, stumbling performance had been a nuisance.

Burning with shame and indignation I had determined to turn the tables. At last tonight, the moment had come.

Every one seemed overjoyed to see me again—obviously glad that I had evidently forgiven and forgotten last year's trick.

Suddenly I turned to Bill and said, "Hope you've had the piano tuned, old boy. I feel just in the mood. . . ."

Instantly the friendly atmosphere changed. It was amusing to see the look that spread from face to face. For a moment no one spoke. Then, just as I was sitting down at the piano, some one called:

"For heaven's sake, get away from that piano! Don't spoil the party!"

That was my cue. Instead of replying I struck the first bars of "Sundown." And how! Easily, smoothly, with all the verve and expression I had always longed for!

I Fool My Friends

The guests gasped with amazement. Fascinated, scarcely believing their ears, they drew nearer. When I finished they loudly clamored for more. Time and again, when I would have stopped, they eagerly insisted on "Just one more, please!"

When they finally allowed me to leave the piano I turned around and said:

"Just a moment, folks! I want to thank you for what you did for me last year!"

The eager, laughing faces turned red with embarrassment. One or two of the boys murmured an apology. Seeing their confusion, I continued:

"I mean it! If you hadn't opened my eyes, I'd still be a dub at playing. I went home mighty angry that night, I'll admit. But it taught me a lesson. And believe me, folks, when I think of the real pleasure I get out of playing now, I'm only sorry you didn't pull that trick sooner!"

Before letting me go home that night Bill demanded "How did you do it?"

I laughed. "Why, I just took advantage of a new way to learn music, that's all!"

"What! Didn't you take lessons from a teacher?"

"No! I taught myself! When that trick showed me up last year, I sent to the U. S. School of Music for one of their free demonstration lessons. Well, it proved to be so much easier than I had hoped for, that I sent for the complete course. And believe me, I'm mighty glad I did! There wasn't any expensive private teacher to pay—and since the lessons came by mail, I didn't have to set aside valuable hours to study. I practiced only in my spare time, a few minutes a day. And the course is thorough! Why, almost before I knew it, I could play anything—ballads, rhapsodies, waltzes, jazz!"

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West of the West

By George Gilbert

Author of "Dupe of the Desert," etc.

CHAPTER I.

LIKES 'EM WILD.

"THIS country's too tame," Phil Byers let drop into the smooth course of argument in the Bar BQ bunk house over the respective merits of rim and center-fire saddles.

"How come?" "Cindy" McGlone demanded.

"The X M T is goin' t' take dudes next year."

"Ye-ah?"

"Alfalfa all up and down the valley now. Most outfits asking punchers t' stack hay and carry pliers instead of guns in their belts."

"Well, that's been going on for a long-come-short," Cindy reminded him.

"I know, but it's finally got onto my nerves."

"Supposin' yo' had any."

"It takes nerve t' live in such a clawgone peaceful region."

"I suppose yo'd like t' find some real longhorns, brand in the open, fight rustlers or Injuns, and have yo'r fill of romance?"

"Wow! Yo' go bale yo'r hair for hay," and Phil threw his boot at Cindy,

who dodged it, caught it as it seemed out of reach, threw it at the candle in the bottle on the table, and so stopped the small-ante game. A roar came from the thwarted gamblers, and they divided between the two bunks, lunging at them to find them empty, and their fists only pummeling each other. When they discovered their error, several had black eyes or carmined noses, as the candlelight showed when some one set fire to the stub again.

"No one'd growl much if yo' two did streak it for the wild West that they claim is still west of the West," Mart Francey stated solemnly. "I guess this ranch could run without yo' two, all right."

"It's goin' t' run without me, beginnin' to-morrow," Phil declared casually.

"Me, too," Cindy echoed.

"Say, I was only jokin'," Mart hastened to add.

"Well, I'm not," and Phil yawned before hitting his bunk for a good night's sleep.

"Neither'm I," Cindy seconded, stretching himself beside Phil.

The card game was resumed just where it had been interrupted by the boot. Phil, the long and lanky, and Cindy, the short and slim, fell asleep with that perfection of peace that comes to the outdoor man only.

With the morning, Phil and Cindy did not ride after breakfast. Instead, they began to pack their war bags carefully. Jim Inks, the Bar BQ foreman, noted these preparations with hostile eye. The two were making ready in the open space before the big bunk house.

"I'm askin' my time," Phil stated bluntly.

"So'm I," Cindy echoed.

"So'm I," Jim mimicked Cindy; "every time he barks, yo' growl."

He pulled a little book out of his pocket and began to reckon their time. He stated the amount and they nodded. He scribbled an order on the Arden National Bank for it.

"This'll give yo' the money, boys. So long. Come back any time."

"So long, thanks," Phil replied.

"Me, too," Cindy came in quickly.

Jim strolled away, chewing a straw savagely. These two were good hands, and Jim hated to lose them. But he wouldn't say so. In fact, he had strained a big point by inviting them to come back at any time they elected to return. And they knew it and appreciated the compliment.

The two rode toward Arden with much pleasant jingle. Each had a good trail horse and a fair outfit. The slip of paper would provide them with spending money for a long time, if they kept away from the tiger and kindred animals. Toward noon they made town, cashed in on the order and divided the cash.

"Now, what?" Cindy asked Phil.

"I dunno."

"Sure's funny how a guy'll get all steamed up because he is sick of his job and before he's out of it a day he wishes he had it back."

"I'd almost go back, except that we'd get the laugh."

They strolled about town, reading handbills, eying displays in store windows, speculating on the cost of a big feed at the Cattlemen's Rest. They resisted the blandishments of several cappers for games of chance, and kept their money intact. Their horses were at hitch rails before a store.

"So far this town ain't cost us a cent," Phil told Cindy at mid-afternoon.

"And so far's I'm concerned, it won't."

"How come yo' quit when I did, Cindy?"

"I dunno. Yo' mad?"

"No. We've stuck t'gether quite a spell since we met up at El Paso, when

I got into that JP. with that holdup man in the alley and yo' he'ped me out. For a little man, yo' got nerve, boy."

Cindy did not reply to this direct praise, except to grin. But he became very red of face in his embarrassment and was saved from revealing the full extent of his bashful consternation by the sight of several cows being driven into town.

"Hi, Phil, lookit those wicked longhorns!"

"Sure-'nuff old-timers! I heard my daddy tell about such cows. Those are different from these white-faced Herefords or red cows that we haze around these parts nowadays. By the Brazos, they're sure ornery!"

The longhorned cattle came along, carefully herded by three riders, who pointed them up the street to a small holding pen and got them inside, while Phil and Cindy watched afoot. As the gate closed, Phil asked one of the men what the longhorns were and where they came from.

"We bought them of a man that furnishes rodeo stock; holdin' them for our town rodeo next month. Goin' t' enter?"

"Where did they come from?" Phil asked.

"I don't rightly know. Some old outfit back of the Mokiones, I think."

"Wild country back the'e?"

"Yo' said it, kid."

"Know the name of that outfit?"

"No, but Jermy Porter, over at Navaho, might."

"Thanks."

Phil and Cindy sat atop the high fence of the small corral and watched the longhorned cattle. The men who had driven them in rode away, their task done. The long, sharp horns of the cattle came in for comment, as did the firm hoofs, the long tails with their brush of wiry hair at the end. Their sides were not padded out with fat. They had a certain alert, eager way of glancing about, a way of rolling back their eyes till the white showed, a way of snorting and pawing to raise dust, a way of looking a human right in the eye, without fear, that held the attention of the two young punchers, late of the Bar BQ.

"By the Alamo, Cindy," Phil declared, "it'd take a hoss t' get a man whe'e he could lay a lass rope onto one of them alligators!"

"Yes, and a he-man t' hold one of them after he snared him."

"And if he was tied fast and one of them got a-goin', he'd likely bust his cinches and pull his hull offn his hoss and him along with it."

"Some of those white-faced cattle are pretty ranny, but they wouldn't never be as quick on their footsies as these hellions."

"No, I've heard my daddy tell about cow hunts when he was a boy. They had no fences or corrals. They just went into the bresh down along the coast among the live oaks, with their big moss-beards hangin' down, and they hunted those old longhorns out whe'e they could lass them down and they branded them right whe'e they threw them. A herd of them was as wild as a herd of buffalo. It sure took good he-men t' handle those tough beasts."

"Say, suppose we go hunt up the place they came from. Might be some excitement in such a place."

"By the Alamo, Cindy, I'll go yo'! No one's got any strings onto us. We'll go."

"That fellow said that Porter at Navaho might tell us."

"Sure. Whe'e's this Navaho place?"

"I dunno. We can ask."

"I wonder what's over beyond the Mokiones?"

"Remember that pome——

> "'Way up in the Mokiones,
> A lion picked a yearlin's bones,
> And dreamed soft dreams of veal——'

"Sure I recomember that. Le's see, it goes on——

"'When Hi-chin Bob came ridin' by
And roped him round his meal——'

"Somethin' like that, sure. Yo' didn't get it just right, but it was about like that. Roped him 'round his meal and then the fun began."

"Say, lookit that big longhorn lookin' at us. Hey!"

The big beef suddenly tucked all four feet under him and came hurtling through the air, horns thudding against the fence right under them. The shock threw them over backward, for they leaned, out of balance, in an instinctive attempt to dodge. They hit the earth outside the fence and saw the longhorn trotting across the corral as if battering a fence was only play.

"Those kind come hard," Cindy said admiringly.

"The harder they come, the better we like them, eh?"

"Yo' said a piece then, Phil."

"Well, le's go, away beyond the Mokiones."

"All right."

They walked back to the hitch rack, tucked their horses between their legs and rode. The cappers for the games of chance saw them go with regret, for the advent of the two and their visit to the bank with a due bill on Bar BQ had seemed to promise rich pickings. But now the two were gone. Outside the town they met a man riding in and asked him about Navaho. He told them it was a little mountain town one hundred and fifty miles west, "on this side of the Mokiones."

Now they rode again, humming together an old refrain.

"Phil," Cindy interrupted the song, "I've got a hunch we'll see a lot of country on this *pasear*."

"I wouldn't wonder."

"Yo' know we've got an agreement that we'll keep away from the girls. Neither of us has ever cottoned t' a girl yet, and while we might dance at a *fiesta*, we're never to get tangled for keeps."

"Sure, that goes on this trip, too."

"Time enough t' get married when yo' get old, eh?"

"Sure, I never did admire the way some fellows get treated when they get branded by some good looker. She has him house-broke pretty soon so that he almost asks permission t' draw breath. Me, I want t' kick up my heels a while yet. I suppose we'll all get married some time. Now, the'e was Hank Peters, got that nice girl over on t' San Sebastian. Nice homestead claim, good snug house, a couple of tow-haided kids runnin' around and actin' coltish. She sure treated us dandy when we called on Hank. If I could find a girl like that, I'd not mind so much."

"No, but she was a reg'lar range girl. Instead of wantin' Hank t' work in town or for some big outfit for just wages, she encouraged him t' make a home and stuck with him till he got it goin'. Now, that kind of girl sure is worth while."

"Yo' said a lot that time. By the Alamo! That kind of a girl——"

He waved his hands expressively to show that that kind of a girl had his entire admiration, impossible to express in exact words.

"Sure," Cindy agreed.

Late in the afternoon they came to another little town, where they stocked up with grub to carry them into the mountains to Navaho. Here again they heard about the wild bunch over beyond the Mokiones, things that whetted their appetites for adventure.

"Hard hombres on that range," the old trader told them; "hard men, hard cattle, and salty hosses. Hard range. They wouldn't make a mouthful of a couple of young gab-squirts like yo'-all."

They loafed up through the foothills,

threaded dim canyons, cut over wide mesas, where the gramma rounded out their horses' sides. They crossed glancing silver streams wherein the game little mountain trout came to their crude lures. They came at the end of a lazy, sweet week of idling thus into Navaho, nestling in the lap of the big hills. Here they found Porter, chief trader of the place, a grizzled, grim old fellow who peered at them out from under big, bushy brows when they made known their intention of finding where the old longhorn cattle came from.

"Yo'd have t' learn all over again," he told them. "Yo've been foolin' around those tame white-faced slobs down in the plains country. These cattle beyond the mountings are plumb ornery. More like big elk than anything else. They've got a nook of old-time range in that country—old Spanish grant."

"Who are 'they'?" Phil asked.

"The Rounsell outfit. Brand's R Cross."

"They sell longhorns t' rodeo-stock buyers?"

"Yes, their longhorns are the old-time kind. They keep pretty much t' themselves. Do some tradin' here, the rest away up at some of those towns north of the mountings.

"How do they find a market for their beef stuff?"

"They sell a lot t' minin' towns and contractors workin' big crews on tunnel jobs, in construction camps, and the like. They don't like driving the rail towns, if they can he'p it. Some say they don't sell half what they could; take life easy and let things drift. Funny outfit, all around."

"They ever hire hands?"

"Never heard that they did, and strangers ain't welcome. They've got a trail-drove trace along the aidges of the mountings that they use drivin' their stuff t' the north and west. Rodeo managers send in t' me every so often for some of their rannihan stock, for rodeo use, and I get them word, and they deliver t' me in Navaho. Last bunch they sent in was driven over t' Arden."

"We saw them. Pretty nifty cows, them was."

"They were tame alongside of some I've handled from their range."

"Tame!" Cindy ejaculated.

"Sure."

"By the Alamo!" Phil exploded: "one of them horned the corral fence right under us and we sailed right through the air!"

"That's nothin'," the solemn-visaged trader averred. "I seen one of them cows kill a man by stompin' him t' death."

"By the Alamo!" Phil spoke whisperingly. "Why, who was the man?"

"It was me," the trader said solemnly.

"Yo'll be tellin' a lie, first yo' know," Cindy said seriously.

"I might if I tried."

He gave them directions as to how to traverse the mountain trails till they came out on the other side of the Mokiones.

"There yo'll find the Rounsells, and yo'll last about a week," he warned them. "They're wild and woolly over in that nook of land and hard curry above the knees. Most every night is their night t' howl. Don't start anything with them that yo' cain't finish in a hurry."

So they rode away toward the more distant Mokiones.

"He told it pretty solemn," Phil said.

"Which he sure did. Well, le's roll our tails and see what's on the other side of the hill, like the bear in the old song."

> "The bear went over the mountain,
> T' see what he could see."

"That's it. And I guess if those Rounsells are hard, we won't fade out

none. I'm rememberin' how yo' paid me back for what I did in El Paso when yo' went through with me when those bullies in Arden had me in a corner, Phil."

"Forget that; any fellow'd do that for his bunkie."

CHAPTER II.

BEYOND THE MOKIONES.

THE long-horned bull sulked in the thick growth silent as a bear watching for a chance to charge.

The quick-footed cow horse, on which was the big rocking-chair saddle, eyed that thicket. He was sure the bull was in it. His rider, however thought the bull was in another bunch of thickety growth out on the flat. The sign was all cut up, for many cattle had passed there not long since.

The lithe, strong-limbed, eager girl in the rocking-chair saddle leaned forward and looked at the bunch of scrubs she imagined was the hiding place of the silent bull. The cow pony, on the other hand, kept walling his eyes and trying to back away and turn to the spot where his nose told him the bull was. Another girl rode around the thicket, a short, slight girl with a wealth of tumbled curls all about her head, on which was a much-battered broad-brimmed hat. The strong-limbed, tall girl wore a sunbonnet, tied under her chin with a pink ribbon. Each girl possessed abundant health and spirit, for their eyes danced with the excitement of the chase for the big bull, and their cheeks glowed with the surging tides of life that made them vibrant with inner power and outward strength. Each sat her big saddle as if she were part of the horse, yet each swayed lightly with every movement of her mount.

"Aloise, he isn't in that scrub; look how yo'r pony keeps backin' away," the shorter of the two girls counseled.

"Snubby's got notions," the taller replied.

"No matter if he has, he's got cow sense; that's why 'Long John' makes yo' ride him when we're cow huntin'."

"Shucks; I never yet saw the old bull that we couldn't get!"

"Not if we used a li'le mite of sense."

Snubby tried again to turn around to face the quarter from which he knew the danger would come upon them presently. He was an old, tried cutting horse. That bull had been hostile when he had been first sighted. He hid twice and stole away through thickets that were scattered over the level land, with patches of good grass in between.

"Mercedes," the tall girl said, "I think he's in this bunch."

"I'd pay more attention t' Snubby, if I was yo'."

"He's a fussy-boots, like old Long John——"

There came a roar from the bushy patch behind them; the longhorn emerged, head down, all feet going, tail up. Snubby saw him from his walled-back eyes and decided to do what instinct called for. He bolted. Aloise, taken unawares, was almost thrown. The rope of Mercedes snaked out; she dallied neatly. The bull hit the end of the rope with a lunge. The center-fire cinch parted and the saddle sailed out from under the plucky girl, just as Aloise was thrown. The horses galloped away. The bull turned and came back, bellowing.

Two of the humans he hated were before him, on the ground. The horses that made them his masters were gone!

Mercedes was not stunned. Aloise was. Mercedes leaped before her sister and whipped off her big hat. She waved it. The bull swerved and went by, turning as if on a blanket and coming back like a limited train. The girl faced about and waved her hat again. Again the bull swerved. Mercedes

reached for her gun, but it had been shaken out of its holster by her fall. The bull galloped away, turned and faced the girls again. He gored the earth, roared, cocked up his tail. Aloise moaned a bit. Mercedes set herself for another attempt to turn the bull. She had been lucky so far. The bull had swerved at the strange sight of the hat waved right across his eyes. Now he was coming in to charge home, the plucky girl felt sure. He started.

A pony came quickly around the clump of scrub, a tall, lean, bronzed rider swept a long arm down and got the brush of the bull's tail in his strong hand, wrapping the long hair about his saddle horn. The horse leaped across the bull's rear, taking tail and bull with him. The bull, thus thrown off stride, found himself tangled as to feet and legs and came down like a landslide. The lean, bronzed rider seemed to soar from his horse and landed in the middle of those jerking legs. He whipped a rope around them and the bull was hog tied. It had all occurred in a flash.

The girl with the big hat breathed deep.

Another roar from that other patch of brush. Another bull came charging out!

The lean, bronzed rider whirled to face this new peril.

Another horse came rocketing around the patch of brush; its short, slim rider got his rope going and over the horns of the second bull, and his horse did the right thing. The bull hit the end of the rope like an avalanche, and went down. He was smaller than the first bull. The short rider threw himself into the middle of the struggling bull's legs and feet, to emerge in a flash with his rope end fast. The second bull was hog tied. The two horses of the unexpected cavaliers stood, tied to the ground. The riderless and saddleless horse of Mercedes was running about at some distance; the horse of Aloise had quieted down and was gazing with a rather puzzled expression, as if he were trying to figure out why his rider had parted from him.

The tied bulls groaned and struggled, then fell over on their sides helplessly, accepting the new situation thus thrust upon them.

Aloise recovered and sat up, staring about her dazedly. Mercedes began to laugh and the two cavaliers joined in her laughter, then sobered bashfully.

"Yo' didn't come any too soon, cowboys," Mercedes thanked them, directing the disconcerting battery of her smile against them.

"That's all right; it was just a piece of work, hawg tiein' two bad actors," the tall, lanky puncher replied.

"What happened?" Aloise asked. "I didn't see much after the earth came sailing up and hit me so hard across the face."

"That fall plumb fazed yo'. I stood off that old bull for a couple of charges, but he came on for fair and just then that tall cowboy comes on the high lope and brush-tails him over. Another bull was in that bunch of scrub and he charges then, but this other, short fellow, ropes him down and they both hawg tie in record time, and that's all."

Aloise gazed at the short, slender puncher admiringly:

"Did that pretty li'le boy rope down and hawg tie a real R Cross longhorn bull?"

"He sure did, Aloise."

"It takes a man t' do that."

"And it sure takes a girl with a man's grit t' stand off a chargin' bull, with nothin' but a battered old steeple-crown hat," the tall puncher said admiringly, gazing at Mercedes.

"Shucks, a Rounsell that cain't do a thing like that would be laughed out of the outfit," the bright-eyed girl replied. She came afoot gracefully, helped her companion up. Aloise brushed her forehead several times with her

strong hand, shook her shoulders, and began to smile:

"I guess the fog is liftin' off my brain."

"I'll catch up those hosses," the tall puncher said.

"I'll get the one that's got the saddle on," the short one declared, and in a flash they were mounted. The two girls watched them go, then glanced at each other and smiled.

"Right handy, those boys, Mercedes!"

"That's it, but strangers."

"Yes, strangers, and strangers are not welcome with the R Cross."

The short rider was coming in, leading the horse of Aloise. She swung into the saddle with scarcely an effort and at once began to fan the horse across the ears with her sunbonnet:

"Buck, Wall-eye, buck! Go it! Yo' showed what yo' could do once. Try it again, double-dast yo'!"

But Wall-eye had other ideas. He had thrown his rider and he was satisfied for that day. Now he submitted to the indignity of having that flappy sunbonnet flicked past his ears, and that without a quiver.

"He's got my sorghum," Mercedes exclaimed. The tall puncher's rope had snared the horse without saddle. At the touch of the noose, he had exchanged all notions of flight and dodging for those of stability and quietness. The fear of rope burn was in him, from colthood days, when he had first felt the snare in the breaking pen. Now he came trotting after the tall puncher's horse submissively.

Examination of the saddle showed it to be whole, except for the cinch. From the tall youth's war bag came what was needed for repairs, and in a few moments the cinch was renewed.

"I guess he's ready t' be sat on, miss," he informed Mercedes. Aloise by now had satisfied herself that Wall-eye's repentance was genuine and had replaced her sunbonnet on her tawny braids. The tall rider swung down and stood beside Mercedes' horse.

"I guess it's about time we made ourselves known," the short puncher spoke up. "I'm Cindy McGlone, and my pard's name is Phil Byers. We came from over beyond Arden and we're lookin' for R Cross."

"Arden!"

The girls were wide-eyed.

"Away over east of the Mokiones?" Aloise asked.

"Sure."

"We've often wanted t' know what was on the other side of those big mountains. What did yo' come over this way for?"

"We heard th'e was a he-man outfit in this part that ran old-time longhorn cattle, had salty hosses, and—and——" The operator stopped, for his friend had kicked his shin pretty savagely.

"And I suppose yo' heard that the girls on the R Cross range ran wild, too, and dressed like heathen. I'm sure we do, almost," Mercedes stormed. "I've got on this big old steeple-crown hat, and Aloise has that old sunbonnet, and we've got on jeans, like boys. I suppose wild girls go with wild cattle and hosses and men!" Her cheeks were blazing with anger and some deeper emotion. She sprang into the saddle and lifted her horse into the high lope like a flash and was off. Aloise cut Wall-eye and he, too, started. As he did so, she turned in the saddle and sent this phrase back at Cindy McGlone:

"Thanks, cowboy; yo've got some salty way about yo' yo'self!"

And then they were gone, dashing from sight amidst the scrubby growth, threading a way evidently well known over the dispersed bits of grassland.

The two wanderers looked at each other and began to laugh.

"Say, Cindy, that big one sure picked yo' out!"

"I didn't see that li'le pretty one looking at any one but yo'."

Just then one of the bulls tried to get up. The hog ties kept him from bunching his feet under him. He rolled over onto his side again with a moan of deepest disgust.

"His groanin' reminds me that we cain't leave two perfectly good beef critters tied up on the open range this a way," Phil said.

"No, and my guess is that when they get up, they'll charge everything in sight."

"I wonder what those girls had in mind about 'em?"

"Goin' t' drive them some place."

"That's a bright idea. Any one might think they was goin' t' tie ribbons on their ho'ns and use them for hatracks."

"That sassy remark don't get us anywhe're, Phil. I'll tell yo' what, pardner. We'll untie them and haze them along the way those girls went."

"If we can. That big fellow looks like a bull-ring candidate."

They got their horses ready for an emergency mount. Each darted in, flipped the hog tie off the bulls, and leaped for his horse. They were astride before the astounded bulls knew what had happened. But the latter came to their feet with all hoofs moving. They each picked out a horse and started. But they were stiff from being tied, tired from the struggle and shock of being tied up thus and, moreover, a bit shy of the two men who had treated them so roughly. The agile cow ponies ducked them and made them seem like lumbering Herefords. Cindy and Phil began to make fun of the bulls.

"Why, these ain't any worse than the white faces we always worked!"

"Sure, they're easy! And did yo' hear what that girl said? She had often wondered what was on the other side of the Mokiones. That's what sent us over onto this side, from that other side, wonderin' about it. But I guess we'd found as much excitement following rodeos back East as we will on this side of the Mokiones."

By now the bulls were quieted down. They submitted to be hazed.

"Well, lookit that; let us drive them, just like heavy beef high-graders back on the plains!"

"Sure's yo're a foot high. Those girls went right out this way."

They read the sign of the two horses side by side, and followed it. The sign soon merged with a cattle trace, and that with a larger one.

"Gettin' near the home grounds; those traces show whe're the bands close by come in t' drink," Cindy said sagely.

"By the Alamo, yo're wise!" Phil joked.

"Lookit how the land rolls down toward that flat! And along this bench is the ranch headquarters, I'll bet."

They turned the two bulls along the bench. Far out beyond, a huddle of buildings could be seen on the shoulder of the bench, overlooking the broad flatlands. Dots moved about on the green—cattle grazing. They saw bunches of cattle closer at hand, and once a wild-looking mare led a *manada* of younger horses across their path. They were big, tough-muscled youngsters, walling their eyes and snorting as they passed far ahead of the two riders. Each head of stock the newcomers saw had, on the right shoulder, the mark "R Cross."

They came very close to a bunch of cattle and then they noted how big and strong they were. The sweep of their horns amazed the two young punchers, the depth of chest and the clear, glancing eyes of the animals held a peculiar fascination for the young riders. The cattle looked at them fearlessly.

"How come we bested these two so easily?" Cindy asked.

"I don't rightly savvy in on this. Those longhorns out beyond sure look

like mastodons, compared with these two."

Suddenly, the range cattle bellowed, high-tailed, pivoted away, and began to run. They ran like deer.

"By the Alamo!" was all Phil was able to jerk out.

"We'd have hard work t' lay a snare onto one of them," Cindy said. They gazed at the bolting animals in pure astonishment. The longhorns turned on a knoll top and faced them again and snorted, their combined snort coming down the wind like the puff of a steam engine.

"They savvied we're strangers, entire," Cindy said.

The two longhorn bulls now showed signs of joining their companions. They had been displaying more spirit of late. They bolted, tails up, mouths open to emit loud bawls. Cindy and Phil sent their ponies after them and soon headed them.

"These must be a different breed from those old mossy horns. Lookit how they gaze back and act like they'd admire t' stampede into us."

"By the Alamo, they're sure rammy!"

The two bulls trotted along docilely enough. The bunch of hostile cattle drifted over the knoll and was gone from sight.

"I'll bet the boss of this outfit will be glad when we drive these longhorns in for him."

"By the Alamo, I hope so. I'm pretty hollow inside and we've used up all our grub. It sure was a long *pasear* through those Mokiones."

"Sure was, and how people did look at us when we asked the way t' this R Cross outfit."

"I guess folks look on it as a pretty wolfy place."

Now they came to the buildings, a dozen of them, strewn along a bench, as the fancy of successive builders had decreed. There were several small corrals. The gate of one was open. They hazed the two longhorn bulls into that, shut the gate, and set the catch in place. Then they turned toward the houses. They picked out the largest house of all, made of stone, chinked up with a white mortar that they knew had been made by burning out native limestone. The door of this opened, and a man appeared whose head almost touched the lintel and whose shoulders filled the doorway. He said crisply: "Light down, strangers!" They swung down, hung up their guns on their saddle horns, and gave him:

"Howdy!"

"Howdy! Yo' drive those bulls in?"

"Sure," and they waited for praise.

"That was neighborly. The girls told me how yo' tied them. Those girls ain't really got their stren'th yet. That old big bull is elected for home beef, and that small one is a runt. We don't let old weaklings cumber our range, nor yet runts of young ones."

He stroked his bushy black beard, which was tinged with gray.

"I take it, then, that those two bulls we drove in are not up t' regular R Cross standards?" Phil asked.

"They're small pertaters around this outfit. That big one was a herd master, but the young bull of his bunch drove him out and he's been sulling in the bresh for months and we've let him go, because he's been puttin' on fat that'll make him good eating, when we beef him. That li'le runt with him was drove out of that bunch, too, and we had him marked t' eat, later. I told the girls they could drive them in today and they went, for a lark."

Phil and Cindy began to feel small enough in the eyes of this big, bull-voiced man. They tried to estimate the kind of horse he would need to carry him for a full day's work with hard-as-nails cattle.

"It'll sure be a joke on those girls that they had t' have he'p t' get away from two cull bulls," continued the big

man, and now he was laughing. "We Rounsells expect our girls t' do better'n that! Wait till Eckers Rounsell hears that Mercedes was bested by an old bull and had her saddle yanked out from under her! And wait till Mosley Rounsell hears that Aloise got bucked off that fat-sided old cow hoss she rode t'-day! It sure will be a joke on them, and the boys won't be slow in makin' fun of them."

Now he glanced full at each of the newcomers in turn and pointed out a round trap for horses where they were to put their steeds. First he indicated a peg just inside the door, where they hung up their guns, going then to the corral to put the horses out. Near the corral gate was a small shed for harness and saddlery, where they put their equipment. Then they walked to the big house. The big man was in the doorway again. They introduced themselves, and he smiled broadly:

"Came clear over the Mokiones t' see what yo' could see, eh? Well, it may not be much, at that. We don't hire every man that comes, either. A few drift in, but we feed them and let them drift farther. We Rounsells are pretty much a law unto ourse'ves."

Phil and Cindy glanced at each other at this veiled hostility.

"That Bar BQ outfit is a plains outfit. They're all runnin' white-faced tame cattle now out that way. We've kept the old line-back dun breed. Yo'll find reds, too, in our bunches, the get of old Sonora red bulls. We like cattle and hosses full-lived, full-sized, and salty, and men the same. Outsiders that drift in are mostly a weakly lot that didn't fit in somewhe'e else and had t' drift. I guess the girls have got on a snack for yo'-all by now, by the way the tinware's rattlin'."

They went into the big stone house. Tin plates and cups were set out on bare hewn boards on a big set of trestles. A stone fireplace was in the rear of the room, and piles of furs and blankets in corners. The two girls came in, with platters of food and coffee that gave out a delicious aroma.

"Sit t' it and eat like yo' meant it," the big man invited. "I'll take a snack myse'f, too."

They ate with the direct earnestness that comes from long hours in the saddle. This did not seem to offend the girls, who waited, in the doorway leading to the kitchen, for orders.

"I guess we got enough," the big man said crisply, and they vanished, sober-faced. Aloise called back:

"If yo'-all want anything more, make a noise, Uncle John."

"I reckon I don't need no invite t' tell me how t' get grub in my house," he rasped back.

Then he held his head up, as when one listens keenly:

"Riders comin' in; I expect it's the boys. Mosley and Eckers will sure laugh at Aloise and Mercedes because two cull bulls ran a blazer onto them out in the bresh."

In a moment the door space was filled with form after form, as big men filed into the room and began to sniff and make remarks about eating.

Phil and Cindy found themselves the center of attention from a dozen big-shouldered, tall, powerful men who gazed at them inquiringly.

"Two youngsters, ridin' through," Long John said.

"Oh," contemptuously jerked out the biggest of the lot: "two driftin' kids, eh?"

"That's it, Eckers," Long John replied.

"How did yo' get in he'e?" another big fellow asked.

"They rambled in, Mose." Long John said.

Something hostile flashed from each of these big men to the two visitors. Each Rounsell turned his head to the doorway.

The two girls were peering around the corner, wide-eyed.

"Git back into the kitchen and cook," Long John ordered, and they disappeared. Long John at once turned his attention to Phil and Cindy:

"How did yo' two come through the mountings? Any one give yo' a tip on the trail t' R Cross? The boys have a right t' know."

"We asked some questions in Navaho," Phil replied.

"Few folks come from that side, so we don't generally reckon much on it. We drive mostly this side of the High Country and find out markets for ourselves. It's all wild this side of the mountings. We know the way t' get beeves on the hoof whe'e they'll bring in cash money. Our kind of beef will travel anywhe'e. Yo' take those overfat, soft-muscled white-face cattle and they'd sure get footsore on the trails we use, but these longhorns can go anywhe'e a fox can. Of course, they don't weigh as much, but take them cow for cow, and they'll deliver more pounds at the end of a long, hard drive than those meaty, fat, pet cattle will. The West was turned into one big cattle range by driving cattle like our old-time longhorns from Mexico t' the Canadian northwest. After the longhorns had broke the way, other cattle came in. We stick t' old ways out in these parts, and like them."

"How's the chances of gettin' jobs here?" Phil asked.

The Rounsells looked at the two newcomers with a sudden increase of interest.

"I thought yo' was just driftin' through," Mose said.

"So did I," Eckers added.

Old Long John gazed fixedly at the two applicants. "We don't want any runt men on R Cross," said he.

"I suppose that's a crack at me," and Cindy scowled.

"Oh, yo're quite a gamecock, youngling," Long John growled. Then he ordered the younger Rounsells to sit down.

"Young gamecocks often get their spurs clipped," Mose said, as he began to eat.

Long John rapped on the rough table with his big knuckles:

"That's enough of that, Mose. These boys have et salt with me and are under our rooftree. It's manners, in such a case, t' be polite. If yo're not, I'll whale some politeness into yo'."

Mose glanced sulkily away. Eckers growled something under his breath, and the other Rounsells shifted uneasily in their seats.

"These two youngsters," Long John went on, "drifted in just in time t' help out Aloise and Mercedes. I sent them down t' get that sullin' bull out of that thicket on Grass Park range. They made a botch of handlin' the old fat fool and some way got set afoot and him charging them. Another bull was hidin' with him, that runty one that got run out of that bunch that waters over on Three Juniper. That runt, he charged them, too, and they both afoot. These lads each downed a bull and hog tied him. The girls came home, tellin' me that the bulls was too much for them. I was about goin' out myse'f t' see what had become of them when these boys drove them in."

"How did yo' throw those bulls?" Eckers demanded.

"I tailed mine down, wrapped his bresh around my ho'n and threw him that a way," Phil said.

"I roped that runt down, and that's all," Cindy jerked out.

This cross-examination was making the two punchers feel chilly toward the whole R Cross bunch. The girls, peering around the corner of the kitchen door again, smiled, then vanished.

"What's yo'r idea in comin' away out in this region for work?" Long John asked.

"We got sick of chasin' white-faced tame cows around," Cindy blurted out; "so we pulled our freight over the Mokiones, looking for this outfit."

"Is that all?" Long John bored into Phil.

"That's all, by the Alamo!"

"Hold on, swearin' like that makes me feel interested."

"How come that?"

"My granddaddy was one of those that fought because he remembered the Alamo."

"Well, Cindy and I had forefather kin in that rokus, too.

"I thought yo' had a certain look in yo'r eyes," said Long John, more kindly of voice and manner now.

"That's all right t' tell about, t' make a point t' get a job," Mosley Rounsell objected.

"Sure," Eckers came in.

"Well, yo' two cockerels objecting that a way makes me make up my mind," Long John decided, banging the table with his big fist. "I'm the cock of this heap and will so remain as long's I can. I'm goin' t' hire these two youngsters. They've got a lot t' learn before they can make real hands in this country. The last outside man we hired quit in a day. He got so tired of chasin' deer-laigged longhorns in the bushy country that he renigged out of it in a hurry."

"Not only that, but he had t' ride real hosses," Eckers put in.

"And stand up t' real men," Mosely added.

"We made hands always," Phil replied crisply.

"Yo' get fifty per month, pasture for yo'r private hosses, ammunition free—and don't be afraid t' use plenty of it," Long John said.

"I'm takin' yo' up," Phil grasped the opportunity firmly.

"Suits us," Cindy decided like a flash.

Long John signed that the discussion was over. The younger Rounsells strolled out-of-doors. Phil and Cindy started after them. Long John went into the kitchen. Aloise and Mercedes came in to clear the littered table. Aloise whispered to Cindy:

"Be careful about Mose and Eckers; they're the leaders of a faction that sometimes run pretty wild around R Cross. They won't stand for anything that looks like favoritism by Long John to a stranger, and Mose gets furious if any man passing through looks at me crosswise."

"Well, a man cain't be blamed if he looks at what's easy on the eyes," Cindy said with a sudden warmth that surprised himself.

"I think that Eckers has the same idea about any man that looks at Mercedes," Phil put in.

Aloise flashed him a glance of understanding and put her forefinger to her lip as a sign for caution.

Going through the kitchen, Long John eased himself out of the rear door and strolled quietly around the stone cabin. He met Mosley and Eckers and the other younger Rounsells there and signed to them to draw aside. Mose and Eckers were scowling.

"Now, what's on yo'r excuse for minds?" he demanded of them.

"We don't like yo'r hirin' these new gamecocks," Mose replied.

"No, we don't," Eckers joined his kinsman, and the others indicated their dislike for Long John's policy by exclamations of agreement with the two leaders of their faction.

"Yo'-all better grow some brains," and Long John winked at them knowingly. "How do we-all know anything about these younglings?"

"Then why do we hire them?" Eckers demanded.

"So we can know something about them."

"I don't rightly get onto that," Mosley said, holding to his point.

"How do we know if they're tellin'

the truth about how they drifted into this region? They may be spies planted onto us for some reason."

"For what reason?" Eckers asked.

"Le's find out. The Blanders may've sent them."

At once the faces of all of them clouded over with hate.

"Yo'r idea is that we ride with them, watch them, and——"

"No, we let them ride t'gether and watch them from a distance. Then, if they meet any one, we see it and we give them all the chance they need t' hang themse'ves on their own ropes."

"Long John, yo've got the biggest savvy, after all," Eckers praised their giant chieftain, and the others slapped Long John on the shoulders as proof of their admiration for his ability to plan for the Rounsell clan.

CHAPTER III.

CHASING WILD ONES.

WITH their minds agitated over other things, but well satisfied as to the inner man, Phil Byers and Cindy McGlone emerged into the early evening before the big stone cabin of the Rounsells. Long John was standing with the group of younger Rounsells that had lately eaten in the big cabin. This fact did not escape the eyes of the two newcomers at R Cross.

"He went out the back way, as if he was going a different way from what they went," Phil said to Cindy out of the corner of his mouth.

Cindy nodded slightly. They continued their stroll toward the group. Long John stopped them as they seemed about to pass with a nod.

"As long's yo' two are hired, I'll lay out yo'r work for yo'."

"Suits us," Phil made haste to reply.

"We like t' earn our salt," Cindy agreed.

"I'm goin' t' test yo'-all out. This is pretty hard cattle range we have. I suppose I'd ought t' put a man with each of yo', t' wise him up on the range, but I'm goin' t' turn yo' two loose together. See that notch in those peaks?" and his long finger pointed to a gap in the big hills to the north.

The two nodded. The weight of many Rounsell eyes were on them.

Long John went on

"That's Mystery Canyon. The end of it makes down onto a pretty bit of park country that we combed for beef two weeks ago. But we think we missed some. We want yo' two t' comb that out for us and fotch in all the heavy, marketable steer stuff yo' find. Let the other stuff alone."

"That sounds good," Phil said.

"Sure," Cindy backed him up.

"Now, we want it all, savvy?"

"All?" Cindy asked.

"Meanin' there'll likely be opposition?" Phil asked.

"That's the north end of our range. B Star comes against us up the'e. We think they sometimes get somethin' of ours."

"Is that why yo' specified ammunition free and use plenty of it?" Phil asked.

"That's it," Rounsell replied somewhat harshly.

"Suits us," and Cindy hitched at his belt.

"I've heard young gamecocks crow before," Mosley Rounsell said bitingly.

"That lets yo' out," Long John commanded.

The younger element became silent before the cold eye of the leader of the wild R Cross clan. Long John gave further instructions to the two:

"Our brand being R Cross and their brand B Star, yo' can see how easy it would be t' make R Cross over t' suit them. Well, we'd like t' know if it's being done."

"If yo' missed some likely young stock they could work the brands over,

and by the next year, after they'd shed off once and the brands got aged up again, it would be hard t' tell that they'd been worked over," Phil remarked. "But how come they've got a brand that fits in with R Cross so easy for workin' over purposes? Have they got the 'B' and the star over each other, connected, like yo'-all have got the R Cross? Easy t' make R Cross into B Star—too easy for comfort, I'd say!"

"Well, we was he'e first. R Cross was a brand when this country was all wild and only the Apaches roamed it. My granddaddy fought them off plenty and we Rounsells grew up in this pocket of country a law unto ourselves. We never gave much thought t' boundaries, either. We own enough of this range t' control the rest, own it as deeded land. But those Blander folks moved over north and they claim down t' the top of Red Mesa, that that canyon makes up onto. Their stuff strays down that canyon, or they claim it does. I'd like for yo' two t' find out about that."

"Why couldn't we go right on over and visit them and find out more about it that a way?" Phil suggested.

"It might be *easy* for yo'-all t' do that," Eckers cut in.

Phil whirled on his heel, his eyes hard as agates:

"Well, if it's easy, why haven't yo' done it before this?"

"I guess yo' ain't thinkin' of the same kind of 'ease' that Eckers is," Mosley hastened to back up his elder brother.

"This is all mirage talk t' me," Phil said.

"Goes over our haids," Cindy added.

"Wouldn't take much t' go over yo'r haid," Mosley said.

"Say, I may be short on inches, but I'll tell you——"

"Ease down a bit," Phil warned.

"Enough of this talk," Long John interrupted. "I think Byers' plan isn't a bad one. Take grub for a few days and go over onto Mystery Range. See what yo' can make out. Look out for those Blander folks, though."

"They picked out a brand that would fit in with yo'r 'R Cross,' but yo' could hardly work their brand over into anything, unless yo' added a letter or symbol, and that would be a daid give-away," Phil said.

"That's just it. They claim they didn't know anything about our brand when they filed their own, that they filed B Star when they first moved in north of Mystery and didn't suspect we was close by. But that doesn't hold good, for we'd been located so long, they must've known about it."

"They a big outfit?" Cindy asked.

"No; two brothers, their father, and a couple of pick-up riders in busy times. They don't run a big herd. They trap winters and don't seem t' have much ambition, except t' live off other people's beef." Rounsell spoke bitterly.

"Why do they call that Mystery Canyon?" Phil asked.

"Old tradition has it that it's got a branch that no white man's ever found yet. Elk herds were trailed into it by my granddaddy, but they disappeared. Cattle have gone into it and have never been found. The Indians hinted that a way was t' be found through the high hills down into the San Blas country, but they'd never tell a white about it."

"Nice route t' drift rustled stock down t' whe'e it could be sold t' town butchers, or hosses that could travel fast and far?"

"Now yo've said what we've said, but never proved."

"We won't want t' take R Cross hosses," Cindy suggested.

"That depends on whether yo' want t' pose as entire strangers or as new hands with us."

"Which would be best?" Phil asked.

"If any of the Blanders see yo' driftin' R Cross stock, they will suspect yo're either workin' for us or rustlin'."

"Why not go as straight R Cross men, new on the range and a bit innocent?" Cindy suggested.

"That might suit. I'll show yo' some hosses that will be yo'rs. When round-up comes we'll give yo' a regular string, if yo' last that long. I think for now yo'd better ride yo'r own hosses on this trip, though."

Long John now gave them more precise directions as to how to get to Mystery Canyon range and the nooks and corners of it where they might expect to find "hid-out" cattle. They agreed to be on their way by early morning. He left them, with directions as to their being given a bunk in the main bunk house of the Rounsell clan. Then the two R Cross recruits were left to their own devices. The young Rounsells remained chilly, and the two went to the bunk house and sat in the doorway. The night had now come and they had looked after their horses, giving each a good rub-down. It had been agreed that they would let their private horses range with the R Cross stock after their return from the Mystery Canyon country.

Phil and Cindy took a stroll.

They had now time to survey the collection of cabins along the bench-land, the corrals, and the sheds on the flats below, and to think over the events of their first day with the longhorn bunch beyond the Mokiones.

"How do yo' like it as far's yo've gone?" Phil asked Cindy.

"Oh, I can stand a lot of this."

"I think they're pretty chilly."

"Naturally."

"How about us bein' fired away off on a trip like they've put us out onto, first throw out of the box?"

"We've got t' study that over, pardner."

"I guess that Mose and Eckers don't feel bad because of our bein' sent away off that a way."

"No, indeedy."

He started to say something more, but Phil signaled that some one was coming. Mosley and Eckers Rounsell came toward them and started to cross the threshold, although they must have known that Phil and Cindy were there.

"Say, what's the idea, sitting in the dark, so a man would stumble over yo'?" Mose demanded, stepping back.

"That's what I'd like t' know." Eckers backed him up.

"Yo' knew we was right on the door-sill. I guess yo're honin' for a rokus," Phil drawled.

"Yo're not callin' us?" Mose demanded.

"No; I've done it, I'm not doin' it. It's all over," Phil said quietly.

The two Rounsells jerked out their guns and swung them over. Phil and Cindy did not stir.

"Well?" Eckers demanded.

"Yo'-all know plenty well that we hung our guns up over Long John's door, inside. We've got no guns," Phil replied, "and we're not goin' t' get any guns till we start on our ride t'-morrow mornin'."

"Playin' safe?" Mose snarled.

"Playin' the part of a white man. I hung up my guns when I came into yo'r camp and so did my pardner. We was raised white."

There was a biting emphasis on this last sentence that cut into the hardened sensibilities of the two bullies of the Rounsell clan. They turned away, muttering. Mose stopped to call back:

"I suppose yo'll be snivelin' t' Long John about this?"

"My idea is that every gent skins his own polecats," Phil replied calmly. "My guns will be on t'-morrow, and I'll be riding outside the limits of the home ranch of R Cross. That's all."

The two went away rapidly.

Cindy chuckled:

"Well, yo' taught him a lesson in manners and grit, pardner."

"I doubt it; that kind don't learn easy or quick."

"They're both alike, but two of us could teach them a few."

They clasped hands and then withdrew into the bunk house, to find the bunk assigned to them jointly. It was just inside the door. They were soon asleep. Later young Rounsell came in and the two newcomers were awakened by their horse-play, but no one started any rough work on Phil and Cindy. This might have come either from a desire to let the new men rest, or from a chilly feeling against them, putting them on the outside of the Rounsell wall of welcome. But, finally, the bunk house quieted down, and the two slept, to awaken at the sound of a musical triangle playing "I Can't Get 'Em Up, I Can't Get 'Em Up!"

Phil and Cindy were let severely alone during the morning meal, which was eaten in the big stone cabin. They did not see the girls. The meal was cooked and served by older women, relatives of Long John and mothers of some of the younger Rounsell riders. There were several of these older women in the colony, and a number of young girls, nieces of Long John. Phil and Cindy pieced this out from talk they heard while at breakfast with the R Cross crowd. Long John had had his morning meal much earlier. He waited till Phil and Cindy were ready to start, looked over their equipment and grub, and, last of all, handed them their guns and to each gave a new full box of shells. They had looked well to their saddle guns before starting to make sure they were in good order. Their sixes had been cleaned early the day before and were in working condition.

So they stood, ready to mount, the young Rounsells watching them jealously, for they resented these newcomers being taken into favor by Long John. Aloise and Mercedes came out just then, and the two swung afork and raised their hats in salute to the girls, who waved their hands to them with a trifle more energy than the occasion warranted.

Suddenly one of the younger girls screamed and pointed.

Out on the path to the north, a thick-bodied rattler was crossing the way, head up, tongue vibrating redly, body laid almost in a straight line. The diamond markings on his skin showed plainly that he was newly over his enforced fast from shedding and now eager for prey or trouble.

"Quick! My haid, yo'r tail," Phil said.

Cindy and Phil swung their guns over like wheels of light; they roared and leaped. The rattler threshed out on the path, his head and tail clipped off as neatly as if with twin shears. As he blew the smoke out of his gun, Phil caught the eye of Mose Rounsell along the back of the blued barrel and held it. Cindy shook out his used shell and put a new one in. They spoke to their horses and rode out without another word. Behind them a hum of talk went up. Cindy spoke to Phil, wheeled his horse, swept over and got the big rattles of the dead snake. He rode back and tossed them to Aloise:

"Yo' might want them for yo'r hatband, miss."

"And she might not," Mose cut in.

The girl shook the rattles playfully. She kept them in her hand while Cindy rode away, left hand on hip, bridle reins held high, body swaying slightly.

"That was mighty good shootin'," Long John remarked, and no one contradicted his judgment.

The two pals rode slowly, for they had a long, hard trip before them, they well knew. Their horses had already been under saddle many days, but, of course, they had been taken good care

of. The punchers had grained their horses in the towns and found good grass for them on the way, and they had had good water and plenty of rest. Altogether, the two horses were above the average in condition, but they would need an easy warm-up, rather than a fast start, to get them limbered up before attempting a high lope. So the two friends rode slowly along the bench and out along a plain trail toward the north. The trail turned at the end of a mile and they were then out of sight of the Rounsell ranch house and winding in and out among clumps of thickety growth, with grassed parks in between.

They had gone on thus slowly for some time and had begun to banter each other on the possibilities of a race between their horses, when Phil signed to Cindy to be watchful, and indicated a rider off to one side, going fast, as if to circle them. Each shook out his belt and held himself ready for trouble. The rider did circle them, and they saw the horse reined up across the way. Phil laughed:

"That's Aloise Rounsell; lookit the sunbonnet."

They now rode forward with confidence. The girl came out to meet them, her face serious. She glanced about nervously:

"I got away without being seen; I want t' talk with yo'-all."

"Nothin' more pleasant," Cindy grinned widely.

"We girls heard yo'-all was sent t' look out for strays this end of Mystery Canyon."

"That's right," Phil replied.

"Yo' may get into a tangle with the Blanders?"

"It may come t' that," Cindy replied.

"I wish—I wish"—and she was twisting her bonnet strings nervously around her slender fingers—"I wish it wouldn't happen."

"You ain't got any truck with those rustlers, have yo'?" Cindy asked with a show of animosity.

"I never had it proved they are rustlers," quickly. "Ossie Blander—well, he's paid me some attention——"

"Oh, that's it?" Cindy asked, his voice a bit harsh now.

"Yes, that's it! A girl here would die before she saw an outsider, unless she spoke t' the Blanders. We don't get many chances t' see strangers."

"Oh, yes," Cindy said, yet his voice was edged with sarcasm.

"I've rode north sometimes and seen Ossie. He's a real handsome boy. I hope yo'-all won't get t' shootin' with him."

She let the twisted bonnet strings fall and looked at them appealingly. Then she went on quietly:

"Ossie's brother, Teke, he's made friends with Mercedes——"

"Oh, he has, eh?" Phil heard himself say sharply.

"Yes; we went t'gether, so we'd chaperon each other, like."

"Oh, sure," and Phil saw that Cindy was grinning.

"No harm in that," Cindy remarked. "All right, Miss Aloise, we won't hurt yo'r pets. If they come after us with all their claws a-goin', we'll pat their backs and rub them between the ears. Get a-goin', yo' Alazan," he said to his horse, and he lifted that astounded equine suddenly into a full lope, that Phil's Sombrio soon equaled. They raised their hats in salute and left the girl sitting there, staring after them as they raised a big dust cloud on the winding trail between the brushy clumps on their way north toward Mystery Canyon.

"I guess that cuts out our work for us, pardner," Cindy laughed at Phil. "No sooner do yo' begin t' smile at one of these girls on R Cross than her male relations get proddy, and she herse'f tells yo' that she's got a lad near by that's got t' be treated polite and easy."

"I don't see's yo've got anything t' brag over; she wants yo' t' treat that Ossie boy real nice, too."

"Calls him Ossie. I wonder if that's because he's known as her *oso,* or bear, as the Mexicans say about a fellow that's a girl's known suitor? Sounds mighty like they was pretty well crushed on each other."

"Might be, Cindy. But we'll be nice t' their pets up on Mystery, unless we find said pets rustling away with R Cross stuff. Then we act according t' range law and the right to take care of those that's in the right."

"Now yo' said a lot, pardner. Well, we're out t' chase wild ones, all right. If that old bull and that runt we downed yesterday are weaklings and small, for R Cross range, I don't know what a real healthy bull, steer, or cow would be. I'll tell yo', I don't like the looks of some of the big ones we've seen so far this morning. They look like chips from the old block t' me."

"Well, these Rounsells seem t've lived through it and become fat and sassy on chasin' these wild ones, and I'm thinkin' we can hold up our end."

"We'll try her out, anyway, pardner. We came huntin' wild life, and it sure looks t' me as if we'd found it. Le's get along t'ward Mystery and see if we cain't solve it."

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

AN ILLINOIS GAME PRESERVE

ONE of the most imposing conservation projects ever undertaken has come to the fore in Illinois, where a program is now under way to set aside a great game preserve. The project will necessitate the issuing of twenty million dollars' worth of bonds to purchase twenty-five hundred acres of land in each of the counties of the State to be set aside as public recreational ground.

It is thought that the bond issue will best be met by annexing the proceeds from the six hundred thousand hunting and fishing licenses that are annually issued in the State. The project has the support of the principal outdoor leagues, the State chamber of commerce, the State federation of labor, and manufacturers' and bankers' associations.

On each of the purchases there will be extensive game and fishing preserves, as well as all kinds of camping and recreational grounds. The prospective domain includes much of the flooded river bottom lands, especially those portions where it is financially impractical to construct retaining levees. These areas are to be used as flood reservoirs. And the rougher uplands, which are to serve as game preserves, are to be reforested.

It is believed that this reforestation on a systematic and wholesale scale will be an important factor in flood control. In fact, bond issue sponsors believe that the reforesting program will place Illinois to the front in a practical effort toward the curbing of turbulent streams.

Horns of Adventure

by Raymond A. Berry

THAT night Jim Price had gone to bed, feeling far more alone than at any previous time in all his life. He was camped far in the arid immensities of the Colorado River bad lands. There were jumbled peaks and deserts of solid rock behind, while before lay a complex labyrinth of nameless canyons and unexpected fragments of the old plateau. And everywhere there was stillness—a dead, spirit-numbing silence that seemed to have endured since the beginning of time.

Then there was the matter of his quest. Surely he had been made to swallow Dan Error's tale of a longhorn bull here in the southern Utah wilderness. Even the old trapper's speculations as to how it got there were fantastically bizarre. A herd founded by cattle strayed from an adventuresome follower of Brigham Young, intent on pushing the Mormon colonies far to the south. Error maintained that it could have come that way. Undoubtedly, some of the Texas cattle found their way into the Utah settlement. Or again, he suggested animals accompanying early Spanish explorers as the foundation stock, saying that perhaps rusted armor still lay upon some unknown mesa, now made inaccessible by later inroads of erosion and flood water.

Either explanation seemed highly improbable when one stopped to reason, but one never did reason on the rare occasions when Dan Error broke his habitual silence and talked. Sullen rivers, wild gorges, and primeval solitudes materialized before the mental vision of the rapt listener. To Price he had described a magnificent, longhorn bull, one with strawberry-red sides and a white line down its backbone, that was absolute monarch of its secluded range. More than that, he had drawn a crude, but accurate, map to lead Price to its haunts.

That picture, together with an advertisement in the paper, was responsible for Price's trip. The advertisement was run by J. H. Durrant, millionaire dude rancher of Colorado, and offered

five thousand dollars for such a beast as Error had described. It was Durrant's ambition to start a genuine longhorn herd for show purposes and to help preserve the breed from extinction. So far he had found females only, for while the longhorn cows bred to pure-bred bulls of other breeds produced good offspring, the scrub longhorn bulls were hunted down and shot without mercy.

So now, with no indication of a suitable male in the length and breadth of the Texas mesquite jungles, Dan Error claimed to know of one here. Well, one thing was certain—so far, Error's map had been absolutely correct. Hell's Millrace, Paint Rocks, Castle Butte, Stinking Springs, and the Fleshpots—he had found them all just as Error had described them. Consoling himself with this thought, Price went to sleep.

It was a sudden medley of sounds that wakened him from his dreams. Startled, he drew himself up on one elbow and peered into the moon-etched night. There it was again—the agonized bawling of what he would have sworn was a calf. Mixed with this came the deeper rumbling bellow which could come only from a bull, and high above this last could be heard the ear-piercing scream of a cougar. As Price's hand groped for his gun, he caught the sound of heavy bodies crashing through the brush. In another instant he beheld three cows, two of them with calves at their sides, running through a small clearing. To say they ran was putting it mildly—rather they skimmed across it with all the speed and grace of startled deer.

"Longhorns!" he whispered. "Just as sure as God made little apples. And look at their legs and rangy bodies!"

The cows vanished like ghosts in the brush again, while the spine-chilling racket of that other duel grew louder. The screams of the infuriated cat and the hoarse, angry rumbles of the maddened bull echoed through the narrow canyon until the whole place seemed full of struggling furies. Branches cracked, trees shook, rocks rattled, and then came the wildest sight that ever Price had witnessed. Out of the cottonwoods burst a large, clean-limbed bull, every line of his body suggesting tremendous, yet symmetric power. His tail stood out straight behind, the tuft of hair upon its end writhing like a snake's head. The breath from its distended nostrils made an audible hiss that carried across to Price. He could even see the play of bulging muscles beneath the animal's hide.

But most terrifying of all was the great, night-blackened bulk of a cougar, crouched far forward on its antagonist's shoulders. The cruel claws of its hind feet sunk deep in the bull's sides as the front paws of the squatting beast clawed dripping slashes down the bull's neck or reached with lightninglike flashes for his nose.

What a mount and what a rider! It was fiendish, yet magnificent. In the wonder of being permitted to witness such a drama of the wilds, Price momentarily forgot that the monster cat was threatening his chance of returning to civilization with the coveted lineback. He had just snapped out of his hypnotic absorption and lifted his rifle when the bull, which was dashing madly to and fro, suddenly charged under the low, outthrust branch of a dead cedar at the canyon's edge. The lineback shot forward with amazing speed and the dead limb crashed against the cougar's body tearing it, half stunned, from the bull's back.

Instantly, with a triumphant bellow, the longhorn halted and, pivoting, rushed the recovering cat. Price saw the sheen of moonlight along the smooth, stiletto-points of horns, heard a fear-sharpened scream of rage from the cougar, and then the bull struck

his enemy a blow that rolled it a dozen feet. With amazing speed, he followed up his advantage and gored the crippled cat again and again, regardless of the wounds inflicted by the swift thrusts of the creature's raking claws. In a medley of blood-curdling noises, the fight went on to the finish, when there was nothing left of the cougar but a trampled, almost unrecognizable mass of crushed flesh and bone.

Price had watched the conflict spellbound, with all his sympathies going to the longhorn. Now he gave vent to his excitement in a shout of approval.

"Bully for you, old top! You got him!"

With a surprised snort, ending in the rumble of a new challenge, the bull whirled and charged toward the sound. In a flash, Price realized the ticklish situation in which his impetuousness had placed him. He might have shot the animal, but that was unthinkable. To capture the creature alive was what he wanted. Grabbing up a lariat lying at the foot of his blankets, he bolted for the safety of some huge boulders; perhaps, once perched upon their top, he might manage to lasso the beast. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that the space between him and the longhorn was narrowing with disturbing swiftness. Fear lent new wings to his feet, yet the bull ate up his lead with increasing speed.

Price heard his foot click against a horn tip and felt the animal's hot breath. With a cry, he flung himself sideways. And he did so, he tripped upon the end of the lariat and nearly fell. While he staggered to regain his footing, the bull whirled, and, with a bellow of triumph, rushed again. Price felt the massive forehead strike him fairly in the middle of the back and dash him toward a tree. In the split second before his head hit the trunk he heard, or thought he heard, a shout, followed by the roar of a gun. After that came the crash, with a sickening blaze of fire gushing through his brain, ended by a dropping curtain of black oblivion.

He regained consciousness to find a ruddy-lipped, cinnamon-bearded man bending over him. There was a world of friendly solicitude in the grizzled face which wrinkled into a smile when he saw Price move.

"Dan Error!" Price ejaculated feebly.

"Don't look so pop-eyed," the bearded giant rumbled. "Probably you think you're at the pearly gates and I'm runnin' a shift for St. Peter, but such is not the case. Instead, you're right here in the canyon country, a livin' proof that the Lord looks out for fools as well as drunks. Why, drat your hide, Jim, you know better than to go taking liberties with a longhorn bull. There's thousands o' times for you to make all the noise you like without choosing the exact minute when he's seein' plumb red."

Jim sat up. "Guess I'm all here," he remarked.

"You are, but it's havin' a thick skull that saved you. And that wouldn't have done it alone if I hadn't been ready with my gun."

Jim glanced wildly about. "Did you shoot that fellow?"

Error chuckled. "Don't git lathered up, Jim. Nope, I didn't shoot him. I jest let go right clost to his head where he could hear the lead whistle and whiff the powder smoke. I reckon if it had been anybody but you, I'd have let the bull have his way, for I swore two years back, when I first found my way in here, never to shoot a gun among these varmints. It's one of the last places in the world where creatures don't know nothin' concernin' the cussedness o' man. I wouldn't have told you that day, for just that reason, only I was drunk an' couldn't keep from shootin' off."

Price laughed and felt his head. "Anyhow, all's swell that ends swell," he misquoted, "and I'm everlastingly glad that you showed up, whiskers and all. I've been wondering ever since I started on this jaunt why you didn't try catching the old fellow yourself, when you knew so much more about the place than I did."

"I thought of it," the older man answered, "but it's really a day's work for a younger man than me. I've got some money banked as it is, an' I felt that such lively escapades weren't for men at my time o' life. If you hadn't been followed, I wouldn't have come. Talked to the feller camped down the stream?" he asked.

Price looked surprised. "Didn't know there was any one."

Error grunted his disdain. "Don't you ever back-trail to see if you're followed? Didn't I tell you when I give you the map of this place that I didn't want everybody and their dogs in here? I suppose you had a brass band out when you left the settlements an' told them you was after a strawberry-colored, line-back, longhorn bull for which you could git five thousand dollars! That wouldn't be givin' anything away, would it? Not so long as you didn't take the county sheriff and commissioners along to act as trail guests."

Price flushed. "You don't need to be so all-fired sarcastic. I came out without breathing a word to any one."

The trapper ran brown fingers through his tangled beard. "I don't doubt it, boy, but at that you could have overdid secrecy and made your very stillness look suspicious. Anyhow, you're followed by 'Bead' Lawson."

"Bead Lawson!" Price repeated. "He didn't know where I was going."

"Mebbe not," Error replied dryly, "but he sure intends to find out. He's been just three or four miles behind you now for several days. I know by findin' yours and his camp ashes. Also he's travelin' mighty light. No sign o' pack asses at all. It looks to me like the cutthroat figgered that plenty o' ammunition was all he'd be needin', an' that when he came out o' here, he'd be possessor o' a good pack train."

"Meaning, he intended to kill me?"

"You know his reputation," Error answered. "Now, let's break camp and travel. Wouldn't wonder finding me along would prove a real surprise to the lizard."

"I want the bull," Price answered stubbornly.

"Sure," came the calm reply, "but you needn't expect him to wait here for you. He'll be two days' march ahead by night—not so far as the crow flies, but a long way, as we'll have to twist and turn. And another thing, keepin' pack asses from now on is goin' to be a two-man job. Mebbe more. Nature's out o' balance this year, an' the cougars is far thicker than deer. They're hungry. The rocks ahead are alive with them, hunting day and night. That fellow attacking a bunch o' cows with a bull along shows how keen they are for meat."

"How do you know it's Lawson that's following me? Did you see him?"

"Nope. 'Twan't necessary. Knowin' the critter well, I understand his signs. The kind o' coal bed he leaves, for one thing. Never bigger than your two hands. His fires are sort of like a bird's nest. You can never see them till he's stopped usin' 'em an' moved on. Another way I told was by the marks of where he had strung a hair rope about his blankets to keep snakes out. Bead was always superstitious. An' if that ain't enough, in the holes along the creek where he'd been after fish, I counted the heads of nine good-sized ones in one place. Nobody but Bead could eat that many fish. He likes 'em better than a cat."

"Do you think he knows what I'm after?"

"Reckon so. Seems to me I remember seein' him close by while I was talkin' to you that day. Didn't you turn round and find him kinda in the act o' saunterin' by when I was startin' to draw up that map over by the courthouse?"

"That's right. He was," agreed Price. "Listening in, probably."

"Sure. And it wouldn't take only a few minutes for him to get next if he happened to see Durram's ad in the paper. He could put the two together and be sure you was after a longhorn. He wouldn't have money for a pack outfit, an' besides he's too much Indian to need one. Likely he figgered on your supplies furnishing any extras. Jim, we've got to watch like a chicken watches a hawk, or he'll cause trouble. He'd not stop short of anything with several thousand at stake."

Two days later came a disastrous accident. They were making what seemed an easy ford of a small but swift stream. The rifles were both tied on the same burro. It had seemed foolish to carry them all day long when they could be reached at a minute's notice and they both had revolvers.

Then, in the very middle of the crossing, directly above a rapids, the burro appeared deliberately to lie down. Once off his feet, with the current dashing against her body, the pack animal was swept downstream in a smother of foaming water. Helpless, they watched the animal battered on rock after rock as it shot into the dark funnel of cliffs, knowing that there was not a chance in the world of recovering any of the supplies.

Error looked at Price in amazement, tinctured with worry. "I don't like it," he declared. "That pack ass acted as though she wanted to die. Animal's 'pear to get that way sometimes, an' it's been my experience that there's trouble ahead when a dumb critter deliberately commits suicide."

"Rats!" scoffed Price. "Don't be superstitious."

Error frowned. "I'm justified in bein' pessimistic. If Bead Lawson, hungry cougars, no rifles, and a wild bull to catch, won't make a man so, nothin' would. I tell you, that pack sensed misery ahead, and lots of it."

Price smiled quizzically. "Think we'd better go back?"

Error snorted. "No. I ain't the turnin'-back kind. We'll git your tarnation bull in spite of heck an' high water. Come on! We have to find a suitable campin' place before dark."

As though in confirmation of Error's fears, a bullet spattered on a rock between the two men, followed instantly by the report among the crags above. At their startled jumps two more shots buzzed angrily past. Instantly, Error and Price sought the protection of rocks, while the unseen rifleman continued to rake their hiding place with his bullets.

"Don't like it," mumbled Error; "it's too much like shadow boxing with a ghost on a dark night. You can't ever locate the fellow. Right now he's somewhere in front of that bluish cliff where his rifle smoke don't show. Man, wouldn't I like to lay hands on him!"

Staring upward, Price saw, or thought he saw, a faint movement in a small clump of squad brush. It was a long shot for a revolver, nevertheless, he emptied his gun at it. To his amazement, a man partially rose from behind it, then toppled forward on the rocks, face down.

"By gum, you got the cuss!" shouted Error.

Loading his revolver as he ran, Price hurried up the slope until he was bending over the swarthy-featured Lawson. A small trickle of crimson oozed from the fellow's coarse black hair. The man's eyes were closed and the mouth

was set in an ugly snarl. Price knelt beside him to examine the wound. As he did so, one of Bead's arms shot up and clutched him at the throat, while a knife gleamed in the other. Playing possum! Desperately, Price tore at the fingers gouging into his windpipe, while more by luck than good management, he succeeded in catching the knife hand at the wrist. Failing in his attempt to break the grasp on his windpipe, Price caught the fellow by the hair and banged his head against the stone, once, twice, three times. After that he felt the fingers relax and saw that Bead was now struggling to get away from him. He had resolved to hold the fellow at all cost when the half-breed twisted and sunk his teeth far into the arm of the hand in his hair.

The pain forced Price to let go, and as he did so, Bead's knees shot up, striking him in the stomach. The blow sent him over backward, with every ounce of air driven from his body. When he recovered, Lawson was gone and Error was standing close at hand, swearing till the air was sulphurous.

"If we could only have got him," the trapper mourned. "And to think we lost him after you made such a fine shot. It's enough to drive a man dippy. Why didn't you shoot him again when you got close? Why didn't I run faster myself? Darn it, I feel like an idiot!"

Price was too disgusted to talk.

"Oh, well," fumed Error, "what's did is did, I reckon. One thing certain: From now on we sleep a blamed long ways from our camp fire. I don't relish the thought of havin' my throat cut while I sleep."

That night they saw nothing of Lawson, but in the morning they found that the cougars had killed and half eaten one pack animal. The rest were huddled in a clump of pine, crazy with fear, and looking gaunt with hunger.

"Never ate a thing all night!" Error ejaculated. "Too scared to take a bite. In three or four days they'll all starve at this rate. That is, if the cats don't eat 'em first."

"What we've got to do is to locate the line-back again, and do it quick!" Price replied. "In the meantime we'll have to hide our supplies daytimes and take a chance on what will happen to the burros."

The following day their search was rewarded by locating the bull and two cows upon a long shelf of rock, perhaps a third of the way up the side of a large mesa. A careful investigation of the place convinced them that while the shelf was over a quarter of a mile long, and at one place perhaps twenty rods wide, there was no other means of approaching or leaving it than the one they had used. At this point the shelf narrowed to a strip not over thirty feet wide.

It's the best chance we'll ever get," Price stated positively. "Grass isn't too plentiful, and within a week he and the cows will be starved down so that we can handle them."

"How are we going to keep them from boltin' past?" Error asked. "There ain't nothin' we can use for a stockade. That one pine there is too big for us to work on with nothin' but a small camp ax. An' if we ain't got 'em fenced off by dark, they'll git suspicious an' go through in spite of everything."

"We need building material and need it quick," Price agreed, and looked above him.

"What are you staring at?" Error demanded.

"See anything queer about those dry poles sticking out from the cliff face?" Price queried.

Error looked at the point indicated by Price's hand.

"That does seem funny," he admitted. "Almost like they'd been placed there. Looks like a cliff dwelling, though I ain't never seen any right in this locality. But what of it?"

"There'll be a lot of flat rocks and poles in it. Just what we need."

"How you goin' to get 'em? Fly?"

"Use their stairway," Price grinned. "Can't you see the steps?"

The steps were a series of erosion-worn niches, some of them hardly discernible, that led up the cliff toward the cliff house.

"It's suicide to try it," argued Error. "No sane man would attempt it. I tell you that cliff bulges out in one place."

"We've got to have something to block this gap, haven't we? All right! I'm going to get it. While I'm shucking off my shoes, you slip back and get a couple of sticks of that dynamite, and lots of fuse."

"Now I know you're locoed," Error groaned, as he started down the trail.

An hour later Price was convinced that Error was correct. He had thought he might make the ascent without serious difficulty. Now however he was finding it more than he had bargained on. The cliff did slant out, and the crude hand holds, although notched in to give a grip, even in this position were made by a race of mountaineers more sure of their footing than a goat. In addition, the notches had become partially filled with dirt which it was necessary for Price to scrape out while hanging with one hand. He dared not look below for fear dizziness would overtake him. And if he did make the top, there was still the back trip to be contemplated. Why hadn't he thought of that sooner? Once or twice he felt his hands slipping, and his very marrow froze at the thought of the fall. A seventy-five-foot drop, with dynamite and caps to complete any mutilation left undone by the crash! Once he thought of reaching behind and pulling the sticks from his pocket and dropping them, but, if he did, Error might be blown to atoms. The thought of falling made him light-headed, and he bit his lips to bring back a keener functioning of his brain. Funny how gravity got on top and pulled you when it was in that direction! Keeping his mind definitely fixed on the next above of those inadequate notches, he wormed on till, with a gasp of relief, he pulled himself onto a narrow shelf by the cliff dwelling. It was larger than he had supposed. There were rock and poles in abundance—all that they could use, once it was blasted loose.

Before fixing his charges, he examined the structure and discovered cooking utensils of clay and stone, arrows and spears, together with a mass of fiber rope. Testing this last, he found to his amazement that it was still quite strong. Queer how it had been preserved in this arid air. Letting down a line of this, he motioned for Error to attach the two long ropes still in their possession. Hurriedly, the latter obeyed, and Price hauled them to the top and tied them securely to one of the timbers in the cliff dwelling. The lariats were not long enough to reach the bottom of the cliff by twenty feet. Well, if he had to, he could drop that distance, but not for anything would he attempt going down those steps. Error, seeing his plan, began cutting and piling small boughs and brush beneath the rope's end. Meanwhile, Price attached his caps and fuse and lit the charges. As he swung down the wall, feet braced against the rock to save his hands from being pinched beneath the rope, he realized with a feeling of abject terror that one of the fuses was burning at nearly twice the normal rate. It would go off before he could run any distance.

"Look out!" he shouted to Error. "Run!"

The trapper heard and understood, but he shook his head. He knew that his companion would be hurt or stunned by the drop, and he meant to stay and aid him at any cost. Thrilled at the

exhibition of courage, Price slid to the end of the rope and dropped without hesitation, expecting every moment to see a mass of rock and dust leap out from above. As he lit, sprawled upon the heap of boughs, Error, with white face, jerked him to his feet and yelled "Run!"

Somehow he had come through without broken bones, and, with the trapper yanking him forward, they sped along. Abruptly, Error halted and pressed him tight against the cliff. There was a heavy boom from above and then the air was filled with whizzing pieces of stone and wood. It seemed impossible that they could escape, yet their position, tight against the cliff, proved their salvation. Rock and wood hit everywhere but on them.

At the finish of the bombardment, Error ran a shirt sleeve across his damp brow. "Nobody but a natural-born fool for luck, or his pardner, could git by with that," he ejaculated. After this, I'm ready to believe we can weather anything. See that! Even the stick with the lariat fastened to it came down with the rest. Come on. We'll build a wall that's bull proof."

That night the line-back charged their barricade several times and, while they watched to make certain he did not succeed in getting over, the cougars ate another burro. The same thing was repeated the following night, while on the third the bull gave up, but the cougars ate the last pack animal.

"You know," Error remarked as they went to bed that night, "I'm gettin' uneasy about what's goin' to happen next. The pack asses is exhausted, and these cats is goin' to stalk us if we ain't blamed careful. If we could sleep by a fire, that would keep 'em off, but if we do that, Bead's more'n apt to use a rifle on us. Seems to me we're between the devil an' the deep, blue sea. It'll be a week before the longhorn's wore down so's we can do anything with him, an' I don't want to be cougar feed."

At dawn, Price was awakened by Error's elbow digging into his ribs. Something about the pressure told him that things were not right in camp. Almost reluctant to view the new menace, he opened his eyes and saw the head of a cougar not four feet from his own. He could feel the fetid air of its breathing and see the wrinkles ripple on the savage muzzle as the animal sniffed. The tawny eyes, staring at him hard as agate, sent icy chills chasing down his spine. The beast was so close, Price didn't dare even to grasp his revolver. Steadily he gazed back into the cruel face, feeling as he did so that he was in the throes of nightmare.

Just as Price felt he must yell to break the hypnotic suspense, a twig cracked over in the direction of their last night's fire. With a sudden baring of ugly fangs, followed by a savage snarl, the cougar sprang across their bed and faced them from Error's side, whereupon the trapper shrank back until Price was pushed from beneath the covers. Terror-inspiring threats rumbled from the crouching cat. Then, with a quick movement, it flashed a paw across its muzzle and let out a bloodcurdling *m-e-o-w*. This was repeated, then the long, gray body tensed and the beast prepared to spring.

Price had hold of his gun by now, and, training it upon the cougar, he fired, with the barrel not six inches above Error's head. As he did so, the cat dropped back on its haunches, momentarily stunned, with a long, white slash on the round head showing where the ball had plowed along the creature's skull. With a yell, Error threw back the covers and leaped to his feet, camp ax in hand. The cat partially recovered and sprang, but was met by a hissing edge of steel. The blade bit deep into the cougar's neck and a gush of red spurted along the ax handle.

The trapper glanced at Price, his face hard. "This is what we git for losin' our rifles. If we could shoot a few of these varmints, the rest would clear out, but what chance have we got with these popguns? They're no more help to us than a thermos bottle in Tophet."

"You'd think that Lawson would be shooting some himself."

Error snorted. "That cuss? Not in a lifetime. Nights he'll crawl into some cranny in the rocks where nothing can come at him from behind, an' sleep like a coyote. Out front there'll be a little glim of a fire to keep the cougars off, and then he's as snug as three in a bed. He knows the cats are gittin' our burros an' he's tickled to death. He's enough Indian to like torture, if it's only mental."

The big cat gave a last convulsive kick as the trapper stooped down and wiped his hands upon the tawny hide.

Price laughed a bit shakily. "It's no way to be waked up, I'll tell the world."

"To-night," the trapper stated positively, "we sleep in shifts. I'd rather do it that way than to be woke up in pieces. Why, blamed if the varmints ain't so thick I can smell 'em!"

"To-night I intend to sleep somewhere else," Price replied.

"What do you mean?" Error questioned. "Ain't givin' up the bull, are you?"

"Not so's you'd notice it. But if we leave him penned up much longer on this shelf we'd just as well. Before he's starved down so that we can handle him easily, the cougars will get him."

"Guess you're right at that," Error agreed, "but I'd sooner swap bites with a buzz saw than tussle that fool exterminator to-day."

Price was reaching for the lariats. "I'm starting now before my nerve gets cold."

"Whatcha goin' to do?" the older man demanded. "Just supposin' you're lucky enough to git the feller down. Tie his legs together an' then us pack him home on a pole?"

Price scratched his head. "Don't sound just right, does it? How about taking that baling wire we brought along and making a ring? We can slit his nose and thread it through. Three or four loops will hold him."

"Good idea, only it sounds a little like countin' chickens before they hatch. All right. I'll follow along so as to be able to give folks back in the settlement a word of how it happened."

Price chuckled. "You know blamed well that if I get in a pinch, you'll jump in again just like you did when I was coming down from the cliff dwelling."

"I was too scared to run then," Error lied.

"Think Lawson has given up?" Price asked.

"Might have, but I'm mistrustin' that the noise that made the cougar jump was him tryin' to locate us. Could have been another animal, of course."

"If he's still here, why doesn't he snipe-shoot us from a safe distance?" Price puzzled.

Error shook his head. "No use tryin' to speculate on the workin's of a degenerate half-breed's head. Mebbe he wants us to catch the bull first. Reckon he has some such idea."

"Well, let's quit speculating and go. It's good and cool now in case I have to run for it. Come on and referee the bout."

The line-back, standing beneath a pine, watched their approach with a rumbled challenge. As the two men came still closer, staying in the boulders at the foot of the cliff for safety, the rumble became a roar. One restless front hoof pawed at the thin coating of soil where he stood, while the animal's tail twisted sinuously. As they crept still closer, they could see the long-

horn's glowing eyes and catch a glimpse of his distended nostrils. Now he took a step forward, stopped, pawed more dirt, and, lowering his head with an angry shake, caused the dust to fly as the air spurted from his lungs.

"Want to go back?" asked Error.

"Nope," came the none-too-steady answer, "but, honest, that old devil's got a worse voice than a cougar."

"What's your program now?" Error shouted, trying to make his voice sound above that of the longhorn. "Goin' to put salt on his tail?"

There was no time to answer, for the bull was charging. "Ring around the rosy," chanted Error wildly as he disappeared behind a boulder.

Price side-stepped the charge, and, as the bull passed, tried to lasso him. It was an awkward place to manipulate a loop, and he failed dismally, with the result that in another second he was chased to roost in a runt cedar.

From behind his boulder, Error grinned across at Price. "What's next on the program?" he yelled. "Is it a menu with us the bull's dish?"

Price felt the place where a needle-pointed horn had ripped his clothes and gouged his flesh. He was beginning to be angry.

"Next," he roared back as soon as he could get his breath, "next I'm going to shin down out of here and manipulate in the open."

"If you're thinkin' about a relay race, count me out," Error returned. "Quick twenty-yard dashes, or less, is my long suit."

Price never answered that because, while he perched upon the limb trying to untangle his rope, the bull struck the tree trunk with a force that jarred him loose. As he fell toward the polished horns, he heard a shout of dismay from Error. A confused second compounded of jarred wind, hot breath, hairy body, and wild struggling followed. Then, to his everlasting amazement, Price found himself lying across the line-back's neck, arms locked about the great horns. What a place to be!

He could not even realize his peril fully, for the bull was going through a series of body-jarring gyrations that shook loose every idea, except that he must hang on, from his mind. As he strained to cling to the heaving horns, he dimly felt the wind rushing past him, and, peering through dust-filled eyes, saw the canyon shelf loom nearer. Just as it seemed that they were surely going over, the bull halted short and swung about with a snap that threatened to jerk Price's arms from their sockets. The effort to hold was tremendous. He felt exhaustion beginning to seep from every pore and the breath that sobbed in his throat tasted salty. But he had to hang on. It was that or be stamped to oblivion like the big cat.

From side to side, up and down, the line-back threw him, with what seemed endless energy. Then suddenly the beast began to weaken. Dizzy from his struggles, Price realized that the bull's head was bending sideways, while a white foam bubbled from the broad lips and the breath rattled in the shaggy neck. The massive body was beginning to shake violently and the heavy front legs were starting to buckle.

Tired as he was, Price called upon his worn-out muscles for one last effort, and twisted upon the horns with all his might. The head swung slowly farther to the right, then faster, until, with a bellow of defeat, the bull toppled over.

"Hold him there," he heard Error shout, leaping forward, "while I tie his legs! Jim, you're some bull buster. Any movie company in America would give a hundred thousand to have filmed that scene."

"And I wouldn't do it again for twice that," Price panted. "Hurry up, or he'll walk off on us yet!"

"Not so you'd notice it," Error answered, as he began slipping adroit loops about the longhorn's legs. "Now that'll hold him for——" He broke off abruptly. "Git down, Jim! Git down!"

Error flattened himself upon the ground behind the bull, and Price followed his example. "What's the trouble?" the latter asked.

"Read! Up on the cliff above us, with a gun! Ready to shoot us, now the bull's caught."

Price's gaze followed Error's pointing finger. Sure enough, there on a cliff was the half-breed waiting, rifle in hand.

"Lay low," cautioned Error. "The skunk knows we ain't got no rifles with us. Looks like he was goin' to win the jack pot after all. We can't git so he can't at least wound us, lookin' down from where he is."

"What's that thing behind him?" Price whispered, venturing to peek.

Error did likewise, and his eyes grew large with amazed excitement.

"Man! A big cougar is stalkin' him. Watch, man, watch!"

Price looked again and saw the big cat worm forward, ears flattened against his bullet head, belly against the ground. Unconscious of the menace behind him, the half-breed raised his weapon. Price knew that in all probability he would shoot at him or Error, yet he could not wrest his eyes from that sinister gray form creeping closer and closer. Suddenly, the cougar shot into the air as though released by a tremendous spring. The muscular body struck Lawson fair upon the shoulders, crushing him to earth. For a second the cougar was all destructive energy. His powerful jaws closing upon the back of his quarry's neck cut off any outcry, while working claws were shredding the man's clothing. In another second it was all over, except a blood-chilling pur of content, wafted to their ears by a change in the wind.

The eyes of the two spectators met. "I'd git that wire an' start threadin' this fellow's nose," Error chattered, only I'm sort o' paralyzed with fear. Son, this is no place for human beings."

"There won't be any in another hour," Price answered. "By to-night we'll be a long day's hike from here."

Error glanced again at the terrible figures on the ledge above.

"A long, long ways," he amended fervently.

INDIAN PAGANISM PRESERVED ON RESERVATIONS

PAGAN religion and Christianity, ancient traditions and modern customs, flourishing side by side in the same small section of country, is the somewhat paradoxical story of the Six Nations Indian Reserve at Brantford, Ontario. In this area, people are governed as were their ancestors before history dawned upon the continent.

The tract of land set aside for the reservation—some fifty thousand acres in extent—is near a large industrial city, but this fact has not ousted a strong element of the picturesque from the domain.

The Six Nations Reserve is, for the most part, along the banks of the Grand River. And in this beautiful valley, glorified by Indian history and tradition, the red man still holds sway. He administers his own law and has the same form of tribal government that was in existence among his ancestors for countless centuries back.

It is said that almost a thousand members of the Upper and Lower Cayugas, the Onondagas, and the Seneca tribes still adhere to the religion of their forebears.

Treasure of the North

By A.E. Apple

Author of "The New-timer," etc.

CHAPTER I.

OTHER PEOPLE'S GOLD.

TIMBER wolves were howling quite close to the cabin. The sounds were melancholy and blood-curdling in the extreme—but not to Terry, alone in his home of hewn cedar logs.

For Terry owned the wolves.

His business, at present, was the breeding of wolves, raising them to sell their pelts to the Ontario government, which offered forty dollars per skin bounty.

With five to eight whelps in a litter, the wolf industry appealed to Terry mightily. If all went well, he expected soon to work up a highly profitable traffic.

There was, of course, the fact that the authorities would object mightily if they learned the truth about this beautiful graft. That was why Terry had selected such an isolated location for his fur farm. He had no neighbor closer than eight miles.

Quite proud of his ingenuity was Terry. As crooked as a corkscrew, he derived far more satisfaction from his vocation than if he had been engaged in the growing of fox furs for market.

He treated himself to a drink of Scotch whisky, taking it neat, without any water or other chaser. He did not choke, nor even cough, for his gullet was as leathery as his conscience.

Then he went to the door, opened it, and stood on the threshold, gazing out into a night gorgeous beyond description.

At the foot of a rocky slope, a stone's throw distant, was his wharf, and Jack Frost had coated it deeply with diamond dust. Beyond lay a mirror lake. Its surface was motionless except when a salmon trout, risen from the depths for October spawning on the shoals, leaped clear of the water in the wild abandon of free life.

A cold, silvery moon was poised in

the cloudless sky, among the innumerable twinkling stars. Under it, northern lights played incessantly—long streamers of ghastly white that darted back and forth, constantly changing in shape, but ever like phantoms.

Terry took a deep breath, and the frigid air penetrated his lungs like knives. In this country of the north, sixty below zero was not uncommon during winter. Even in summertime, nights always were cold and it was necessary to sleep under heavy blankets. In a city, brick buildings and asphalt pavements absorb much of the sun's heat, and these gradually cool after twilight, radiating the heat back into space, with a smoky atmosphere serving as insulation and keeping the city warm.

But in Terry's part of the world, the sun shone on granite and on icy lakes that filled the craters of extinct volcanoes to a depth of three hundred, a thousand feet, or even more. Such rock and water stored little of the sun's rays. So a coolness, startling to a stranger, invariably followed sunset except in cloudy, muggy weather.

Terry's gaze wandered from the lake. It shifted to the towering pines, bunched closely together, with here and there a clearing where granite lay exposed without soil to sustain vegetation.

The wolves had become silent. Now, abruptly, one of them howled. The sound was taken up by others, at scattered places in the forest. A barbaric chorus ensued, defiant, menacing. Soon the wolves would be running in packs, their combination for waging wintertime warfare. They seemed to sense the approach of the period of organized slaughter, and to be rejoicing.

But Terry did not shudder.

He grinned, for his game preserve was highly fenced. He was safe, secure. Beyond the barricade of meshed wires, the wolves were stalking natural prey that abounded plenteously. This meant that their owner did not have to buy feed for them. So Terry's grin lingered.

There was something wolfish about that grin—cruel, thin lips disclosing yellowish, tobacco-stained teeth that were abnormally long. Terry had other resemblances to his pets. He was ever skulking about furtively, or moving with amazing swiftness and unexpectedness. His body, of medium height, was lean and incessantly alert, as though he lived in continual fear of attack and had ample reasons in his past for such apprehensions.

The howling died away. Again the night was stilled.

Presently a whippoorwill called to its roving mate; was answered. Down the lake, a loon wailed its prediction that the weather was due to turn foul before long.

Then something else came out of the near-silence, something that made Terry prick up his ears. The moon, shining into his black eyes, intensified their glint of wariness. Terry had the aspect of one suspicious that an avenger might be approaching. He stood motionless, listening, his black hair dangling in loose strands almost to his shoulders.

Terry had Indian blood. It was the strain of the Ojibways, greatest fighters that the North American continent ever produced before the coming of the white man. Ojibways—ancestors of the Sioux.

Terry was only one-quarter Indian, however. His mother had been a half-breed, his father a rake of a Frenchman whom Terry had never seen. The father had quitted life with a blade between his ribs, prior to the birth of the son. Thereby, he had missed nothing of great importance. A sullen baby had evolved into a wicked boy, thence into one of the worst and craftiest villains the North ever produced.

Terry was not his real name. It was just one of a long chain of aliases.

The sound that arrested Terry's attention that night was from an engine, missing badly and running without a muffler. A motor boat, far out over the water, was coming his way.

With eyes like a hawk's, he searched the lake. But the craft was not yet in sight. Terry's ears had identified it, no two marine engines sounding exactly alike. This particular launch belonged to Logan, who ran the Backwoods Inn, a summer hotel, twelve miles down the west shore.

Terry had never had a profitable opportunity to make Logan his enemy. Accordingly, he had nothing to fear from him. His tense vigilance now was due to uncertainty as to the identity of the person or persons in the approaching boat.

It would hardly be Logan, he reflected. The tavern keeper had no business that would bring him Terryward at this hour of night. It was past ten o'clock now.

Terry said to himself—half aloud, as is the custom of men who live much alone: "I'm the only person living at this end of the lake. So some one is coming to see me. I'll gamble blank cartridges against hunting knives, in a free-for-all fight, that it isn't Logan. Some one has borrowed his motor boat."

The possibility occurred to him that a member of the police was approaching to investigate his wolf breeding. If so, a plausible excuse was ready. He would maintain that he was growing the pelts for fur market. As yet, he had not garnered his first harvest of skins and unloaded them on the government to collect the regulation bounty.

Just the same, he patted his pistol, carried openly in a belt holster. And he felt inside his plaid mackinaw coat, and caressed the hilt of a knife that should have had two notches cut in it. These movements were entirely automatic. Terry was quite unconscious of them, as much so as a rattlesnake sounding its buttons.

The launch rounded a peninsula and came into view. It was an old-timer, running at top speed now, but not making more than eight miles an hour. A constantly widening triangle of waves spread out in its wake, lazily rolling toward the opposite shores.

The wolves, too, heard the boat. They reacted by howling fiercely, then returning to hiding in silence as well as darkness.

Terry strode down the slope toward the dock. The hobnails of his laced leather boots clicked and scratched the granite over which he trod. The hillside was steep, and Terry had drunk freely of whisky. Yet there was no danger of his falling. Veteran of lumber camps, skilled at walking on moving logs in the water while breaking up jams, he was expert at keeping his balance.

He stood on the wharf, as motionless as an Indian sentinel, awaiting his visitor. There was only one person in the boat. It was a man. In the clear moonlight, Terry recognized him long before he ported and leaped out to fasten the hawsers of his craft.

The fellow was "Hudson Bay Joe."

That sounded as if he were a trapper or a runner. On the contrary, he was renowned for his preference for indoor jobs. The name had been tacked onto to him merely by reason of the district where he had emitted his first infantile wail.

Joe was the cook and general handy man at Logan's Backwoods Inn. Terry had nothing tangible against him. On the other hand, there was something about Joe that had always got under Terry's hide, an invisible force that antagonized him. It was as though he sensed that fate might intend to make them bitter enemies.

But now Terry concealed his instinctive aversion. Curiosity made that

easy. He realized that it must be a matter of considerable importance that had brought this comparative stranger twelve miles out of his way at an hour when he was generally sound asleep, except during the season to spear spawning fish by lantern light.

Instantly it was obvious that Hudson Bay Joe was terrifically excited. Terry noticed how his fingers fumbled as he knotted the mooring ropes. As Joe stood up and faced Terry, his normally bland, expressionless, blue eyes gleamed with agitation. Terry was a good judge of men, almost clairvoyant in divining the emotions of others. He comprehended that Joe had been concealing a vital secret, and that the safety valve was about to blow off, releasing the pent-up force.

"Somebody dead?" Terry inquired evenly. His tone was one of mild inquisitiveness, almost disinterested.

Hudson Bay Joe shook his head. "Not as I know of," he replied. Then he paused and gulped a deep breath. "You used to be a prospector, didn't you?" he asked.

Terry nodded. "I've been through more gold rushes than I have fingers and toes, including two that have been shot off," he replied.

At that, Joe laughed. The key was high-pitched, nervous, the sound one of relief rather than of mirth.

"That's what I'd gathered," he said. "Gosh! It's lucky you're here—lucky for both of us, I tell you that!"

"I'm the only mining man for fifty miles or more, as far as I know," said Terry. "The rest of them are either uncovering veins, taking channel assays or trying to talk suckers into grubstaking them." He eyed his caller keenly. "Well-l-l?" he drawled.

Hudson Bay Joe reached into a trouser pocket. He brought forth a small, cloth salt bag, untied its puckering string, and dumped the contents into his cupped right palm.

"What's this stuff?" he asked tremulously, handing it to Terry. "You got acid for testing it?"

Terry took his time in making an examination, the while Joe squirmed his shoulders restlessly. "I don't need acid to recognize these things," Terry announced presently. "I can tell by the heft. It's gold."

CHAPTER II.

HATCHING A CONSPIRACY.

AS Terry spoke the word "gold," off in the woods several wolves howled. Their owner had the impression that they had heard him and were responding. He glanced forestward and muttered under his breath: "I must be raising some of them Wall Street bankers without knowing it."

"Gold!" Hudson Bay Joe was murmuring over and over. "Gold—gold—gold!" Quite evidently, he thought it too good to be true.

"These aren't nuggets," Terry opined, fingering rather sharp edges.

"No," Joe answered. "I dug them out of ore with a knife."

"How wide is the vein?" Terry asked. He was highly emotional under the surface, though adept at appearing calm in moments exciting. But now he was having great difficulty in concealing his intense agitation.

"I don't know how wide the vein is," Joe told him. "I dug and uncovered it for a distance of twenty feet, and didn't find the end of it."

"Maybe you were digging the length of the vein," Terry suggested. "I got stung on some mining stock that way once. The prospectus said the vein was a hundred and ten feet across. Later, I found out that was the length, and it was only two feet wide."

But Joe, though he could comfortably have used more intelligence than nature had bestowed upon him, had not been feeble-minded enough to overlook

such a bet. "I dug twenty feet in both directions—east-west and north-south," he declared.

"It's free gold," said Terry. "Was there much more like these pieces?"

"Enough to make you dizzy," said Joe. "The chunks are sticking out all over the ore, like currants on a cake."

Terry whistled sharply between set teeth. "It's a whale of a strike!" he reflected. "Of course, the vein may be only a few feet deep, a splash-over from a crevice where the stuff boiled up from the bowels of the earth long ago. But the mother vein must be near by."

He was thinking swiftly now. Sight of the yellow metal had intoxicated him. The greed of gold was racing in his blood, and he said to himself: "Joe hasn't told his secret to any one else, or he wouldn't have come all the way to share it with me, arriving so excited. If I knew where the vein was, I'd be tempted to follow him and give him a blade up to the hilt."

Aloud he said: "This stuff isn't bad at all. Very unfortunate that you found it on some one else's land."

Hudson Bay Joe gave a start. He drew back, his shoulders huddled, peering at his companion. "How did you know?" he faltered, much as though he felt the presence of something uncanny.

Terry laughed coldly, the tone almost mocking. He replied, "You've only been in these parts since last spring. You came here broke. It's a cinch that you haven't saved enough to be buying property. I know what Logan pays at the hotel—thirty dollars a month and keep."

Joe groaned dismally. "That's just it," he confessed. "The gold is on another fellow's property."

"Logan's?" Terry inquired casually, studiously offhand.

But Joe was not to be caught off his guard. "I'm not telling—yet," he countered cunningly. "So far, no one knows except myself. I've been down on my luck for two years and more, and I'm not going to let this chance slip through my fingers. There must be some way of cashing in on what I've discovered. I've been sizing you up for a long time, in my quiet way, Mr. Terry. I had an idea that you and I might talk this over and——"

"Sure!" the wolf breeder agreed, cutting in quickly. His tone now was so cordial that it might have dripped honey. "As a matter of fact, it was on the tip of my tongue to suggest such a thing, this getting together for profit, when you took the words out of my mouth. It's a lucky thing you came to me. I know the mining game from soup to nuts. It won't be the first time I've cracked just such a nut as you've brought to me. Come on up to the house. I've got some prime Scotch, as good mountain dew as you ever tasted. The night's cold and I feel the need of a good drink. Maybe you'd care to join me."

The invitation made Hudson Bay Joe almost shout. "I'm as dry as a covered bridge with a new roof," he declared. "Old Logan won't stand for drinking by any one working for him at the hotel. When he hired me, he told me I'd get fired if he smelled the stuff on my breath. You know how that kind of gent generally is. I thought sure he had a good stock laid away that he lapped up on the sly. But I've been all through his belongings, ever with an onion in my pocket ready to kill the scent, and can't find a drop. The old tightwad!"

They were hurrying up the granite slope now, bound for the cabin of cedar logs. Terry was tingling with emotions that were playing through him as rhythmically as music. Intuition told him that he was embarked on a great adventure, one that would prove crucial in his destiny. He had, too, a premonition that Hudson Bay Joe's fate now

was bound so closely to his own that only death could effect a separation.

Death! Terry wondered which of them would pass first!

A faint shiver crept slowly up his spine and spread out along his shoulder blades.

For he required no fortune teller to inform him that he and Joe would shortly be confederates in a crooked game. And Terry, veteran at such conspiracies, was well aware of the perils involved—not the least of which was treachery.

Joe, however, seemed not to be bothered about the future. Inclined to live in the present and let the morrow take care of itself, he was concerned only with the fact that he had unearthed a fabulous treasure.

They entered the cabin. There Terry turned up the oil lamp, stirred the embers in the fireplace, and added more pine to eat into the slowly burning hardwood backlog.

Then he shoved the more comfortable of his two chairs forward, and beckoned Joe to seat himself. Joe did so awkwardly, in the manner typical of a man whose lot it is to be a servitor, and who finds the rôle of guest difficult. He sat rather rigidly, but his fingers kept moving back and forth across his palms.

Meantime, Terry had gone to the bottle of whisky on the table and, with his back to Joe, was pouring two stiff drinks. One, twice as large as the other, was for his guest. With water added by a tin dipper, they looked almost the same shade of amber.

Tendering the earthenware cup to his companion, he said amiably: "Toss this off—it's a light one—and then help yourself to the bottle. Take all you want. I've got six cases laid away for the winter."

Joe gaped at him. "Six cases—seventy-two bottles!" he commented after some laborious mental calculation. "Gosh, it must have set you back."

Terry laughed indifferently. "Don't let that worry you," he assured him. "I didn't come out of the mining game without some of the yellow metal sticking to me. I've got some good bank accounts," he added hastily, to head off any idea that he might have a fortune cached on the premises, one worth murdering him to obtain. "Yes, sir! I've got money—all that's needed for putting through a deal of this sort. You've sure come to the right party for a partner."

Joe nodded. He had downed the giant's drink without batting an eye. Terry could not resist staring at him, and said to himself: "Not one hollow leg, but two! So ho! That's why he blew in here broke. I've got a rum hound on my hands."

Joe had assured him that he had not had a drink since spring. That made it all the worse, for it meant that he was a periodical drinker, and a few drinks to-night would start him on another bust.

Already the fellow's eyes were roving toward the bottle every few seconds. Terry nodded silently. Joe rose and helped himself. He filled the cup to the brim, drank half of it neat, and returned to his chair with the rest.

"Listen!" his host admonished him sagely. "I want you to enjoy my hospitality to the limit. But you'd better watch your step or old Logan will be tying a can to you."

Joe laughed scornfully. He spoke with pride. "I brought an onion in my pocket, hoping you'd have a crock. Don't worry about me. I have to get at least a quart of redeye under my belt before I show it. Besides, I've found gold, so what do I care if I get fired?"

Terry half closed his eyelids. "You haven't got the stuff out of the ground yet," he reminded the other. "The deal

may take time. The chances are, we'll want to keep you in the enemy's camp until we get possession of the treasure."

"Enemy?" Joe echoed, frowning in puzzlement.

"Sure!" said Terry. "You found the gold on Logan's land."

Joe was astonished at such insight. "How'd you know that?"

Terry shrugged. "You do the hotel cooking and other chores single-handed," he replied. "So how'd you find time to go gold hunting off Logan's reservation?"

Joe muttered vehemently. "That's just it!" he growled. "I work like a horse, like all hired men in this country. Nothing I'd like better than to slip something over on Logan. You're right, the gold's on his property."

"How'd you discover it?" Terry asked soothingly.

Joe grinned craftily. "You'd have a fat chance finding out, if I don't tell you," he boasted. "Logan's got seven hundred acres up here, a big chunk to prospect. I've covered up my tracks."

Terry affected not to have noticed the insinuation that Joe had the whip hand and intended to use it. "Seven hundred acres!" he said. Simultaneously, the thought came to him, maybe there's a joker.

"What's wrong?" Joe inquired anxiously. "You've turned as white as a sheet. No, it's ashen, more like buckwheat flour."

Terry felt as weak as a wilted sheet. "Maybe the mineral rights of that land still belong to the government," he suggested. No tone could have expressed more dread.

But Joe reassured him. "Logan's father homesteaded the seven hundred acres in 1875," he said, "and got the mineral and timber rights. The gold belongs to him, all right. I've heard Logan mention it often to his daughter, Martha, who lives at the hotel with her pa."

Terry sighed with intense relief. But the imaginary danger had unnerved him. This time, it was he who journeyed for another drink. Joe, however, trailed right along in his wake.

They clicked their cups, as the Vikings did with the skulls from which they imbibed their potions of exhilarating alcohol.

Standing there, quite close to each other, they looked into each other's eyes. It was a challenging, a measuring of confederates—or of opponents? That would be answered later.

There was a long silence, during which neither flinched.

Then Joe broke the stillness of the cabin.

"You're as slick as freshly peeled bark," he said, his voice gruff in its frankness. "I was noticing down at the wharf, how easy and offhand you slipped into your pocket the gold samples I brought along. Trot 'em out! They're mine!"

Instantly, Terry complied. And fervently he assured his companion: "I had no intention of keeping them! I was going to give them back to you as soon as we got up here."

"Sure, sure!" Joe leered. "That's what the fellow in Toronto said when he asked to see my watch and then tucked it in his vest while he was talking a blue streak." He counted the chunks of yellow metal twice before restoring them to his salt sack. "They're all there," he admitted.

"You seem to be surprised," Terry protested. "My dear friend," he continued wheedlingly, "pals mustn't be suspicious of each other."

"We're not pals yet," Joe reminded him. "I've bit on too many hooks to take another without swimming around the bait and studying it. You're willing to help me grab this fortune off the Logans?"

"Does a duck swim?" Terry countered. "And you'll find me a loyal mate.

You need have no fears. I'm a man of my word——"

"I hope so," Joe cut in. "Well, in a game like this, a fellow has to take a chance. How do we split?"

"Fifty-fifty!" Terry proposed.

Joe gazed deeply into the black eyes of his companion, and pondered. "I found the stuff and ought to get more," he suggested.

"But I'm putting up the capital," Terry argued.

"That's so!" Joe agreed. "It's a go, then. Shake hands on it."

They clasped. Each gripped tightly, as if to impress the other with his strength. Both winced simultaneously.

Afire with excitement, they could hear their breaths coming pantingly.

"We're off on a desperate venture," Terry said hoarsely. "There's big stakes—millions in gold, if the vein's like you described it. No use beating about the bush. We'd better get right down to hardpan and talk plain. You're not as dumb as you look. Soak this up: I'll kill you if you double cross me."

Joe bared his teeth. "I'm not a bad shot myself," he responded. "What you said, goes two ways."

Off in the woods, a wolf howled, and another answered. Either would eat the other at the first opportunity.

CHAPTER III.

THE GIRL, MARTHA.

THAT enemy of man, Satan, who surely must have added the gold after the creation of the earth, was present in the cabin of cedar logs that night. Terry long had been his servant. And now Joe, after a lifetime of honest toil, was yielding to the lure of temptation and enlisting in the army of unscrupulous parasites.

The howling of the two wolves was distinct and alone. The others did not join them. Though this was coincidence, the cabin conspirators both read into the howling another meaning. They were startled.

Terry was first to break the tension. "We're wolves now," he said grimly, "running together in a pack. And we hang together or hang separately."

"They only hang for murder," Joe commented half dazedly.

Terry shrugged. "Murder and gold," he declared, "go in company like lamb and mint sauce or corned beef and cabbage."

"Who's going to get killed?" Joe asked in a whisper. He turned and peered into the far end of the cabin, where the illumination from the lamp was dim. And it seemed to him that the shadows were swirling, as if phantoms were endeavoring to materialize there.

"Who's going to get killed?" Terry echoed. "I don't know. Maybe, nobody; maybe, both or either of us. Let the future take care of that. Never cross a bridge before you reach it is a wise saying. Have another drink, and then tell me how and where you discovered the gold."

They drank, and returned to their chairs, drawing them close to the fireplace and adding more wood for the flames. The frost of the October night had not penetrated the slab door of the cabin. The chill that the two men were experiencing was the reaction from their preliminary excitement, and from their contact with the subject of death.

Said Joe: "Maybe, in prowling about, you've been through the big clearing in the woods a quarter mile back of the hotel. Yes? Well, nothing much has ever been done to it except to cut down the trees and burn the brush. It's been used as a cow and sheep pasture. Logan's got the idea of making another garden patch there, for the bigger traffic he expects next season when the motor road goes through. He's had me working at it in my spare time. This morning, I set off

twelve sticks of blasting powder under two big hemlock stumps that was growing close together. It was too big a shot, more than was needed. Lifted the stumps, all right, and dropped them quite a distance away. Made a hole in the ground, too. When I come up, I see that the soil isn't more than two feet deep at that place, and that the rock's exposed below."

Terry was listening intently. "And the gold ore lay right there under your eyes?"

Hudson Bay Joe nodded. "Just like finding money in the street," he said in awe. "Too good to be true. Like a dream."

"That's why the stuff has never been discovered," said Terry. "It was hidden by a heavy overlay of soil. Well I——?"

Joe swallowed. He was becoming excited again, experiencing a return of his agitated emotions now that he was living over, in narration, this tremendous event in his life.

"I was sort of stunned at first," he continued, "when I got down into that hole and saw the gold ore, with chunks of the yellow metal sticking out all over it. I opened my knife and pried some loose. The biggest ones I couldn't get, they were wedged too tightly into the ore."

"Is that so, is that so?" Terry exclaimed, his voice shaking. He rose in his excitement, and began pacing the floor.

"Gospel truth!" Joe assured him. "Well, it didn't take me no time to get the samples of gold. Then I started to run and tell Logan all about it, hoping he'd do the decent thing by me. But I'm no sooner out of the hole than I fall back into it. Maybe I stepped on a loose rock and slipped. But—whether I'm going crazy or not—I swear to you that I felt as if I'd been pushed. And then, as I picked myself up, I let out a yell, for I saw you, Terry, standing there in front of me, grinning. I blinked my eyes, and you was gone."

Terry halted in his tracks and stared fixedly at his henchman. "I've read of such things, and heard a few experiences told by word of mouth," he said. "Well, I wasn't there, you can gamble on that, old-timer. But I soon will be."

Joe was wagging his head in bewilderment. "Funny things, these here brains we got inside our skulls," he said. "I'd take oath I saw you. And yet maybe it was just because I'd heard that you'd been in the mining game, and it bobbed up from my memory at that moment. I've seen things before—six-headed wolves and rattlers as long as a box car—but always when I'd drunk too much. That's the trouble with liquor. In moderation, it's safe to handle. But if a fellow laps up more than a couple of quarts in a day——"

By force of suggestion, he rose and went to the bottle. It was empty. Terry lifted a board in the floor, and took out another. He opened it, and both had a drink.

"What'd you do next?" the wolf breeder asked. "I want to get all the facts, so I'll know how to make our plans."

"I looked all around," Joe replied, "to make sure that Logan or nobody else was in sight. Then I set off some more charges, to loosen the dirt, and got busy with a shovel. I kept uncovering ahead and throwing the soil back to hide what I'd laid bare behind me. All in all, I exposed a patch of ore about twenty feet each way. A humdinger!"

Terry agreed—fervently. "If it's like you say," he declared, "it's the best proposition I've ever had a finger in. Always did have an idea that something like this would come along one of these days. Well, Logan owns the mineral rights."

"That's the trouble," Joe lamented. "What are we going to do about it?"

"First," Terry answered, "I'll open negotiations and try to buy the property from him. Say, does he know that you came to see me?"

"Sure!" Joe exclaimed. "I had to tell him I was coming here, when I borrowed the motor boat."

The wolf man frowned. He did not like this complication. It would have been, he believed, far better if there were nothing to link him to the cook.

Joe correctly interpreted his frown. "I thought of the same thing," he said. "So I hatched a good excuse. I told him that I'd been working hard and wanted to have some recreation, and that you'd promised me some old clothes one day when you were around the hotel, and I'd kill two birds with one stone and drop in here and get them."

Terry was exultant. "Fine!" he rejoiced. "I'll make your lie plausible by giving you some duds worth carrying. Who all are at the hotel now?"

"There's myself, that's one," said the cook. "Then there's Logan, and his pretty daughter. That makes three."

"I'll say she's pretty," Terry indorsed. "You'll mush a thousand miles through this bush country before you find another like her."

Joe nodded. "No danger of a sugar shortage while she's around," he agreed. "I wish I wasn't so dog-goned ugly. Still, I wouldn't have a look-in now. There's just one other person at the hotel, at present. He's a young chap, crazy as a nut about the girl, Martha, though he's only been there about a week. He's buzzing around her like a robber bee at a pail of honey. But, though he doesn't seem to have made much impression, she hasn't eyes for a horny-handed gent like myself who always——"

Terry interrupted the chatter. He was scowling.

"A young guy, eh?" he said gruffly. "What's he doing here? A friend, visiting?"

"No, he's paying for having the feed bag put on him," the cook replied. "Eats like a horse that's been lost in the bush and just come home to the barn. He's from the States, some big city down there, North on a vacation."

"Late for that," Terry commented.

"I heard him tell the girl that he was in an office and that the boss had stuck him for the tail end of the vacation lists."

"We want Logan's gold; Martha's Logan's daughter, and the young buck has a crush on the girl," said Terry. "I don't like the combination. Wish he was off the stage—— Well, they'll send him home in a coffin if he gets in my way. I'm after big game. If Logan doesn't want to sell out his property cheap, I'll tackle the problem with something in the nature of ice tongs."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEMON OF WORRY.

MEANTIME, at the Backwoods Inn, fate seemed to be playing the intended victims directly into the hands of Terry, the wolf breeder and Hudson Bay Joe.

Martha Logan, that evening, had gone on a canoe trip with young Barlowe, the sole guest of the North-country tavern.

They returned about ten o'clock, and found the girl's father in the lobby, staring into the flames of the huge fireplace, unlighted pipe in mouth.

A picturesque place was that lobby. On the floor were pelts of lynxes and bears that Logan had brought down with his rifles. The walls showed numerous mounted fish and heads of buck deer and moose. The ceiling was supported by cedar logs that served as pillars. It was a large room, well and comfortably furnished, with a business-like registration desk of oiled Norway pine, and a private office beyond.

Yet this lobby was not out of propor-

tion to the size of the hotel proper. The inn had more than a hundred bedrooms, with running water, and its own electric lighting plant operated by gasoline engine and storage batteries. This was used only when profits justified it. At other times, oil lamps served.

Logan had sunk his all in this place, the savings from harvesting the timber of his property. That had not been any great fortune, viewed by metropolitan eyes. Logan's estate was far removed from a railroad, and trees do not yield any large sum when sold on the stump.

Business had been bad from the start, three years back. But this was not due to the proprietor's having used bad judgment. While erecting the hotel, he had banked on the government's running a motor road through the district, so that guests could be conveyed by car back and forth between railroad and tavern.

That program had been delayed—a terrific disappointment to the veteran of the bush. As things were now, guests had to be hauled over rough trails in a buckboard. And Logan was too honest not to enlighten them in advance.

Money matters were worrying him frightfully at present. That was why he was puffing at his pipe, only vaguely aware that it had gone out.

As the two young people returned from their water trip, Logan's strained face relaxed into a smile.

Like Barlowe, he had eyes only for his daughter. He reflected that she was the image of her departed mother as he had known her in the golden days of their romance. A pronounced blonde, with very dark-blue eyes, she had hair of an unusual hue. It was like the sunlight on a marigold in full bloom. Outdoor life in the North had made her athletic, yet her small body had not paid the price in any loss of her soft curves.

Barlowe, too, was not by any means an unpleasant sight to the tired gray eyes of the elder Logan. Already he was losing the pallor imparted by confinement in a city office. His cheeks were flushed by the frosty air without. His dark eyes sparkled as he watched the girl.

"He's tall, and has good shoulders, and a chin that doesn't belong to a weakling," Logan mused. "If I had him for a winter in the bush, I'd make a real man out of him, one that could stand the gaff against any his age."

"I feel like a child when I'm on the water with Martha," the young chap was lamenting. "She handled the canoe all the way. I've counteracted office work to a considerable extent by gymnasium exercise. But I'm just beginning to realize how pathetic and downright ridiculous it is for a fellow to sit in a rowing machine for an hour and work the oars without getting anywhere, not even across the room. Why, I can't even paddle a canoe straight! I'm ashamed of myself."

Martha laughed mischievously, and not without pride. "Oh, you'll learn, all right," she protested quickly in a soothing tone, as she saw that her mirth had cut. "Why, this is an entirely different world to you."

"It sure is!" he replied with a sigh. "I dread the thought of going back to the grind of the office. A winter of dictating letters, sitting almost motionless in a swivel chair, while steam radiators clank and the air hammers rivet next door! Just compare that with life up here—hunting, fishing through holes in the ice, going about on snowshoes, and zipping downhill and out across the valley on a toboggan!" He groaned.

It was on the tip of Logan's tongue to propose: why go back? Chuck that city stuff for good and all. Live the way nature intended you to—killing your own meat, growing your own vegetables, splitting your own firewood, and building your home with your own hands. But he wisely re-

strained that impulse. After all, what had he to offer the young man? Nothing! Nothing at all! Why, he himself was up against it hard, driven into a corner financially, at his wits' end as to how to make the grade until next spring.

"How many fish did you get?" he asked. It went without saying that, trolling from a canoe in this country, they had not come back empty-handed.

"Three!" Martha answered. She had caught thousands, but never failed to thrill at landing them or to feel triumphant at narrating her victory. "Three salmon trout," she added, "and one of them weighs about nine and a half pounds. We left them on the porch."

"Better get them under cover or they'll disappear by morning," Logan warned them. "A lot of mink and otter about this fall."

"I cleaned them in the canoe, coming home," Barlowe announced importantly. "You see, sir, I'm getting along. The first one I tackled, a week ago, kept slipping out of my hands until I nailed it to a board. You sit still, old chap," he added hastily as Logan started to rise. "I'll put them on ice. You look tired to-night, Mr. Logan. I hope you're not feeling ill."

The woods veteran laughed a bit sourly. "I haven't had a sick day for twenty years and more," he boasted. "That's part of the wages of living up here."

Barlowe nodded. "I wish I weren't going back to civilization," he declared glumly. "Oh, well, this life is too good to be true! Such things don't last—not for me, at any rate. I only have six more days until I leave. Then vacation's over."

"Five!" Martha corrected him softly. "That is, unless you change your plans."

He glanced eagerly at her; evidently she, too, was counting the time. But no thrill of elation tingled through him. "She doesn't really care," he told himself. "It's just that she was lonesome for the companionship of some young person like herself. Thousands of other fellows would have appealed to her just as keenly, if they had come along instead of me. We live in different worlds, indeed. I'm from the city, where she'd perish of homesickness for her own natural environment. She's a girl of the wilds, where I'm a greenhorn. Alone, thrown on my own resources, I'd perish up here in a month —— Ah, what a gorgeous girl she is!"

Ten minutes later, Barlowe had put away the fish and gone to his room for the night. The day had been a strenuous one for him. For one thing, Logan had walked him fully ten miles, showing him landmarks of his career. Then, too, the cool night air had induced a narcotic drowsiness. He hated to leave the girl. But she, too, soon would retire, to rise with the sun.

Alone with her father, Martha snuggled on his lap and gently smoothed his fast-whitening hair. "You poor dear!" she said soothingly. "You *are* worrying. I've noticed it more in the last two weeks than——"

"What!" he exclaimed. "Have I been showing it? I thought I was keeping my troubles concealed."

"You cannot hoodwink me," she told him. "What is it? Money?"

He hesitated. "I didn't want to bother you with it," he said awkwardly. "There is nothing to be gained by merely making two people worry instead of one."

"Nonsense!" she reproved him. "I am not the worrying kind, and you surely know it."

"That's true," he agreed. "Just like your mother! That was one of the many wonderful things about her. Always bright and cheerful, even when we had trouble making both ends meet,

going along with a sort of blind, adoring confidence that I'd find the way out of our troubles."

"And you always told her about them?"

Logan looked at her, aghast. "Surely," he replied. "Why, I couldn't have kept a secret from your mother!"

"Then it's not fair to conceal anything from me, for I'm taking her place. At least, I've done my best."

"You've succeeded wonderfully," he said huskily, his gnarled fingers patting her soft, pink cheeks. "I guess you're right, Martha. I've reached the point where I simply have to unload. You'd know soon enough, anyway. Yes, it's money."

"That is too vague."

"I have this property mortgaged to the hilt," Logan said. "There are some bad investments in mines that you didn't know anything about. They took my surplus. A mortgage falls due within a week. I can't meet it. You know what that means?"

Her cheeks paled. "That we will have to get out?" she asked faintly. "That we will lose our home?"

Logan nodded. "That's the idea," he confessed. "Mortgages cause so much worry that I often think they must have been invented by Satan. Oh, well, I'm still strong. I'll take care of you, my sweet. We'll not starve."

"No!" she declared resolutely. "What's more, we won't leave this place at all. I feel it—intuition, you know."

"If I could just hold out another year," Logan said fiercely. "The motor road is going to be built next spring. The money's been appropriated for it, and this time there won't be any slip-up. Once the road's through, I'll have this place packed by anglers in the spring and summer and hunters in the fall and winter. With the new garden patch that Joe's making, we'll grow our own food. There's money in this game, if you can just get the business."

Ah, if Logan had only known that he had a fortune—perhaps millions of dollars—in gold on his property! He and his daughter would have become half delirious with joy.

But he did not know. And life is hard and harsh, whether in city or North woods. Opportunity often comes to the very threshold—and departs without the faintest knock on the door.

And while Logan's daughter comforted him, Hudson Bay Joe and Terry, the wolf breeder, were plotting in the distant cabin of cedar logs to rob him of the fortune that was his and that might slip from his grasp before he ever had an inkling of it.

It happened that Barlowe had been listening to the latter part of the conversation. He was not eavesdropping by intent. He had started downstairs for a pitcher of spring water, caught a few significant words, paused in the darkness at the head of the steps—and lingered there.

Having learned the Logans' predicament, he elected to return to his room without the water. Arrived there, he was to spend an almost sleepless night, cudgeling his brain for a way to help this girl whom he loved, and her father.

"I wonder how much the mortgage is," he said over and over to himself. "Gosh, if I just had the money saved up! This would be the turning point of my whole life. Why, it might even lead to Martha changing her surname to Barlowe."

CHAPTER V.

TERRY PLAYS HIS FIRST CARD.

EARLY the next morning, Terry headed down the lake in his own motor boat. Hudson Bay Joe had left him at midnight, returning in Logan's antiquated launch to the Backwoods Inn.

Terry sped along swiftly. His was a topnotch marine engine. The craft sliced its way through the water, hurling curtains of spray to either side. A stiff wind had come up with the sun. But it was from the south, so Terry did not really need the tarpaulins that he had prudently donned.

His destination was Logan's hotel. Curiously enough, his thoughts were chiefly concerned with only one person —and it was Joe, not Logan.

Terry had set his heart on acquiring the gold. The stuff was there; he intended to take it by fair means or foul, and he did not admit to himself any possibility that he might fail. That was Terry's way—to go directly after what he wanted, like a bullet to a target.

That he was determined to trick Logan out of his vast gold property was enough for Terry. Obstacles might rise. He might have to shift his tactics. But he would run the gamut of stratagem, would wade through gore to attain his goal.

Utterly without scruples, he could call into play weapons that any normal man with healthy morals would consider entirely out of the question.

Terry had killed three men in his time, and would not hesitate to send a fourth or even more to join them in the hereafter. All his life, he had lived in the wilderness. He recognized no code except that of the wolf, of nature itself—namely, a chain system of murders.

Any one who rose in his path to obstruct him would meet the same fate as others who had committed similar indiscretions. That is, provided he did not lose the whip hand in the crisis.

Better men than Terry have gone unexpectedly to the undertakers—legions of them!

Yes, Terry's thoughts were concentrated on Hudson Bay Joe, after he had devoted the period from midnight to dawn to planning what he would do with the wealth after he got it.

If the hotel cook had known the nature of those thoughts, more than one hair would have fallen from his scalp.

Terry was debating with himself just what he would do to eliminate Joe, once victory was won. He had, of course, no intention of sharing the booty with his confederate.

There'd be nothing to be gained by killing him now, he reasoned coldbloodedly. Logan knows that Joe visited me last night. Logan's a wise old fox. He might put two and two together and trace the crime to me. He's uncannily expert at following a trail, and if he turned detective and started on a man hunt——

That thought made Terry squirm, there in the motor boat.

"I have Joe's secret, and that's all I'll get out of him," he thought. "For all practical purposes, he might as well be buried now. But I've got to wait. The trouble is, the gold's in ore, and to get it out will take a lot of time. Once I get Logan out of the way, it will be time for Joe to make a mysterious disappearance. He might drown—or shoot himself 'accidentally' while climbing over a fence or log with his rifle, out hunting."

At the same time, Hudson Bay Joe was doing considerable pondering along similar lines. Moving about the hotel kitchen, preparing early breakfast for the Logans, Barlowe, and himself, he was not as gullible as Terry fancied him to be.

Joe's thoughts ran like this: I can't trust that Terry any more than it'd be safe to pick up a live rattler by its fangs. As soon as we have the gold cinched, he'll kill me at the first chance. That's the only way he can get rid of me and hog the wealth for himself. The gold's still in the hard rock, and it can't be toted off like a satchel of bank notes.

Yes, sir! Terry would kill me—sure as shooting, sure as death and taxes and mosquitoes when the fishing's good. There's only one thing to do. I've got to beat him to it."

How could the thing be done?

Hudson Bay Joe was decidedly an amateur at decisively eliminating enemies. He had never killed a man. But he had the makings of a killer, now that a tremendous fortune in gold reared its enticing self as an inducement. And, once a man resolves on murder, he is appalled by the numerous means of destruction from which he may make a selection.

Joe thought them over, one by one, while he sliced bacon with a razorlike knife and dropped an eggshell into the boiling coffee.

Shooting was his first selection, for Joe was an expert with all manner of firearms. He could take a rifle and make its bullet behead a partridge on the wing. Given a proper gun and supernormal eyesight, he might even bring down a sixteen-pound Canada goose flying a mile overhead.

But two can play at shooting. Terry would have to be taken off his guard. And he might happen to turn at the crucial moment, in time to defend himself and prevent a leaden pellet from entering his anatomy from the back.

The same held true with stabbing, even more so.

Joe thought of poisons. But none was available that could be got past the wolf breeder's lips without his realizing it.

The plotter was not anxious to kill Terry, not by any means. His attitude was that he would be killing sheerly in self-defense. If he had been certain that his confederate would play square with him, Joe would not have contemplated murder even for an instant—not at this stage of the game, at any rate. Of course, later on, when the gold began to come from the ore and piled up in hypnotic quantities, he might not be so generous.

His black meditations were interrupted by Logan, who opened the kitchen door and told him to shake a leg, that Barlowe had scented the frying bacon and was pacing the floor like a caged, famished wolf.

Terry came upon the scene shortly after Joe had carried the emptied breakfast dishes away. He strode into the lobby, where he found Logan alone with Barlowe.

"Good morning, Mr. Logan! Snappy outdoors, eh? We'll be having the black freeze early this season. I see the ducks are flying south in big flocks."

"Good morning, Mr. Terry!" was the reply. "Yes, it's going to be a stiff winter. The trees have dressed themselves for it, with thick bark. They never guess wrong. Meet my guest, Mr. Barlowe, from the States."

The two men acknowledged the introduction by brief nods. But there was no lack of interest. They instinctively disliked each other from the start. Something telepathic seemed to pass between them. The looks that they exchanged had the nature of steel against flint, emitting sparks.

As customary with him, the energetic Terry came directly to the point. "I wanted to talk a little business with you," he suggested significantly.

"Go ahead!" Logan invited bluntly. "Don't mind this lad. I never conduct any business in private."

"Nor I!" Terry countered, feigning approval that he encountered extreme honesty akin to his own. "Guess that explains why you never put a door on your office back of the counter there."

Logan nodded. "Sit down and take a load off your feet," he said hospitably, although he had no liking for the visitor. "Now, just what's ailing you? Any way I can help you?"

Terry settled sinuously into a chair. "Your hired man, Joe, was up to see me last night," he began. "I'd promised him some old clothes, and he dropped in to get them."

"So I understand," Logan said nonchalantly. He had no grounds for suspicion that Terry and Joe were in conspiracy against him.

"Joe was telling me," the wolf breeder continued, "that things have been very dull around here. Of course, I already had surmised as much, from what I'd seen."

"Yes, it's been a dead season for me," Logan admitted.

"That's tough," said Terry. "After Joe left, I got thinking it over. The thought occurred to me that—the hotel business having proved a fizzle in this district—you might want to sell out. I've had my eyes on this place for some time. I'd like to move my animal farm down here, where it will be closer to the railroad."

This came like a bolt from a clear sky. Logan was amazed. "You want to buy?" he asked. "You really mean it?"

Terry nodded. "Yes, I want to buy."

Logan groped for words. Honest to the core, he told the truth. "The place is hardly worth buying," he said mournfully. "It's mortgaged to the hilt."

Terry smiled. "That doesn't matter," he said. "I don't mind taking over the mortgages."

Logan stared at him. "But there's one mortgage that falls due before the month's up, and the bank in Toronto absolutely refuses a renewal."

"How much has to be paid?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

Terry shrugged. "I can swing that," he declared.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Logan exclaimed. "This sure is unexpected. Last night, I was thinking that I'd lose the whole shooting match. But maybe there's the chance to salvage something after all."

"I'll do the fair thing by you," Terry assured him graciously. "We won't have any difficulty in coming to terms. What's more, I can pay you in cash. I've still got a lot left of the stake that I brought with me out of the Porcupine boom."

Terry's voice was calm, but inwardly he was fairly boiling with excitement. Things were coming his way far more smoothly than he had dreamed. He would make it easy for Logan now, and in closing the deal drive a sharp bargain.

"I'm tempted, all right," Logan confessed. "Gosh, I haven't any choice! One minute it looks as if I'm going to lose my shirt. The next, you come along and it's just like finding manna in the wilderness."

There was silence then, while he meditated. Presently he repeated. "I haven't any choice. Now, as you know, the good timber has mainly been taken off my property. You'd have to meet the mortgage for ten thousand dollars, and take over the other for twelve thousand. Atop of that, how much cash will you give me?"

"How does ten thousand, in good coin of the realm, sound to you?" Terry suggested. With millions at stake, he felt that, after all, it might be best to loosen up in hope of closing the deal quickly. Given time to ponder the situation, Logan might hold out for a very fat price. And it would never do to let the gold fall into the hands of the banks.

"Ten thousand in cash!" Logan said half dazedly. Again he meditated deeply.

Abruptly he announced, "That suits me!"

"Fine!" Terry declared heartily. "We'll draw up the papers at once, and this man can be one of the witnesses."

But Barlowe unexpectedly took a

hand. "Hold on!" he interrupted. "Mr. Logan, if you had funds to pay off that first mortgage that's coming due, would you sell out?"

"I should say not!" was the reply. It ended in a gasp, as if the suggestion were outrageous.

"You'd hold on until the motor road comes through?" Barlowe pursued. "You'd gamble that you could then get this hotel on its feet and make real money out of it?"

Logan nodded emphatically.

Terry sensed the way the wind was veering. Rage foamed in him. It was all that he could do to refrain from drawing his pistol and silencing the city chap.

"You keep out of this!" he said curtly. "In this country, strangers don't butt into the private affairs of others."

"So?" Barlowe drawled, coolly taking Terry's measure with his eyes. "How do you get that way? I'm not butting in. I'm the little factor known as competition."

Terry was startled. The fear flashed into him that the young fellow, too, knew about the gold. Perhaps, unseen, he had been near by and had observed Joe making the gold discovery.

A cold chill penetrated to the very marrow of Terry's bones. His lips moved soundlessly, for he was at a loss just what to say to meet this critical situation.

"I thought—in view of the property being so big—that a prohibitive price was at stake," said Barlowe jubilantly. "Mr. Logan, I have some savings of my own. I can raise the rest, on a proposition like this, quickly."

"Then," Logan declared, his voice husky and tremulous, "the Backwoods Inn is not for sale."

Terry experienced a faint dizziness He had played his first card—and lost But he was not yet out of the game.

CHAPTER VI.

MARKED FOR DEATH.

THE following midnight found Terry, the wolf breeder, and Hudson Bay Joe in secret conference.

Leaving the Backwoods Inn after the session that had been terminated dramatically by Barlowe's coming to Logan's aid, Terry had retreated to his motor boat. Joe had been eavesdropping; he had quite conveniently gone to the wharf on the pretext of pulling in some night lines that he had set for fish.

The two confederates had exchanged greetings, then pondered the sky as if debating how the weather would turn. Hurriedly, in a whisper, Terry had named a meeting place.

Now they were there. The place was a trail cabin. Its original tenant, despairing of wringing a living from nature in the raw, had packed up and abandoned it to the convenience of itinerants who, following in a never-ending, dribbling stream, blessed him for having provided this shelter against the elements.

Shelter was certainly needed, this midnight. The wind during the day had shifted to east. By twilight, a heavy rain was falling. Now it was pouring down in torrents, in a typical North country storm. A savage gale was blowing, and now and then towering dead timber or weaklings among live trees went crashing down in the forest.

The roof was leaking badly, but the plotters had no time to notice that.

Both of them were tremendously excited.

"The prize is slipping away from us!" Hudson Bay Joe lamented. "This Barlowe fellow smells a rat. He guesses that you have something up your sleeve. The last thing he said, before you left the hotel, was that you were suspiciously eager to buy."

Terry swore a blue streak. "He's

crazy about the girl, Martha," he said. "That's why he wants to help the old man. It makes him doubly dangerous as an enemy. A fellow in love is worse than a drunk. He hasn't enough sense to be careful, when he thinks he's serving his sweetheart. He'll jump into a whirlpool if it's only to show off for her benefit. If this Barlowe comes into direct contact with us, he'll be as fearless as a she-wolf defending her whelps."

They stared into each other's eyes, and their agitation was mingled with a sort of frantic despair.

Those eyes gleamed wickedly by the flickering light of the candle that Terry had brought and lighted. Its use was quite safe, though the trail cabin had a window and it was uncurtained. They were fully a mile from the Backwoods Inn, with dense thicket between. In addition, there was almost no chance of their opponents being abroad at this late hour and in such bad weather.

It was a time and place for prowling villains only.

The two men, gazing at each other in search of a solution, were standing. They had not removed their dripping oilskins. The water, running from the garments, was puddling on the damp, dirt floor.

Viciously the wind lashed the rain against the cabin. It was as though demons were celebrating this situation that apparently would inevitably have a fatal outcome. From far off, they heard the booming of surf against the west shore of the big lake. Terry was not concerned for the safety of the motor boat in which he had come from his wolf farm. He had moored it in a sheltered bay.

Hudson Bay Joe cursed Barlowe. Then he asked: "Do you think he's bluffing? Can he get the money here in time to meet the mortgage?"

Terry leered. "Of course he can! Do you think he'd have made the offer if he wasn't sure? It'd cripple him with the girl, to make a grand-stand play that he couldn't carry through. You know what that means?"

Joe nodded. "We'll have to move fast," he said.

Terry agreed. "Fast is no name for it," he replied. "We've got to head him off."

Another silence followed, in which Joe comprehended the full import of the suggestion. He drew back, as if his pal had suddenly turned into an ogre.

But his shrinking was only momentary.

"That's what!" he agreed. "We've got to get Barlowe out of the way before he can get the money here and turn it over to old Logan. If we can do that——"

"We'll have Logan just where we want him!" Terry said grimly. "He'll have to sell out to us, or else let the bank clean him to the last cent. If Barlowe puts his rescue stuff across, we'll be in the hole. Logan will continue as he is. He'll sit pat. The gold's in ore, and we can't steal it and cart it off in the night as if it were bank notes or jewels. What we need, and absolutely must have, is outright ownership of the property."

This was obviously so vital to the success of the plot that Joe merely nodded.

Again he cursed Barlowe vehemently, and wound up with, "I could strangle the city dude with glee. You ought to be around him, like I am. Asks if we don't have salad forks, and can't I get some fresh mushrooms for his steaks. Got a craze on mushrooms, I guess, way he talks of them. Like me with whisky."

And Hudson Bay Joe raised the bottle of Terry's Scotch that he was holding and took a deep drink.

"What's wrong?" he exclaimed suddenly. "You got a heart attack?"

The wolf breeder had turned white.

His black eyes bulged. "Oh, oh!" he said jerkily. "If I fell in a sewer, I'd come up covered with gold watches. Likes mushrooms, eh?"

The cook nodded. "Sure does! Offered me a dollar if I'd get him some. I promised to, to-morrow." He paused and eyed his henchman in bewilderment. "Say, what's gotten into you, Terry? You're as red-purple now as you were white a few seconds back."

Terry was a being fearful to behold. His eyes fairly glared with vile emotions.

"Tell me," he said rapidly, "does old Logan eat mushrooms?"

"Naw, he doesn't care for them. Neither does the girl."

"Then, they don't know much about them—so?"

The cook's head bobbed up and down. "They don't know anything about them," he answered. "I do. Quite often, when we've had guests at the hotel, I've gone into the bush and picked them a mess of toadstools that was fit to eat."

Terry reached for the bottle and took a drink. He smacked his lips. "I've spent a good part of my life alone in cabins," he said. "And I've killed a lot of time reading. That way, I've picked up a good deal of scientific knowledge. You ever hear of the *Amanita verna?*"

Joe shook his head. He was impressed by the use of such high-flown words.

"*The destroying angel!*" Terry prompted him in a low tone.

At that, the cook's eyes widened in comprehension.

"I get you now!" he said. And he glanced apprehensively at the window as if expecting to see the red coat of a mounted policeman.

Terry's idea had been caught by his henchman.

"The destroying angel!" Joe echoed, his tone one of dread. "It's one of the most deadly poisonous mushrooms we have growing wild in Ontario. Looks identically like the safe ones that are grown in beds for market. Packs the same poison as deadly agaric."

"And there's no known antidote!" Terry exulted.

"No known antidote!" Joe repeated. "A doctor can't do a thing for it. *And I know where some of it grows wild!*"

Terry clutched his arms in a grip that would have made Joe yell, had he not been so fascinated by the suggestion that his companion had given him.

"You sure?" he asked eagerly. "You positive?"

"It's the destroying angel, all right," the cook assured him. "I know, for I've dug it up. That's the only way you can distinguish it from edible ones—by the poison sac underground.

"Exit—the city dude!" Terry whispered savagely. "We'll serve him the mushrooms he wants—and we'll add enough destroying angels to make sure of killing him."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.

THE cook had fully realized that Terry had been leading up to the scheme to murder young Barlowe. But when he heard the suggestion actually voiced, the words had on him the effect of a powerful electric shock.

His immediate reaction was a surge of intense horror.

Murder suddenly became a terrible, hideous thing to Joe. He quite forgot that he had been cold-bloodedly considering killing his companion. Of course, he had excused himself, had pacified his conscience, by arguing that such would be self-defense, that it would be a case of get Terry first or Terry would get him. Nor was he altogether averse to having Barlowe put out of the way. What Terry had just proposed, however, would make Joe the real murderer. Furthermore, his secret would

be shared by another. And it was absolutely certain that, henceforth, he would be in his confederate's power, that Terry would have a powerful club over him and would not fail to use it.

Quite different would be his own intended assassination of Terry, later. Joe planned to be mighty careful, to make sure that there would be no spectators, that he alone would know the truth of what had happened.

He cried out, in the first stages of panic: "Hold on! Hold on! I'm not going to mix up in no premeditated murder."

Terry eyed him scornfully. "Why not?" he demanded, as if the taking of a human life were a daily occurrence with him.

"Why not?" the cook echoed, aghast. It sounded as though his teeth had begun to chatter. "The law's swift and certain in Canada. They hang for murder up here."

"Sure—if they catch you," the wolf breeder agreed. "But you and I aren't going to get caught. Why, you poor bonehead, don't you see that we're playing a safe game? Even if suspicion turns on us, we have a defense that would clear us in court. Barlowe himself asked for the mushrooms. We didn't suggest it. He even offered to pay you to get them from the woods for him. A faithful servant of the Backwoods Inn, eager to oblige all guests, you went into the bush and gathered what he wanted. You thought, of course, that you were getting only mushrooms that were safe to eat. It was sheer accident—deeply regrettable on your part—that you unknowingly plucked some poisonous ones and mixed them with the safe stuff. Why, no jury would convict you! I can just hear the lawyer laying the case before them."

He paused and intently studied his companion to observe what effect his rather ingenious discourse had made.

Then he frowned in disappointment and irritation, for it had all been like water thrown on a wild duck's back.

Joe was fingering his throat in gingerly fashion, as if already he could feel a noose being tightened about it.

"What you say," he said, "sounds nice. But how do we know that the law wouldn't trot out some other evidence that would upset our defense? We think our secret is safe, that no one knows of our conspiracy. But maybe we're wrong. Maybe we've been trailed this night. Maybe there's even some one listening at the door."

A tense silence ensued, in which Joe stared alternately at window and door. Terry found himself doing likewise and was conscious that he was experiencing creepy sensations so extreme that they felt almost uncanny.

In the cabin stillness, it seemed to them that the storm had suddenly become wilder. The rain had turned to hail, and this was rattling against the log building like machine-gun fire. Off in the forest, a mighty crashing reached them.

"A big tree's gone down!" Joe chattered. "It'd ridden many a storm, thought it was secure. Maybe we're kidding ourselves the same way."

Terry, ever practical, whipped out his pistol. He went to the door; opened it. A violent gust of wind blew his long black hair into disorder. Rain, mingled with hail, assaulted him through the opening.

"There's no one out here," he declared. Nevertheless, his uneasiness persisted. He turned and asked, "Are you sure that no one saw you leave the hotel?"

The cook nodded emphatically. "I was as careful as if I was handling dynamite," he replied. "I waited until long after all the others had gone to bed. Then I softly raised my window and went down the roof of the shed. It was as black as tar."

Terry meditated. "Did you close the window after you?" he inquired.

Joe hesitated. "I think so, but I'm not positive," he admitted. "Now, why can't a fellow remember an important thing like that?"

Terry was scowling. "Who has the room under you?" he asked. "Is it empty?"

"No, Barlowe sleeps there. I'm on the top floor, the attic," Joe answered. "Why do you ask?"

The wolf breeder smothered an oath. "Because," he said roughly, "if you left the window open, a lot of rain has blown in. Maybe it's leaked down through the floor, been discovered by Barlowe, and he's reported to old Logan."

At that, Joe's eyes protruded from their sockets. His lower jaw sagged. "Logan would go to my room, and it would be found out that I'm not there!"

"That's the idea, exactly!" Terry told him acidly. Again he swore. "I might have expected some such slip-up," he growled, "having a jackass for a partner. If you bail up the game like this in the opening stages, there's no telling what kind of an error you may make when we reach the big showdown."

Joe was studying his finger nails, striving to recall. Suddenly he exclaimed in vast relief. "I closed that window, all right! It all comes to me now. The window came down on the trigger finger of my left hand and gave it a bad crack. Look, it's all red and sore! I'm going to lose the nail."

"I'll remind you if you lose your head," said Terry. "Not that it'd make any difference! Well, I'll gamble on your having remembered correctly. It spares us a trip. We won't have to suspend operations and go to the hotel to investigate about the window."

That settled, Joe's thoughts swerved back to the murder plot. "You talk about me being a jackass and all that," he said. "Maybe I am. But I'm not dumb enough to see how craftily you're engineering this thing so that I'll be doing the killing, just obeying your orders. Back up, you're in the wrong stall."

He had figuratively placed his finger on the exact state of affairs. But Terry promptly threw him off the track, eliminated his suspicions, by protesting, "Why, I had no such idea! It's been my intention, all along, to share and share alike. I'll go into the muck to my neck, just like yourself."

"Yes?" Joe asked eagerly. "How so?"

Said Terry, "I have a pocket flash light with me. We'll go out and gather the mushrooms and the poisonous destroying angels. Are they far away?"

Joe shook his head. "About halfway between here and the hotel. I could almost find them in the dark."

This pleased his companion. "We'll bring them back here," Terry proposed. "You put them on the floor, in two separate piles. I'll do the mixing for you, if that satisfies you. If your conscience worries you, you can turn your back and truthfully maintain that you didn't see me do it. Just put down one heap of safe mushrooms and another of the deadly ones. I'll shuffle them. As far as you know, when you turn, they haven't been touched. You can throw one lot away and keep the others."

"That ought to be safe enough," Joe admitted. "In the morning, I can say that I went out early and gathered them to serve them to Barlowe on a breakfast steak. That's the best time—eh?"

"The quicker, the better," Terry agreed. "It takes from nine to fourteen hours for the poison of the destroying angel to get in its work. Up to then, the victim feels no symptoms. After that, there's nothing to be done except send for the undertaker. All a doctor can do is hem and haw and look wise."

Joe shook the quart bottle of whisky.

"There's really only one drink left!" he said hopefully. "But we'll share it."

"You bet we will!" Terry told him emphatically. "I feel the need of a jolt myself."

They split the liquor. Then they went out into the night to gather one of nature's deadliest venoms.

Returning to the trail cabin, bearing their white cargo in their hats, they deposited the beautiful fungi on the floor. Terry had been carrying the destroying angels.

He knelt on the packed dirt. Joe turned his back.

"Hurry up!" the cook urged quickly. "I'm facing the window. I don't see any one looking in. But it makes me feel queer."

All uncurtained windows are that way on dark nights when plotting is in progress.

"All right!" Terry announced a few seconds later. He stood up. "They look alike, don't they?" he asked, in awe.

Joe got down on his knees. He made close examination. "I can't tell them apart," he declared, "and I'm an expert at mushrooms. Only reason I was able to locate the bed of destroying angels so quickly for you was because I'd spotted it before, and dug down into the ground and found the poison cup."

He rose. And now the two men faced each other. Their eyes clinched. Both had the feeling that their relationship had changed. The ball was rolling, their evil plot in the first stages of execution. Up to this time, all had been merely talk. Now, however, they must hang together or hang separately. Thenceforth, in the eyes of Canadian law, they shared guilt equally.

A bond joined them. Their destinies—their very lives—were fused together. If one ever betrayed the other, it would be at the expense of his own neck.

They realized this to the utmost.

Instinctively, despite the hatred that each inwardly entertained for his confederate, they reached out and clasped hands.

"I swear solemnly never to be a traitor to you!" Joe declared in a strained voice.

"I swear the same!" said Terry. He added menacingly, "I also swear to cut your heart out if you double cross me."

"That goes two ways!" Joe countered grimly.

Then abruptly their hands parted. They stepped back a pace and took each other's measure.

A peculiar electric tension was in the air. They had the weird feeling that they were no longer alone, that—though they still remained in the cabin—they had transferred themselves to another realm or plane, and had joined the multitude of murderers of the past.

This was a new sensation to Joe. Terry, of course, had already killed. But, on those occasions, none had shared his secret. Now, for the first time, he had intrusted his fate to the keeping of another. Worst of all, his partner was one whom he detested. Just the same, his emotions of guilt were akin to the cook's.

They must be faithful to each other in preserving their mutual secret.

This, however, would not prevent Terry murdering Joe, or vice versa, to obtain undivided ownership of the gold for which they were gambling their lives.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE THRESHOLD OF DEATH.

NEXT morning, when Barlowe came downstairs, he found Logan awaiting him in the hotel lobby. The innkeeper was pacing up and down the floor. But his gait was no longer wearied. It was elastic, betokening a resurrection of strength.

Logan had not slept much during the

night. This had not been any new experience. For months, he had been lying awake, staring into the darkness, cudgeling his brain for a solution of his financial predicament, his heart gnawed by a dull fear that Martha would come to hardship with him.

Now he hastened forward and grasped Barlowe's hand.

"Have you changed your mind, lad?" he asked eagerly. It was as though the city man's offer of relief had impressed him, after mature deliberation, as being too good to be true.

Barlowe comprehended the other's emotions. He smiled in friendly fashion and answered, "No, I'm going through with the thing."

Logan, still holding his hand, gripped it more tightly. "You're manna in the wilderness!" he said huskily. "If I pull out of this mess O. K., I'll have you to thank for it."

"You'll pull out all right, and no doubt of it," Barlowe assured him confidently. "I'm not a rich man, by any means. But I have something saved, from my salary at the office. Along with it is some insurance money that my father left me. I've hung onto it, awaiting a time to invest. This Backwoods Inn looks like a good bet to me, and a safe one."

"I'll make you my partner, give you a half interest," Logan proposed fervently. He felt that nothing could be too good for his rescuer.

"We'll talk about that later," Barlowe told him. "Now, I haven't enough money to swing the deal. But I have some friends—fellows I went to school with—who have been more fortunate than I in business. They're the sort that always have loose cash lying around, awaiting the favorable opportunity. I know that I can talk them into aiding us. I have in mind organizing a fishing and hunting club. The members will come up here for their vacations. In town, they'll rent a club room and have daily luncheons where they can get news from the scene of action and discuss the big ones that get away."

Logan nodded. "The big fish get away," he commented. "That is why they are big."

"The club idea will catch on," Barlowe continued. "It's already done extensively. You've no idea how anglers and game hunters love to get together and exchange notes. With the place you have here, and the wonderful fishing and shooting, you should have several of these clubs going in distant cities. Nothing I'd like better than going about organizing them."

He was quite enthusiastic, and it was not altogether due to his youth. The Backwoods Inn undoubtedly had all that he claimed for it, and more.

"With the motor road being put through next spring," he said, "it'll be easy to get guests back and forth between railroad and tavern. You have a sure-fire proposition, Mr. Logan. My friends will see it in the same light."

"Are you going personally?" the elder man asked. "If so, you should get under way as quickly as possible. Time is mighty valuable to us now. The date on which the bank closes down on me will be here before we know it."

Again he began pacing anxiously.

"I realize all that," said Barlowe. His voice was grave. "We're fighting against time, and it's going to be nip and tuck. I thought of going in person, as you suggested. Trouble is, the people I'll ask to put up the cash are in several different cities, far apart. You know how classmates scatter to the four winds. The only way I can get to them all before it is too late is to do it by mail. I'm rather a good correspondent if I do say it myself, and I know how to put up a sales argument that sounds convincing when typed or penned. I wrote the letters during the night. How about mailing them?"

"I'll take care of that," said Logan quicky. "I've already had breakfast. Martha will be down soon. While you and she eat, I'll saddle up and ride the mare over the trail to the post office at the railroad. I can catch the down mail easily."

Barlowe gave him the letters, and he pocketed them as carefully as if he were a courier conveying the plans for a decisive battle. That was what this affair was in Logan's life, after all—a Waterloo for his foes or for himself.

"Victory!" he said softly. "We may lose. If we do, we'll go down fighting. And there's always the chance of losing, don't forget that. I've been through the mill, and I know. As a last resort, I can accept Terry's offer. It will, at least, be better than leaving here penniless."

He paused and eyed his companion in frank admiration. "I'll make you a fifty-fifty partner for helping me out of this hole," he repeated. "I wish you could stay right here now, and not leave us at all."

Barlowe's dark eyes flickered with suddenly intensified interest. "That would be great!" he explained, thinking of Martha.

Logan sighed. "There's no money to be made out of this place until the winter passes," he said. "So there's really nothing for you to do here that would strike you as worth while—in the way of cash," he added, sensing that Barlowe had his daughter in mind at that very moment. "As soon as I get the place on its feet, I'm hoping you'll care to come, and never leave again."

"There is nothing that I would like better," said the young chap. "But you might repent of your bargain. I'm not such a business wizard as you seem to think, sir. In the city, I've worked mighty hard, but I haven't really got anywhere. It's the same with thousands of others—plugging away at a humdrum grind, hoping for promotion, deserving it and, when the time comes, finding a relative of the boss or one of his friends dropped in ahead of you. It's just like a rowing machine—rowing your head off and never getting anywhere, not even across the gymnasium."

Logan spoke indignantly. "You underrate yourself, lad," he said. "There are thousands of young chaps who don't get ahead in the city, merely because they are out of their element. They belong out West or up here in the North, living the free and natural life of the open. Generally, when they realize this, it is too late to make the change. Same way with many men who are crackajacks on the plains or in the bush. Put them in the city, and they wouldn't be worth the powder to blow them up. You can't make a good salesman out of a natural-born artist. And a fellow who can do a wonderful operation probably couldn't take an ax and carve a beam out of a Norway pine log to save his life. We're all successes if we find the right job, the thing nature intended us to do."

Just then, Martha came down the wide stairs from above. She smiled the instant her eyes rested on Barlowe. With a gait that was dainty and yet athletically vigorous, she approached.

"I know father has done his best to express our unbounded gratitude to you," she said to Barlowe. "Really, I didn't fully realize, until after I retired last night, what your kind offer means, and what it has saved us from. I think you are simply wonderful."

She gazed at him in such frank sincerity that her father emitted a dense cloud of smoke from his pipe to hide his grin. Then he kissed her good morning.

"That is for good-by, too," he said. "Mr. Barlowe has written the letters for the money we need, and I'm off now to post them. Take good care of her while I'm gone," he added mischievously.

Barlowe grinned and felt rather awkward, doubly so when he noticed that the girl's smile became enigmatic. After all, he had known her such a short time. Her gratitude was genuine, that he was sure of. But was her attitude toward him more fervent than that, after all? He wondered—and could not decide.

To mask a slight embarrassment, he sniffed the air and said: "The bacon smells better and better every morning I'm here. I'm as hungry as a wolf. The cook promised me some mushrooms for breakfast. I hope he hasn't forgotten them."

"Do you really like them?" she asked. "I think it must be an acquired taste, like olives. Still, I've often thought that to be a delusion. I never knew any one that had to acquire a taste for olives. People like them from the start."

"We believe a lot of things that are false," Barlowe commented. "But I certainly do like mushrooms. I could eat a pail full of them, right now. If they taste as good as that bacon smells, maybe I will decide not to leave here, after all."

Hudson Bay Joe happened to be in the dining room at that moment, arranging dishes. He overheard Barlowe's words through the open doorway and he reflected grimly, you'll leave, all right—feet first.

The cook went back to the kitchen. And now there was something about him that suggested a lynx stalking prey. He moved about catlike, laying out utensils like a nurse arranging instruments in preparation for a surgical operation.

Into a skillet that had been heating on the stove he poured a thick liquid that was to be part of a dressing for the mushrooms—including the deadly destroying angels.

He clamped a tenderloin steak between the rods of a broiler, and started it sizzling over red-maple coals.

With a leering grin that was diabolical he stirred the mushrooms boiling in a pan.

Quite surprised was Joe to discover that—now that the crisis had come—his nerves were as rigid as a baited-and-set steel trap, and also as tense. He had expected that he would be highly agitated when the time arrived for the actual committing of the deed that would be murder. With this in mind, he had spent a night of agonizing fear after quitting Terry, the wolf breeder, at the trail cabin.

"I'm as cool as ice," he said to himself. "It must be because I'm playing such a safe game. There's no way on earth that it can be proved that feeding poison mushrooms to young Barlowe wasn't an accident."

Next moment, he was not so sure. There came to him a recurrence of the apprehensions that he had expressed to his fellow conspirator, that something unexpected might occur to disclose the plot.

His sudden uneasiness made him momentarily so shaky that he thoughtlessly grasped the handle of the hot skillet without using a protective holder.

The burn shocked him into a different mood. He cursed savagely, directing his ire at his intended victim instead of the offending skillet.

Gradually, as he turned the steak and stirred the ingredients that were to accompany it, he became calm again.

Presently he was ready to stage the scene that would terminate fatally. By the time Barlowe and Martha finished their blueberries and cereal, his steak and mushrooms and her bacon and eggs would be done to a turn.

So Joe went through the dining room to the door of the lobby. He saw the two young people at a far window. Barlowe was talking to her earnestly.

and she was listening gravely, now and again nodding. Joe could not see their faces, which were turned from him.

"Making love!" he murmured. "Go ahead, boy. This day is your last chance on earth."

CHAPTER IX.

A DOUBLE PERIL.

GREED for gold had maddened Hudson Bay Joe. But as he stood there, watching the young couple, his mood somewhat softened. He was unable to avoid a feeling akin to pity, however fleeting. Barlowe was a fine figure of a man, a proper mate for the beautiful Martha. Soon he would be dead and gone.

Joe's pity, however, was that of a hunter who admires the grace of a deer just before he raises his rifle to shoot it.

His interest in his intended victim was acute. He wondered how much the girl would miss Barlowe; whether she loved him. Wondered, too, what it would feel like to experience death by the destroying angel. Joe had never seen any one perish from eating the poisonous mushrooms. But stories had reached him in his rovings.

He knew that the fate was a terrible one—abdominal pains and cramps in the legs, accompanied by horrible convulsions, together with tetanic spasms, even lockjaw. Then the pulse became weaker—weaker—weaker—until the patient passed from delirium into the hereafter.

Pondering all this, Joe felt a chill creeping through him. He gasped for breath, and called out suddenly, "Breakfast served!"

His voice was so unnatural, the words came so high-pitched and explosively, that Barlowe and Martha both gave a violent start. What they saw looked more like an apparition than human flesh and blood.

"What's the matter?" Barlowe asked, hurrying forward. "You're white and shaking."

Joe mustered a smile. "Don't amount to nothing," he replied jerkily. "I got bad rheumatism from years of tough winters in logging camps, and once in a while it reaches up and gives my heart a twist. I'm all right."

"I think he's been drinking lately," Martha whispered, as the cook turned and vanished into the kitchen. "I've been smelling onions on his breath, clear across the room, ever since yesterday morning. And his eyes have been so red! Father would be furious if he suspected. He's iron-strict against that sort of thing being done by people working here."

Barlowe, however, seemed to have taken the explanation at face value. He shrugged. The matter was none of his affair.

They went into the dining room, staged to be a banquet hall of death. In building the place, Logan had figured on seating a hundred or more people at a time. So, as the two drew up at one of the small tables, they looked very lonesome.

However, they were not—far from it. If Barlowe had had his way, he would have remained alone with Martha forever. She divined this, as he leaned across the table and smiled into her dark-blue eyes.

And she blushed prettily. For once, he had shaken her from her calm poise. Rather nervously, she dipped a spoon into the canned blueberries that, in that country at that season, took the place of oranges or grapefruit.

Barlowe felt that he had won a slight advantage; that he had penetrated her reserve. Of a sudden, he had the notion that he was all clumsy hands and elbows.

They ate in silence until they started their cereal. Then he lost his embarrassment and broke the ice with, "It's

colder to-day. That may make the fishing even better."

She nodded. "You never can tell about the weather here," she said. "You may even see a light snowfall before you leave. It hailed heavily last night. I'm sorry father put a tin roof on the hotel. Yes, we are having an early fall. My, I hate to see winter close in again! It will be dreadfully lonesome."

"I wish I were staying," said Barlowe. "Oh, well, I'll certainly be back later."

"I hope so," she rejoined softly. His heart fluttered. But he was not so elated when she added: "I hope you come often."

Martha picked up a small bell and rang it.

The next course would include the destroying angels.

Out in the kitchen, Joe heard the tingling summons. He pursed his lips grimly. Like a delicate, frail shoot from a root that had almost rotted, conscience sent to him the thought that Barlowe never had injured him.

But Joe had gone into the game with his eyes open. He had experienced a few moments of pity while watching the young couple in the lobby. Remorse, however, was quite beyond him. Barlowe stood between Joe and fabulous wealth. According to the cook's code, the city man had to be eliminated, by fair means or foul.

Joe had everything ready to serve, waiting in a warming oven of the huge wood range. He transferred the plates to a large nickel-plated tray, and started toward the dining room.

He watched the floor cautiously as he advanced. It would be a catastrophe, indeed, if he slipped on anything and wrecked his cargo.

But fate was not thus favoring Barlowe. Joe reached the small table without mishap.

As he placed the viands on the white cloth, Barlowe emitted a deep sigh of satisfaction, followed by a mmm-m-m! of approval.

"Well, this surely is a feast for a king," he said. "If there's anything I like better than mushrooms, it's more mushrooms. Mighty good of you, Joe, to get them for me. Must have been a wet job."

The cook nodded. "Lot of rain fell last night," he answered. "Thanks, sir."

He picked up the promised dollar that Barlowe handed him, the while he reflected that it isn't often a guy pays for getting killed.

Then he retired to the kitchen. The swinging door closed behind him. The place seemed suddenly very hot. Joe went outdoors. He stood on the back porch, gulping frosty air into his tortured lungs.

"That cook," said Barlowe, "isn't as pale as he was."

"Probably had another drink and onion," Martha remarked. "I wonder where he is keeping the stuff—and where he got it."

Her back was directly to the kitchen door. She turned and glanced that way as if a vague uneasiness possessed her and she fancied that Joe still was in the room.

"He's gone," said Barlowe, who was facing the door.

The girl, however, was aware that Joe's presence lingered with them. Therein, she was right. Physically outdoors, his thoughts were concentrated on the dining room, endeavoring to picture Barlowe swallowing the poison.

"He's gone," the young chap repeated. "We're alone again!"

And he eyed her meaningly.

She smiled.

Barlowe picked up a fork. "Never saw better-looking mushrooms," he declared. "Mighty appetizing, just to look at."

"Do you honestly like those things?" Martha asked.

He stared at her as if wondering if she were jesting. "Don't you—really?" he replied.

"It has been so long since I tried any, that I'm not sure."

"They're simply delicious," Barlowe assured her. "Quite a delicacy, in fact. We have to pay a dollar a pound or more for them in the city. Difficult to grow them artificially."

He took up a fork to help himself. "That cook knows how to prepare them," said he. "This is my favorite way."

"They do look good!" Martha admitted. "They certainly must be, the way you rave about them."

"May I serve you first?"

"Yes, I'll eat some," the girl agreed.

CHAPTER X.

SLOW POISON.

BY this time, Hudson Bay Joe had returned indoors and approached the kitchen side of the door that he might eavesdrop. He reached that vantage point just in time to hear Martha say, "Yes, I'll eat some."

This was followed by the sound of a spoon tinkling against a plate.

Joe's heart leaped. He backed away from the door and stared at it as if it had suddenly become charged with a death-dealing voltage.

"The girl will die, too!" he reflected.

This had not been in the plans of himself and his partner. Joe experienced consternation, for it meant that the element of the unexpected had risen. And over and over again, Terry had expressed apprehension that they might encounter such a factor and that it would wreck their plans.

Joe felt so excited that he was bewildered. He wished that Terry were with him, so that they could consult about the new situation. But the wolf breeder was in his cabin twelve miles away, as far as the cook knew.

"I've got to do the deciding for myself," Joe thought.

But, next instant, it dawned on him that there was nothing to decide. He dared not burst into the dining room and warn Logan's daughter. To do so would inevitably bare the entire plot. Joe's dream castle would tumble in ruins. Gone, then, would be all chance of heading off the financial aid that Barlowe was in process of raising for Logan.

As for Logan, he would get to the bottom of the matter. And, with the inexorable sense of justice of an absolutely honest man, he would see to it that both conspirators went to the penitentiary for attempted murder.

Joe was not a man of vivid imagination. But, under stress of the possibilities that were now occurring to him, he pictured all these things in minute detail.

Above all, he saw himself in court, advancing to be sentenced. He stood before the bench; heard the stern voice of the presiding judge; was led away; heard the steel doors of the prison clanged shut behind him, not to be opened until he was an old and broken man.

The cook's imagination at the time was further stimulated by the quantities of liquor that he had been drinking. Panic seized him. He had an impulse to rush outdoors and flee through the dense forest.

Before he realized it, he was out of the hotel, running like mad. But, only a few feet from the back door, he came to a halt. Three hunting hounds were chained near by.

They leaped to their feet, bared their fangs, and growled menacingly.

Joe backed hurriedly away. He retreated to the rear porch, and stood there for several minutes, regaining possession of his nerves.

"I'm an idiot!" he chided himself. "There's nothing to fear. All that will happen will be that there will be two funerals instead of one."

A sudden thought elated him. With his daughter dead, Logan would not have the heart to remain in the Backwoods Inn, where he would constantly be encountering things that would call her to mind. Logan would be only too glad to sell out and quit the place forever. Then Terry and Joe would buy it and have their way.

The gold property would fall into their clutches like an overripe plum.

"Why, matters have shaped themselves for the better, not for the worse!" the cook rejoiced. "This beats burying Barlowe and leaving the girl alive. Queer thing, Terry and I didn't think of it and manage so the girl would get the poison, too, instead of letting chance do it for us."

He rolled a cigarette of native tobacco, and inhaled the extremely strong smoke.

When he finally went inside, he found that Martha and Barlowe had finished breakfast and left the dining room.

None of the mushrooms remained.

"Oh, oh!" Joe exulted. "Enough poison to kill a regiment!"

In mid-afternoon, Logan returned to the hotel, after a difficult trip over a trail made very muddy by the heavy rains.

"We sure need a motor road in this district," he said, warming his hands at the fire. "Well, I got the letters mailed safely, all right. Gosh, it's chilly outdoors! Going to freeze tighter than a drum to-night."

"Going to have more rain?" Barlowe asked.

"No chance!" was the reply. "It's too cold for that. If it does anything, it'll snow. But I don't look for snow. Those are just wind clouds."

"We were out in a canoe, dad," said Martha. "But it got too nippy for us. I tell you, the lobby certainly looked good, especially when we got close to this fire."

"Where did you paddle?"

"Through Loon River Rapids and on into Hermit's Lake."

"Where I saw a black bear that looked as big as a cow," Barlowe said. "Sure was glad I wasn't ashore with him."

Logan smiled. "There are better camp mates," he agreed.

"Tell him about that one you ran into last February, dad."

Logan shrugged. "Nothing much to it," he said. "I was back in the clearing behind the hotel, when all at once a real chunk of a bear came racing into view. At first, I thought he was chasing a rabbit. Deep snow on the ground, you see, and you couldn't make out a white rabbit against it at any distance. But the bear kept right on coming in my direction. I got rather nervous. He stopped, of a sudden, not more than twenty feet from me, and stood there growling. I didn't have a rifle or even a pistol with me. All I had was an ax that I'd brought along to fell some timber. Of course, it was a real bush ax, sharp enough to shave with. But it wouldn't have been any good if that bear had rushed me instead of abruptly turning and making off as fast as he'd come."

Barlowe was puzzled. "Why not?" he asked. "Couldn't you whack an awful gash with such an ax?"

Father and daughter exchanged glances and laughed heartily.

"Son," said Logan, "the man doesn't live who's quick enough to hit a bear with an ax or anything else. Ever see one of them move in a hurry? He'd just give one slap with a paw, catch the ax handle in mid-air and knock it flying. Still, you're from the city and don't know about such things."

"I certainly am in a world strange to me," Barlowe agreed. "People who live bunched up in cities haven't any idea what the open country really is like. They don't have to come up North here to find out, either. You take places in the West. In Nevada, there's less than one person for each square mile of land."

He sighed and said, "I feel tired and sleepy. Don't understand it. Yesterday I had more pep than a wild cat. And it was the same to-day, up until about an hour ago."

Martha nodded. "I'm drowsy, too," she announced. "It must be the warmth of this lobby after being out so long in the cold."

Out in a corridor, just around an open doorway, Hudson Bay Joe was listening. Not that he was particularly concerned with the general conversation. But he was afire with curiosity to learn of the first symptoms of the poison getting in its work.

It was coming at last, he now felt sure.

Nearly nine hours had passed since breakfast. It was time for the venom to begin overpowering its two helpless victims.

First should come a lethargy, such as the young people had just described. Next terrible abdominal pains and cramps in the legs would assert themselves swiftly, unexpectedly. After that, horrible convulsions, spasms, even lockjaw. Then the pulse would grow weaker—weaker—weaker—until the gates of death opened mercifully to release the sufferers from agonizing torture.

"My legs are kind of stiff," Barlowe complained. "I think maybe a walk and some fresh air would do me good. Come along, Mr. Logan. I'd like to talk over a few of the business details with you, if your daughter will excuse us."

The girl nodded drowsily.

CHAPTER XI.

IN AT THE KILL.

WITHIN the ensuing half hour, Terry, the wolf breeder, came upon the scene. He wanted to be present during the death of Barlowe, whom he hated savagely for having interfered with his plot.

A plausible pretext for intrusion was necessary to ward off any chance of suspicion. Terry had it ready.

Alone in his motor boat, he made for the wharf of the Backwoods Inn. The craft limped to the dock. Only one cylinder of the engine was functioning, and it was about ready to stop.

Logan had been strolling in front of the hotel, his guest having gone inside to return to Martha. The tavern keeper changed his course, and went down toward the lake.

"Hello, Terry!" he greeted the newcomer. "Trouble with your boat, eh?"

Terry nodded. "The pump's not working," he lied, "and there are about seven thousand other things wrong. You know how they always come in bunches."

He had, of course, purposely disabled the motor up the lake.

"I'll give you a hand," Logan volunteered.

"Well, if you won't be offended at my suggesting it, sir, I'd far rather have that hired man of yours. He was telling me the other night that he used to be a repair man."

"That so?" Logan asked, surprised. "Well, he certainly has managed to conceal his knowledge around here. Still, I don't blame him. He has his hands full, as it is. One trouble with this world is that if you ever demonstrate that you can do any particular thing people demand that you keep on doing it."

Terry feigned an awkward manner. "I want to apologize," he said. "If I talked too roughly when you turned

down my offer to buy you out. I'm hot-headed, and once in a while my temper runs away with me, try as hard as I will to hold it in check."

"That's all right," Logan assured him amiably. "If there was anything said amiss, I don't recall it."

"That's generous of you. After all, we're neighbors," Terry replied. "Where'll I find that cook—Joe, is that his name?"

"I'll send him down to help you," Logan offered. "If the two of you can't make the grade and get the boat running satisfactorily, I'll be glad to tow you home. Or maybe you'd rather stay here for the night. The lake's a bit rough for towing a big launch like yours with a slow tub like mine."

This was precisely what Terry desired—to spend the night under Logan's roof. But he did not want to appear to be too anxious. "We'll try to get it going first," he said.

Logan went up the granite slope. Terry's lips curled as he watched the retreating figure.

"I'll soon have you where I want you!" he gloated.

He was afire with impatient curiosity to know how his scheme was working out. If Barlowe had eaten the poison mushrooms for breakfast, by this time the venom should be asserting itself.

Hudson Bay Joe was expecting Terry to arrive. But he feigned only surly reluctance when Logan found him in the kitchen and sent him to the wharf. This attitude also was part of prearranged plans. The game was to make it seem that the two henchmen had nothing in common.

Logan remained in the hotel. Martha and Barlowe also were there. But Joe prudently spoke in a very low tone as he arrived close to the wolf breeder.

"Did you fetch some more whisky?" were his first words. "I've run out of it."

The answer was an impatient oath. "What's doing?" Terry asked gruffly. "Things running smoothly?"

They were in the motor boat now, making a pretext of inspecting the supposedly disabled engine.

"He ate the stuff, all of it," Joe answered in a whisper. "The girl shared it with him. What do you think of that?"

Terry was startled. He dropped a wrench and smashed a spark plug. But it took him only a few moments to size up the changed situation. He saw it exactly as had his confederate. The death of Martha would make Logan more than ready to sell out and quit the scene where he would be constantly reminded of her.

"She'll do a lot of yelling before she croaks," he said coarsely. "I figure that Barlowe will stand the gaff as quietly as any man could, barring a Chinaman. He's built that way, even if he is a city guy. I'll be glad when he's out of the way, with the earth patted on top of him. Say, you blockhead, don't stand there staring at me! Grab a tool and pretend you're busy trying to fix this launch."

Liquor had eliminated any fear that Hudson Bay Joe might originally have entertained for the wolf breeder.

He obeyed the order, but he said in a menacing voice, "Look here, you ground hog, show a little more respect for me. Don't forget that I'm the lad that found the gold, and that you'd be out in the cold if I hadn't been good enough to let you in on it. I'm tired of you talking to me as if I was your slave. I'm just as good a man as you are, and maybe better if it came to a show-down. There's sharp claws inside my fur. Put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Come, come, old man!" Terry urged him hastily. "Let's don't start a row down here. This isn't any time to haggle over politeness. There's a double murder under way. You and I've got

to work together as smoothly as two drops of oil, or we may find ourselves in the jug."

Joe grumbled. At the moment, he was standing above Terry, who was leaning over the engine. The cook was holding a hammer. A wild impulse shot through him—to swing it with all his strength and crush the other's skull. Never had he known such hatred as that which he entertained for this man with whom he had cast his lot.

Wisely Joe kept himself under control.

I'll do it later, as soon as we have Logan out of the way and the gold is cinched, he vowed silently. Aloud he said: "How about that whisky? You promised to fetch some."

"I have it here in the boat," Terry informed him impatiently. "But you can't very well tackle it just now. Say, you don't seem to realize the seriousness of this affair!"

"Sure, I do." Joe countered. "They hang for murder in Ontario. I've thought about it so much that I'm getting used to it. But I'm not afraid of anything I say to you. You can't queer me. If I ever hang, you'll dangle alongside me. I bet that long black hair of yours would get caught inside the noose. No, it's a bit short, at that."

Terry inwardly vowed vengeance, not the less sharp for his present forbearance.

Joe, made belligerent by liquor, gazed out over the long lake. Twilight comes early up north in October. Darkness would be gathering by five o'clock. Already, shadows were forming under the trees.

The wind was dying down, though the waves continued to thud the heavy launch against the bumpers of the dock.

The tops of the big pines were rustling in somber, funereal fashion. Above them, dark clouds fled swiftly, like the souls of giants departing to their final rest. It was a fitting atmosphere for death.

That thought came to Joe so forcibly that it awed him and sent a peculiar fear into his evil heart. He felt the presence of death all about him. It puzzled him that he did not link Martha and Barlowe with the weird mood that had come over him. They were doomed, he reflected, yet something seemed to tell him that the Grim Reaper had marked some one else for destruction.

Joe glanced at Terry, then his look shifted again to the leaden lake. Out yonder, the water was fully a thousand feet deep.

A corpse—Terry's for instance—weighted with heavy rocks, would sink forever, Joe meditated. In these deep lakes, with the lower waters always close to the freezing point, bodies of the drowned seldom were recovered. In the depths, they floated refrigerated, with no warmth to induce decomposition that would generate gases and float the remains.

Terry, at the moment, was thinking exactly the same thing.

In common with his partner, he saw the elimination of Barlowe and the Logans only as the first stage of acquiring the entire treasure for himself, undivided.

Each villain was bent on killing his pal for the further reason that neither trusted the other.

Terry broke the tension. He stood up. "I quit!" he announced loudly, so that his words carried up to the hotel. "It's getting too dark for repairs. We'll let the boat go until morning. I'll take advantage of Logan's offer, and bunk here for the night. Rustle me up a good supper, cook. I'm hungry."

"Yes, sir!" Joe responded, wishing that he had more destroying angels at hand, and it would be safe to use them. Then he whispered: "Tuck the liquor under your coat. When I fetch towels

up to your room, I want mine ready for me."

"All right!" Terry agreed curtly.

He strode across the dock, Joe following in his wake.

It would have amazed a stranger to see how swiftly the shadows were closing in. Under the pines an assassin could have lurked undetected by a victim, only a dozen paces away.

The night would be a black one.

The two men reached the summit of the granite slope. Joe turned to the right and took a path around to the rear entrance. He smarted to think that he must continue in the rôle of a servant, while Terry enjoyed himself as a guest.

The wolf breeder opened the door. He stepped into the building where, before morning, his destiny was to be determined.

No lamps had been lighted. The lobby of the Backwoods Inn would have been almost black had it not been for the flickering light from the fireplace.

Logan was not in sight.

But Martha and Barlowe were present, sitting silently in chairs, motionless, as if something diabolical were sapping their strength.

CHAPTER XII.

AGONY.

AS Terry entered, Logan looked up and said: "Too dark to get the boat going, eh? Glad to have you stay here for the night."

The wolf breeder lit a cigarette. "Thanks!" he said, with a heartiness that was genuine. "I'll be glad to pay."

"Neighbors never pay under my roof," said Logan. "Now, business has been so dull with the hotel that not many rooms are ready for guests. Joe knows more than I do about sleeping quarters that can be prepared quickly. I'll have him take care of you."

The cook, arranging tables for dinner, heard him, and came out into the lobby. He beckoned for his confederate to follow him.

As Terry went up the stairs, he heard Logan say to Barlowe: "Why, Martha's gone asleep! She must be very tired. That was a pretty long canoe trip for a bit of a woman like her."

Terry thrilled with a sense of triumph. As soon as Joe had led him into a top-floor bedroom and they had closed the door, he said in an exultant whisper: "Did you hear what the old fellow said? The poison's getting the girl. Barlowe will be next."

Joe had lit an oil lamp, using matches kept in a corked bottle as protection against mice and fire hazard.

He nodded. His face was decidedly grave, in striking contrast to the brutal jubilation that leered in his companion's.

"Gimme the whisky!" Joe demanded in a strained tone of eagerness. He came close, running his tongue around his dry lips.

Terry reached into a large, deep hip pocket and produced a quart bottle. "I only brought one," he announced. "We've got to make it do. This business is too serious to risk either of us getting tight."

The cook scowled at news that he was to run on short rations. "Gimme it!" he said, and reached out.

Terry held the bottle behind him and stepped back a pace. "Hold on!" he said firmly. "You can't tote all of this off. I'll want the odd nip myself."

He looked about. There was an empty half-pint bottle on the washstand. "What's been in this?" he asked.

"Liquor," Joe replied, "and not bad stuff, at that! I found it this afternoon, tucked under a mattress, where some guests had left it. There wasn't much in it—barely enough to wet my whistle."

Terry filled the small container and handed the rest of the whisky to his partner. "This'll do for me," he said. "I want to keep a clear head."

Joe tilted the bottle and drank as if he had just spent a month crossing a desert. He sighed with satisfaction, and tucked his treasure inside his jacket.

"Better beat it!" Terry suggested. "Now, we don't want to talk together any more than is absolutely necessary. If trouble comes up, seek me out."

The cook nodded and left the room. Presently Terry, too, went downstairs. He found his hosts and their other guest sitting in the lobby, just as he had left them.

Barlowe was rubbing his knees and rocking his body back and forth.

"I wonder what can be wrong with me," he said in the strained voice of intense pain. "I'm getting terrible cramps in my legs."

"Maybe you're catching cold," Logan suggested. "I warned you against swimming in that icy lake."

But the father was speaking absent-mindedly, almost as if he were unconcerned. His eyes were concentrated on his daughter. He was leaning far forward, staring at her anxiously.

"It's unusual for her to take such a long nap at this time of day," he said uneasily. Then he rose and went to her. Gently he shook her shoulder and said, "Martha!" His voice was very tender.

The girl responded by a distinct moan. She did not open her eyes. Again he strove to waken her, this time more vigorously. But his efforts were fruitless.

"Great guns! She's ill!" Logan exclaimed in consternation. "This isn't sleep. It's deeper than that. It's a stupor."

He felt her pulse and murmured, "It's slow and threadlike." Next, he raised one of her eyelids. "Dull and glassy!" he announced. "Oh, my darling, you're ill!"

Instantly, Barlowe, who had been watching with bated breath, rose from his chair. He swayed, as if a sudden faintness or nausea had come over him, and had to clutch the chair back for support.

"How far are we from a doctor?" he asked.

Logan groaned. "Fifty miles!" he replied. "We have to do our own doctoring up here."

"Have you a good medical kit?" Terry cut in. "What she needs is a stimulant, no doubt. Get her some whisky."

"I never keep it in the house," Logan answered. "But I have some aromatic spirits of ammonia. It's better."

A hissing sound came from between Barlowe's clenched teeth, as if a spasm of pain had shot through him. "I feel dopey myself," he said. "It's all I can do to keep from going to sleep like Martha."

Logan stood motionless, reflecting swiftly.

"It must be something that you two have eaten," he decided. "Have you taken any food out of the ordinary to-day?"

"Nothing except mushrooms," Barlowe replied.

"Did Joe gather them?" Logan asked quickly.

"Yes," answered Barlowe.

Logan frowned in perplexity. "They ought to have been safe," he said. "Joe's quite an expert at keeping away from the dangerous ones. He's gone into the bush and picked many a mess for other guests in the past. We've got an awful lot of poison toadstools in this country, though, and some of them are hard to distinguish from the safe ones. That's what Joe's told me. I don't know much about the things. They never appealed to me as worth taking a chance on."

Barlowe groaned again, but this time there was more than a physical cause for his distress. He recalled the scene at breakfast in the dining room when he had assured Martha that mushrooms were "quite a delicacy," and she had finally agreed to eat some.

That conversation now came up in his memory like a haunting ghost. "God forgive me!" he said in horror. "She wouldn't have eaten them if I hadn't urged her."

His mental emotions at that moment also tortured him.

Logan bit his lip. But he realized something of the terrible remorse of his young friend, evidently, for he said not a word of reproof.

Terry, however, was not so delicate. "Why, you poor fool!" he said sternly. "You ought to have had more sense than to eat mushrooms up here in the woods."

"He didn't know," Logan interrupted. "This country is all new to him."

"Joe knows, though—or should, at any rate," Terry commented. He wondered afterward just how the words happened to slip from him before he could restrain them. Hastily he added, "I bet he wasn't eager to get them for you."

"No. I've been after him for days," Barlowe admitted. "I finally induced him to gather them by paying him a dollar."

Terry tingled with glee as he heard this confession. He comprehended the weight that it would carry in a court of law. He felt that no evidence could be more favorable to the defense, if the crime ever went to trial. Certainly, it would make jurymen exchange glances and nod their heads.

"Then," said Terry, "it's your own fault, this accidental poisoning of yourself and the girl."

No one challenged his statement, and Terry, accordingly, experienced intense relief. He thought to himself joyfully: I'm out of the bog and on safe ground, early in the game.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MEDICINE MAN.

MEANTIME, Logan was thinking fast, as if debating just what remedies to administer to his daughter. Standing there, he muttered, evidently unconscious that he was voicing his thoughts: "Worst trouble is, I'm not certain that we've diagnosed her illness correctly. The evidence points to mushrooms. But I'm not sure. I'm at sea, on this subject. I don't know what kind she ate, or what treatment to give even if she did eat the ones that are poisonous."

He was interrupted by a knock at the front door.

He opened it and peered out into the gathering dusk.

An Indian stood before him, clad in a variety of clothes that had been given to him by white men whom he had guided.

Logan knew him. They spoke in the Ojibway tongue. Logan's welcome was effusive. He turned and cried out: "We're in luck! This is Wise Otter. He's a medicine man."

The father hurried the newcomer to his daughter, rapidly explaining the situation. Then the doctor of the wilds began a careful examination of pulse and eyeballs. Soon he left her and went to Barlowe. The young fellow explained his symptoms, Logan translating, for this Indian had only a smattering of English.

This done, Wise Otter shook his head ominously. He said to Logan: "They have eaten the destroying angel."

"What can we do?" the father asked in agitation.

Terry understood the Ojibway language. He was following the conversation intently.

The Indian shrugged. "It is a deadly poison," he said. "There is no antidote for it."

Logan stared at him in horror. He stepped back as if to retreat from the dire news. It was fully a quarter of a minute before he could speak. Then he said in a hollow voice, "You mean that my daughter is doomed to die?"

"She will die during the night," the Indian replied, "and the young paleface, also."

The father was stunned. The announcement seemed to have broken him. His face had gone ashen, haggard.

"And I thought," he lamented, "that I'd reached the limit of hard luck when it seemed certain that I would lose my property and be penniless again. This is more than I can bear. Surely, it cannot be true."

"Wise Otter knows. It is true," said the Indian calmly.

Logan asked him, almost pleadingly, "Will it be a painless death, or one of terrible agony?"

The Indian did not answer. His silence was significant.

Logan appeared to be dazed. The fire had gone out of his eyes and had been replaced by a dull look of bewilderment.

"I must carry her to her room," he faltered, "and make her as comfortable as I can during the few hours she still has to live."

Terry volunteered, "I'll help this Barlowe. He's in a bad way. Look at his white, strained face. And his nails are almost drawing blood from his palms. Too bad we haven't some whisky to relieve his suffering!"

The medicine man motioned to Logan. "Let me talk to you—alone," he said."

The hotel man followed him out to the front porch, and closed the door behind them.

Terry went to Barlowe and assisted him to his feet. "Lean on me," he directed. "Well, I guess you won't be going back to the States, young man, just the way you expected."

A couple of minutes later, when Logan and Wise Otter came back into the lobby, Terry was upstairs with Barlowe. Logan glanced at his daughter, lying rigidly back in her chair, eyes closed. But he did not immediately approach her. Instead, he went into his private office, and emerged holding a pistol. Then he beckoned, and the Ojibway trailed him into the dining room. They went on, through the swinging door, to the kitchen, where Hudson Bay Joe was busily rattling pans in preparation for dinner.

The cook glanced up at the intrusion. He noticed the pistol; caught the stern and relentless glare in Logan's gray eyes. He turned as white as flour.

"Wh—what's wrong?" he asked jerkily.

"You murderer!" Logan charged between set teeth, his head thrust forward in menace. "Don't reach for your hip, or I'll shoot."

Joe's hands went into the air in surrender.

"Terry's double crossed me!" he wailed. "He's thrown the blame on me."

The words were out of his mouth involuntarily, before he realized, impelled by an instantaneous surmise that in no other way could the truth have become known. Joe delivered himself of the curse of a trapped criminal.

"I'll kill him!" he declared in a whisper so horrible that it would have made Logan's flesh creep if intense emotion had not been dominating him. "I'll kill him!" said Joe. "I'll cut his treacherous tongue and black heart out."

"You'll never have the chance," Logan said sternly. "Your freedom of movement is over. There's nothing except the scaffold ahead of you."

Joe seemed to shrink, to huddle, into himself. He lowered his right hand slowly, and gingerly fingered his throat. As he did so, the Indian stepped to his rear and searched him, removing a pistol and a blade.

Logan continued, "Terry did not betray you. It was Wise Otter that turned the trick. One of the young bucks of his tribe was going through the bush last night; he noticed a light in the trail cabin, went close, and overheard you plotting with Terry. The young Indian, afraid of Terry's vengeance, kept his mouth shut until this afternoon, when he confided to the medicine man. Wise Otter came right over."

Joe almost foamed at the mouth as he glared at the Ojibway. His look swerved to Logan, and he snarled: "You're aiming to send me to the hangman. But I'll have my revenge. You'll never learn from me why we did this thing. And the Indian has arrived too late. Nothing can save your girl and her lover now."

A shiver went through Logan. But he seemed to have steeled himself by knowledge that the criminals were to be brought to justice. "Come!" he ordered. "We'll confront Terry."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT TERRY DID.

THE wolf breeder still was in Barlowe's bedroom. He had come to the hotel to watch the agonies of his expiring victim, and now he had a ringside seat.

He sat tilted back against the wall, in a plain pine chair, a frozen look masking his jubilation. Terry was the sort that derives pleasure from watching the pain of others. He was doubly pleased because, in this instance, it was his most hated enemy that was suffering.

Suddenly he heard footsteps out in the uncarpeted corridor. He was unconcerned, believing that the newcomers would be none other than Logan and the Indian.

Barlowe's eyes were closed. He twisted and writhed about on the mattress. Pitiful moans came from behind his tightly closed lips. But his foe experienced not the slightest compassion for him.

The door opened abruptly. Terry's chair came down to the floor with a bang, as he noticed Logan's blazing eyes and the pistol that he held so menacingly, and saw Joe's snarling face in the doorway.

The wolf breeder's hand did not flash for his own gun. For one thing, the gesture would have been futile. None knew better than he what a dead shot was this woodsman who now had him covered. Furthermore, Terry was a fast thinker, and he had made a lightning-swift decision.

It was to this effect: He was in the dark as to just how much Logan had discovered and the charges that evidently would soon be hurled at him. Logan had the drop on him, and Terry elected to feign innocence and attempt to bluff his way out.

"What's all the excitement about?" he asked evenly.

"Joe has confessed," Logan answered.

"I——" the cook started to say.

But Logan snapped at him, "Shut up!" And, simultaneously, Joe felt the Indian prod his back with the tip of a blade.

Terry acted his rôle to perfection. His face registered bewilderment. "This must be a joke," he said. "But it can't be, at such a time, with two people dying. What do you mean, Joe has confessed?"

"He has admitted the truth, involving you along with himself."

Terry flashed a venomous look at his confederate. "That's a lie!" he declared. "I don't know what you're driv-

ing at. Nor have I any idea what Joe can have against me, to try to make an innocent man a victim. Why, I've given him old clothes and even some money and a few drinks!"

The wolf breeder was sparring for time. He paused and awaited a reply, groping for some clew that would show him how better to play his hand.

"The mushroom poisoning was premeditated murder," Logan said sternly. "You'll swing for it, along with Joe."

"Oho!" Terry ejaculated. "So that's what's wrong! I was wondering. Murder, eh? But what motive could the cook have for wanting to kill Barlowe and your daughter?"

Again he waited. Receiving no reply, he decided that Logan did not yet know about the gold. This was comforting, especially at this time when there seemed to be so few straws to clutch at.

"You might as well own up," Logan told him. "We've got you dead to rights."

Terry countered skillfully: "Joe's unsupported word will lack weight against me. You'd need at least two witnesses."

Logan smiled grimly. "We have another witness," he announced. "Your plotting in the trail cabin last night was overheard."

Terry involuntarily gave a violent start. The pallor that had been showing in his countenance became more pronounced.

"Who was listening outside any trail cabin?" he asked in a low tone.

"A young Indian belonging to Wise Otter's tribe."

"So?" the wolf breeder inquired quickly. "His name?"

"Johnnie Beaver," the Ojibway said.

A faint smile of triumph showed about Terry's hard lips. Undoubtedly he felt that he had gained an advantage. "Johnnie Beaver!" he echoed. "A known enemy of mine, who would stop at nothing to get revenge on me! It's on record that I had him arrested for stealing some of my traps last winter."

There was a brief silence then. After all, Terry reflected, the game was not going altogether against him, not yet, at any rate.

But Joe took a hand. "They've got us, Terry," he said dismally. "Don't you know when you're caught? You might as well stop bluffing. You've admitted that I haven't anything against you. Why, then, should I try to involve you, if you weren't in this plot as deep as me?"

Terry's reaction was a surge of rage that instantly asserted itself.

"You kitchen rat!" he shouted. "Playing to get off with a light sentence by turning king's evidence and supplying testimony to convict another, are you? I always sized you up that way. Not having a pal with you, you try to rope me in as one. You won't get away with it."

Logan interrupted roughly. "You can tell your story in court," he said. "Joe takes the stand against you, and so does Johnnie Beaver. If you can convince any jury of backwoodsmen, with the evil reputation that you've been sowing in your wake, I'll eat a porcupine, quills and all."

Terry stood motionless, weighing these words. He could not deny the logic of what Logan had just said. Cornered and desperate, the wolf breeder's sole hope had been to bluff Logan to a point where he could gain the freedom of outdoors.

Once in the bush, even the Mounted would have a difficult time finding him. Terry was at home in the forest as a fox. He could make the thicket yield him food where most others would starve, even to the point of scraping the inner bark of a jack pine and subsisting on the paste.

But bluffing a judge and jury would be a far different matter. A clever crown prosecutor would quickly make the defense look as if a cyclone had hit it.

Terry felt that he was near the end of his trail. It had been a crooked, winding one, most of the time through shadows, strewn with victims of his stealing as well as of his death-dealing weapons. The trail seemed to be ending in a precipice, over which he must plunge to destruction. For there was no turning back now. He had staked his all.

And he had lost.

His hatred for Hudson Bay Joe could not have been more intense. It had been gaining force steadily, like an avalanche getting under way. The wolf breeder did not know what had caused Joe to betray him. It did not matter that Joe himself was trapped. According to Terry's code, Joe should have taken his punishment stoically and preserved rigid silence, protecting his ally. That was Terry's code—for his partners, though not for himself. To save himself, he would have turned traitor to Joe without an instant's deliberation.

All that Terry cared for was the fact that Joe had proved to be his undoing—Joe and Johnnie Beaver. "I had a fortune almost in my fingers," he said to himself—inwardly. "Maybe it was millions. That's gone now. But I've played against Logan. And if I don't take the pot, he won't."

How could he prevent it, however?

Logan did not yet know about the gold. But Joe did. Yonder he stood, his lips moving silently as if he could hardly wait to tell the rest of it, that Terry's failure might be made complete and final!

The others were watching Terry in silence, wondering what strange procession of ideas was trooping through his brain. They had no conception of his thoughts, save that they must be evil, indeed.

The wolf breeder was saying to himself: Joe covered the gold ore after he found it, so that no other would make the same discovery. I can have revenge on Logan for beating me, and get back at Joe at the same time. I'll fix the cook so he won't be able to tell about the gold.

As if intuition were warning him, Logan said to Wise Otter: "Go over and search him. He's undoubtedly armed. I'll keep him covered."

But the Indian had barely taken the first step forward when Terry acted.

His right arm seemed to move like a striking snake.

It flashed to his waist, jerked up the bottom of his mackinaw coat, and clutched the butt of his pistol.

"Stop him!" Logan cried. And, even as he spoke, he realized that the Indian would reach him too late.

Terry intended to shoot. Logan did not know who was the intended target. He decided that it probably would be himself, inasmuch as he was Terry's armed captor. Or the wolf breeder might attempt to shoot Wise Otter, too, in the hope that he could dash to freedom. A desperate chance, but a cornered man would take it.

So Logan fired in self-defense.

And Terry also pulled a trigger.

The explosions of the cartridges came so close together that they could barely be distinguished apart.

CHAPTER XV.

INTO THE HEREAFTER.

THE wolf breeder fell to the floor, gave a few convulsive jerks, and lay motionless. There was a bullet hole directly through the middle of his forehead. At the back of his skull was another opening, the size of a half dollar, where the lead had emerged, to hurry itself in the wall.

Logan was a veteran woodsman. He did not carry toy weapons.

There was another victim of the shooting. It was Hudson Bay Joe.

Expert shot though Terry was, he did not make his target where he had intended. Joe had ducked aside. The bullet, instead of penetrating his heart, went through his lungs.

He cried out in agony and dropped to his knees. "The half-breed got me," he said. "I'm done for."

Logan nodded. "Yes," he said, "you're through, Joe. The bullet came out at the rear."

"No more dishwashing for me," the cook said faintly. He sagged back and lay on the floor, eyes gazing wanly at his companions.

"I'm sorry I had to shoot Terry, villain though he was," Logan murmured. "However, I acted to defend myself. I thought he was going to plug me."

And then Joe saw a very strange thing happen.

Barlowe, who had been writhing and moaning on the bed, up to the very moment of the shooting, sat erect.

Logan saw that the dying man was staring in terror at the change that had come over Barlowe. He said, "There's nothing to be afraid of, Joe. You're not seeing a ghost in the hereafter."

He paused.

"Barlowe and Martha did not eat the poisoned mushrooms," he continued. "We've been tricking you, all along—you and your dead pal. It had to be done, to trap you into confession o' your plot. Without the menace of the hangman's noose, neither of you would have cracked and come clean with the truth."

Barlowe was sitting on the edge of the bed now. He lit a cigarette. He said: "It struck me as odd, you visiting Terry one evening, and his coming right down next morning to try and buy the hotel. It seemed like more than coincidence. I figured that the two of you must have cooked up something together. My suspicions were heightened when it became obvious that you were getting liquor. Terry was the only man in the district who could give it to you. I wasn't sure that he had any. But I had none and Logan had none. That left only the wolf breeder."

He stooped and put a pillow under Joe's head. The cook eyed him gratefully.

"I shadowed you," Barlowe continued. "I followed you last night to the trail cabin and overheard your plot to feed me poison mushrooms, though I didn't gather what your real motive was, other than to prevent me from coming to Mr. Logan's aid. That put me on my guard. I told him about it next morning. Just before you came into the lobby to announce that breakfast was served, I took Martha aside and confided to her. She played her part wonderfully."

Again he paused, and a perceptible shiver went through him.

"We didn't eat any of the mushrooms," he said. "You were out in the back and couldn't see when I put the whole lot of them in a bag that I'd brought along and tucked them inside my coat. When Logan returned from mailing the letters, he found us feigning to be in the first stages of fatal illness. I'd already told him, and he'd done his share ably. We wanted to keep you and Terry thinking that Martha and I were dying, and that meant that it was best not to tell you that it was I who got wind of the plot. You'd realize that a dead witness isn't of much value, also that, knowing, I wouldn't have eaten the mushrooms. Still, it was necessary to make you panicky by dangling the hangman's noose above you. So Logan, while off mailing letters, got in touch with Wise Otter and coached him to come upon the scene with the imaginary story about Johnnie Beaver."

"That's all," said Logan thankfully. "Joe, it should comfort you to know that you go to your death without the blood of two innocent people on your hands."

The cook nodded gratefully. He endeavored to speak, but the only result was an agonized coughing. Hardened woodsman that he was, he was taking his punishment gamely. Now and then, he was unable to repress a groan. But that was all. Otherwise, he was enduring his torture as stoically as any Indian.

"I can't figure it out," said Logan. "We're not at the bottom of this plot yet. It's quite plain that you wanted to get young Barlowe out of the way so that he couldn't help me financially. With him done for, I'd have had to sell out to Terry, or else let the banks pluck me clean. But why was Terry so anxious to get hold of my property? That's what I want to know."

They waited. Joe's mouth worked, and his lips moved without framing words.

"This is your chance," Barlowe told him earnestly. "You can make amends to Logan before you die, by telling him what he wants to know."

"Hush!" the hotel man cut in softly. "Don't you see that the poor fellow is doing his best to speak?"

Joe nodded affirmatively, made a supreme effort, and managed to voice three faint words:

"*Gold—pasture—millions!*"

Logan stared at him in amazement. "Is that right?" he asked excitedly. "There's gold in the clearing back of the building?"

Again Joe nodded.

"It can't be a placer mine, or I'd have noticed nuggets and dust in the soil long ago," Logan said. "Is it down underneath, ore in the rock?"

For a third time, the dying man moved his head. Then his eyes roved to the window, as if wondering whether it were open, and admitting the frigid air from without.

His watchers understood. He felt the approach of death.

"I don't hold anything against you, Joe," said Logan in a kindly voice. "I hope that's some comfort to you. Ah, if you had only come to me and told me that you had discovered the gold! I'd have done the right thing by you—the honest thing."

Joe heard his forgiveness, and smiled wanly. But it was very doubtful whether Logan's last words penetrated to his comprehension. For, as if forgiveness had sent him into a peaceful sleep, he closed his eyes before Logan stopped talking.

He passed without any convulsion.

Logan knelt and felt for a pulse. He found none. Folding Joe's arms on his breast, he rose to his feet. Then he gazed for some moments at the two dead men.

His voice was awed as he said, "The Destroying Angel has them both now."

That night, Martha sat in the lobby of the Backwoods Inn with the two who were dearest to her on earth.

"This has been an extraordinary experience," Barlowe said. "I still feel bewildered about it all. When I came North on my vacation, I had not the wildest dream that I would run into an adventure such as I have just experienced. It seems unreal."

"It's real enough, all right," Logan rejoined. "We have two dead men on the premises as proof of that."

All three shivered. Martha drew closer to Barlowe, who was sitting on a settee beside her. He patted one of her small hands reassuringly. And, to the girl, even the presence of death seemed suddenly to have no terrors.

"Yes, it's real," Logan continued. "But I admit that I feel a lot like you. When we went out with lanterns and spades and uncovered that huge vein of

gold ore, I thought I must be dreaming. I've been a prospector in my time, and I know good stuff when I see it. We're millionaires!"

"You certainly are," Barlowe agreed. "I'm mighty glad for you and Martha both."

Logan looked at him quickly and in frank surprise.

"Why do you put it that way?" he asked. "It's true we won't need those loans that you so kindly were going to raise to keep me from losing this place. But you came along in the nick of time, lad, just as I was going under. You saved me, and no doubt of it. I made you a promise, and it holds good. You get a half interest in the whole property, just as if it didn't include any gold mine. That's only fair."

Barlowe smiled at him gratefully. "You're too good, too generous," he declared. "I couldn't think of accepting."

"You will, just the same!" Logan said emphatically. And he added, "You're a greenhorn up here, and I don't think you could find your way to the railroad alone. I'll just keep you prisoner until you do accept."

Martha laughed happily. "I'll decide," she suggested. "We share alike, the Logans and the Barlowes."

"You bet!" her father approved emphatically. He rose and went to the fireplace, where he knocked the dead ashes out of his pipe. "I think I'll go to bed," he announced. "I suppose you two, being young, want to sit up a while longer and talk it all over. Excitement keeps young people awake, and it makes the old sleep peacefully. Good night!"

He went up the broad stairs.

When they were alone, Martha said to Barlowe, "Isn't it all just wonderful! Now you are rich, and you don't have to hurry back to any city office."

He smiled thankfully. "It is more wonderful than you have any idea," he told her fervently. "You're the real treasure that I found in the North, darling. I'll stay here forever, if you'll have me."

"Forever!" said the girl in a whisper.

Logan, lingering in the darkness at the head of the stairs, was watching with intense satisfaction.

He murmured: "That's just the way I used to kiss her mother, when we were courting—long, long ago."

MODERN SCALP WARFARE

TO the victor may belong the spoils, but the scalp taker does not always get his bounty. Such may be the sad reflection of two Kansas men who bearded nine coyotes in their holes, dug them out, and triumphantly collected the bounty on the scalps of their victims. So far so good! But the coyotes have a longer tale than this.

The woman owner of the farm on which the coyotes were found, with that unassailable feminine logic which is at once the admiration and despair of the masculine mind, thereupon claimed that bounty money on the ground that as the coyotes were found on her land the scalps were as undoubtedly hers as any of its other produce.

Discretion is the better part of valor, and the surrender of their hard-earned bounty money in this case will not be condemned by a jury of the scalp-takers' peers. The money was turned over to the claimant, and the case was closed.

It is likely, however, that if in the future coyotes commit depredations on the poultry yards of this logical lady, her masculine neighbors will assert their willingness to be scalped in truth rather than take the field against the marauding coyotes. "Once bitten, twice shy," says the old proverb.

The Gallopin' Kid's Horseshoe

By Christopher B. Booth

Author of "The Gallopin' Kid Slips It Over," etc.

WITH twenty-four hours of time and eighty-five dollars in cash his to do with as he pleased, "The Gallopin' Kid" rode blithely into the cow town of Jasper which, so he had heard, was a right lively place and one of the best towns along the border for a man to amuse himself in. He was on an errand for Colonel Pike, owner of Circle X Ranch, and was in no great rush to get back to the outfit.

Always a friendly and peaceably inclined man, The Gallopin' Kid certainly was not looking for trouble—and yet he rode down the zigzagging main street and straight into trouble aplenty. It is not at all a difficult thing to do in a strange town when one doesn't know the local "Who's Who."

An ancient and dilapidated buckboard stood in front of the long, rambling frame building that housed Jasper's chief commercial enterprise, called "The Red Front Emporium." On the driving seat of the buckboard sat a girl who was young and pretty. The Gallopin' Kid noticed her from a distance of some yards and slowed his horse down to a walk so that he might prolong the view. He observed that she was stroking the head of a dog, a nondescript mongrel, and that the animal fairly trembled with happiness at this unaccustomed kindness.

At this moment "Roaring Ben" Yancy appeared upon the scene, about as ornery a human specimen as any one could expect to find outside or inside a jail; a swaggering, loud-mouthed bully, the town of Jasper tolerated him for one reason and one reason only. He was Lem Yancy's brother, and Lem Yancy was a power to be reckoned with.

Roaring Ben was moderately drunk and, as usual, quarrelsomely inclined. At sight of the girl in the buckboard, he discovered an opportunity for controversy. He swaggered forward until he stood against the front wheel.

"Yuh got my dorg," he announced belligerently.

The mongrel, at the sound of Roaring Ben's raucous voice, cringed against the girl's legs, and the latter braced herself defiantly, giving Roaring Ben a look of intense scorn and dislike.

"Your dog?" she snapped. "I'd be ashamed to admit it, if I were you! How you must have abused him!"

"He's my dorg," thundered Roaring Ben, "and no sheep-herder's gal is goin' ter give me no argument about it neither."

The girl's hand leaped out and grabbed the whip from its socket on the dash, brandishing it warningly.

"Don't you dare touch him!" she cried. "He may have been your dog once, but you've beaten him and kicked him, and no man who treats a dog like that has any right——" As Roaring Ben pressed closer, the whip swished and stung him across the shoulder. He caught the end of it in his hand and managed to jerk it clear of her fingers.

"I'm takin' that dorg," he declared, "and I'd like to see any one stop me."

The Gallopin' Kid had reined up a few feet away, his amiable smile suddenly vanished, leaving his face unnaturally grim. The next instant he was out of his silver-mounted rodeo saddle with one broad leap that landed him squarely at the other man's side.

Being entirely unaccustomed to having any sort of interference with anything he did, Roaring Ben swung around, startled and bewildered.

"Yuh better mind yore own business, mister," he growled threateningly. "Yuh look tolerable healthy, and if yuh aim to keep that way, yuh better draw in yore nose and move on."

The Gallopin' Kid *did* look healthy, dangerously so at this particular moment.

"I kind of got a habit of makin' it my business to teach fellers like you to have better manners with ladies," he said. His voice was soft and drawling and yet there was a tone which made it clear that he was ready for any issue that might arise. "Now, you give her back that whip and do a mite of exercisin' with your feet."

The eyes of the two men clashed, and Roaring Ben realized that here was a stranger to whom the local greatness of Lem Yancy meant nothing at all.

"She's got my dorg," he blustered; "she ain't got no right——"

"I reckon we can settle that real prompt," broke in Gallopin'; "a dog's got some rights, too, about pickin' masters. If you call him and he comes to you, like any good dog does when he answers his master's voice, then he's yourn. Speak up now and we'll let the pup decide."

Roaring Ben was armed, and this would not have been the first time that he had downed a man with his gun with so little provocation, but this young and soft-spoken stranger wore no gun holster, and shooting a defenseless man was a breach of fighting ethics that even the brother of Lem Yancy could not violate with impunity, so he took refuge in profanity. Swearing was one talent with which Roaring Ben was generously endowed.

Out darted The Gallopin' Kid's hand, and before the other could back away, his fingers closed like the grip of a vise about Roaring Ben's wrist. A sharp twist—a little trick that Gallopin' had learned from a California puncher who, in turn, had got it from a Japanese—and Roaring Ben collapsed to his knees with a bellow of pain.

"Leggo! Yuh're bustin' my arm!"

"Now that you're on your knees, which is the right and proper place and position to ask a lady's pardon," said The Gallopin' Kid, "I reckon you'd better tell her how plumb sorry you are."

Roaring Ben looked wildly up and down the street. Several witnesses to

his humiliation had gathered. At this instant he would have used his gun if he could have got to it, but pain made him helpless. The Kid's fingers tightened again and Roaring Ben abruptly capitulated.

"I'm sorry, miss," he mumbled.

"Louder," ordered The Gallopin' Kid. "Whispers don't count. This is goin' to be a *public* apology."

Roaring Ben obeyed and made his apology audible even if reluctant. Gallopin' swiftly flicked the other's gun from its holster and dumped the cartridges into the street.

"I'll leave this here shootin' iron at the sheriff's office to be called for when you've sobered up sufficient. Now—vamose!"

Glowering, muttering, Roaring Ben had no choice but to make the best retreat he could, and The Gallopin' Kid removed his hat to the pretty girl in the buckboard. She was staring at him with wide eyes that mirrored a mingled expression of admiration and alarm.

"Here's your whip, ma'am, and I've sort of got a feelin' that there won't be no more trouble."

"I—I'm afraid," the girl replied tremulously, "that there will be a lot more trouble—for you. It was wonderful of you, simply wonderful! But you shouldn't have taken the risk."

"Aw, shucks!" Gallopin' said deprecatingly. "That feller ain't nothin' but a loud voice and a pair of strong lungs, and blowin' wind ain't very deadly, I reckon."

The dog had emerged from between the girl's feet and was hinting for another touch of her kind, friendly hand. Absently, she patted the mongrel's head as she stared down into The Gallopin' Kid's face.

"You're a stranger in Jasper, aren't you?"

"That's right, ma'am."

"You would be," she said, nodding, "not to realize the danger of what you've done. Men who value their safety do not cross the Yancys—not if they are sane and sober."

"Yancy?" questioned The Gallopin' Kid. "Ain't that the name of the homo who runs some sort of palace uh pleasure here in this town?"

"Yes, and Lem Yancy is the most powerful man in Jasper—the most dangerous to have for an enemy. The loud voice and pair of strong lungs is Lem Yancy's brother, and a blowing wind *is* deadly sometimes. If it has the strength of a tornado, you know. I appreciate your taking my part as you did and the best way I can show my appreciation is for me to give you sound advice—get out of this town just as soon as you possibly can. Roaring Ben—that's what they call him—won't lose much time making things unhealthy for you. It's an unforgivable thing you've done—injured the Yancy prestige."

"Well, ma'am, I ain't much of a hand to go outside of my way lookin' fer trouble, but at the same time I never believed in runnin' away from it once it caught up with me. Howsoever, I shouldn't be a lot surprised that I'm listenin' to words of wisdom and when I get through 'tendin' to a little matter of business for my boss I allow I won't be reckless in offerin' myself on the altar of courage."

The girl removed one of her gauntlets and offered him a browned, strong hand.

"My name is Ruth Denton," she said. "We've got a sheep ranch eight miles north of here. I see you're a cowman, but if you don't mind eating at the same table with sheepmen, we'll be glad to have you drop in and see us any time you happen to be riding our way."

"Thank you, ma'am," responded Gallopin', his pulse beginning to misbehave a little, "and I reckon I'll most likely be ridin' your way—real soon."

There seemed to be no way that he could prolong the conversation with-

out seeming to presume, so he retreated toward Flash, his horse, and swung lightly into the silver-mounted rodeo saddle that testified his ability to ride 'em "high, wide, and handsome."

"Flash," he murmured to his mount as he rode on down the street toward the livery stable, "the truth is that I was never crazy over sheep-herders, but I'm statin' to you, confidential, that I could be plumb crazy over one sheepman's gal without more'n half tryin'. Boy, somethin' tells me that my fate's been writ."

The Gallopin' Kid, it must be admitted, was somewhat addicted to falling in love.

Lem Yancy, who had got rich and was getting richer in Jasper from the sale of liquor that he smuggled across the Mexican border, plus the considerable income from public and protected gambling, was so different from his brother that it might reasonably be difficult to believe that they were actually kin. Unlike Roaring Ben, Lem Yancy was a man of few and quietly spoken words; also unlike Roaring Ben, he was small of stature, and partook not of the liquid goods that he sold over his long bar.

For some reason—perhaps it was nothing more than the loyalty of one brother to another—he saw in Ben no vices whatever. It tickled his vanity to see Roaring Ben make other men knuckle down beneath his bullying. Everything Ben did was right; every word he uttered was the unalloyed truth —with every other man in Jasper knowing that Ben Yancy was an unrivaled liar!

As was to be expected, Roaring Ben carried his own version of the street encounter to his brother Lem, sitting at his desk in the shabby little office at the rear of the saloon. Lem had his usual unlighted cigar clamped between his teeth and a three-carat diamond ring gleamed from one of his hands as he counted a fat sheaf of bills. Another diamond sparkled from his shirt, just above the V of his loud fancy vest.

He turned in his chair as Roaring Ben came thumping into the office, breathing heavily. Obviously, Ben was upset over something.

"Wha's matter?" inquired Lem Yancy from the unoccupied corner of his mouth.

Roaring Ben's first response was a deluge of forceful but explanatory profanity. When he had blown off steam for a full minute in this manner, he thudded his body into a chair opposite his brother.

"Yuh know that sheep-herder named Denton?" he began.

Lem Yancy nodded.

"That good-lookin' gal of his had my dorg, Lem, and I'm askin' for her to gimme it, see, when some dang cowpunch, wantin' to make a hit with her, rides up and jumps offn his hoss, landin' square on my back and downin' me, yuh understand, 'fore I knowed what was happenin'. He gives me a kick in the stommick while I'm already down, Lem, and I can't git to my gun, see, because it was bounced outn the holster when I fell. This feller he gits hold of my gun his ownself, Lem, and says he'll drill me shore if I don't make tracks."

A deep flush of anger began to spread across Lem Yancy's normally pallid face.

"Nobody can do that to *my* brother and get away with it!" he shouted in a voice shrill in contrast to that of Roaring Ben's booming bass.

"And that ain't all," amplified Roaring Ben. "This bird, see, is tryin' to make a big hit with the gal. He says: 'That ain't the only one of them Yanceys I'm goin' to put on the run, lady; I'm goin' to make both of 'em hard to catch 'fore *I* get through with 'em. Lem Yancy has been runnin' a crooked lay-

out and a big game with marked cards ——' Aw, he says a lot more, Lem; I disremember all he said."

Lem Yancy looked as though he were about to choke. Here was disrespect greater than he had ever previously experienced. True, there had been furtive whispers reflecting upon his honesty, but never before had any man dared to voice these suspicions openly.

"Gimme this feller's brand, Ben."

"Never set eyes on 'im 'fore," replied Roaring Ben. "Stranger ridin' a black hoss, Lem. He jest rode into the livery stable—so I reckon he aims to stay around a spell and keep shootin' off his mouth about what he's goin' to do to us Yancys." His voice rose to even greater volume. "Well, he won't be shootin' off his mouth fer long. Soon as I kin git my hands on another shootin' iron, me and that feller is goin' to trade some lead."

His hand moved to a drawer of the desk where he knew that Lem kept a .45. This was pure bluff, for he knew exactly what would happen. His brother interposed with a gesture.

"Wait, Ben," counseled Lem Yancy, "there's a better way than that. Ain't no use yuh gettin' into a jam—and mebbe this smart Aleck is lightnin' on the draw. We'll let 'Tip' Eaton 'tend to that there feller; no chance of a comeback if Tip Eaton happens to git into a shootin' with 'im."

Tip Eaton was a deputy sheriff and Lem Yancy's jackal. A bad deputy sheriff can shoot a man and plead the grim performance of his duty without the unpleasantness of legal consequences.

Pretending reluctance, Roaring Ben allowed himself to be persuaded to this more cautious plan. It was what he had been working toward all along, for he knew Lem a lot better than Lem knew him.

The errand that had brought The Gallopin' Kid riding thirty-five miles south from Circle X called for the delivery of certain papers to a man named Goshorn and their return duly signed and witnessed before a notary public. Goshorn was out of town and did not return until after nightfall.

The Gallopin' Kid was not a coward, but neither was he a fool.

If he had not already been pretty sure that the girl in the buckboard knew what she was talking about, when she warned him against the Yancys, Goshorn confirmed the warning. For Gallopin' mentioned the little matter of the run-in with Roaring Ben, and Goshorn looked concerned.

"There's only one safe thing to do," he emphatically advised, "and that's to get out of Jasper and to get out pronto."

"After bein' thirty-five miles astride a hoss," bemoaned The Gallopin' Kid, "I kinder hanker to have a bed under me."

"Better lose a night's sleep than have Lem Yancy put you to sleep for keeps. And the beds at the hotel ain't fit for a self-respecting cow-puncher to sleep in anyhow. Mebbe you don't like the idea of bein' run out of town, but, speakin' personal, I'd prefer bein' run out than bein' shipped out inside a box. And I'm handin' it to you straight—hit the breeze. Even if you don't give a hoot for your own hide, these here papers have got to be turned over to Colonel Pike."

"That's right," agreed Gallopin', "and I reckon it's only common sense anyhow." And so he surrendered his original intention of spending a pleasant evening holding down one of the chairs at Lem Yancy's green-topped poker table and, perhaps, sampling the quality of Lem Yancy's contraband liquor.

"Where's your hoss?" inquired Goshorn.

"Livery stable."

"Better stay off the main street," advised Goshorn. "Likely it'll be Yancy's

game to get you in a row with one of his men and put you in the fix of either reachin' for your iron or tuckin' your tail. Yeh, you'd better take a back street when you go to get your horse."

The Gallopin' Kid's face flushed.

"I'll be danged if I'm goin' to sneak up any back streets!" he exclaimed hotly. "I've always been able to take care of myself—and I've been in some purty tight pinches, one time and another."

"Suit yourself—if you're willin' to take a chance of not gettin' back to Circle X with these papers," retorted Goshorn. "It's a cinch Yancy will have somebody layin' for you. Don't be a fool, man."

"I reckon I got to remember these dog-gone papers," Gallopin' admitted dolefully, accepting the safer course; and a few minutes later, not overproud of himself, he was slipping through the thick shadows of the narrow lane which paralleled the main street.

Jasper's liveliest hours were after nightfall. Lem Yancy's place glared with lights, and somebody had started the nickel-in-the-slot piano.

"A right interestin' evenin' plumb spoiled," mourned Gallopin'. "And I got a feelin' that the aces would be comin' my way, too. Dad-rat the luck!"

He reached the livery stable and found it in complete darkness. The double doors were open, but no one responded to his "Hello, there!" and it might be taken for granted that the proprietor had gone over to Yancy's.

"Reckon I'll saddle up and leave a silver eagle for pay," he decided, fumbling for a match and groping about for a lantern. He found one and lighted it. And then it happened.

Tip Eaton, the deputy sheriff, discouraged by the failure to find the stranger who had so successfully earned Lem Yancy's displeasure, had come to the livery stable but a few minutes earlier to see if the man he was after had slipped out of town unobserved. The Kid's hands were both occupied with his saddle gear when, from around the corner of a box stall, the deputy appeared, a dim but bulking figure in the uncertain, yellowish light. Gallopin' felt no alarm, for he thought it was the proprietor of the stable.

"Reckon I'll be pullin' out," he said.

The deputy sheriff stepped closer.

"You're under arrest, and I give yuh fair warnin'—no tricks. Drap that saddle and up with yore hands!"

The Gallopin' Kid knew that he was in for it and that he did not have even a fighting chance. He did not waste his breath in questions or indignant protest. Down went the saddle and up went his hands.

Gallopin' was a tall young man and his arms were long, giving him a tremendous reach. The tips of his fingers touched the crossbeam of the stable ceiling and came in contact with metal. It was a horseshoe nailed to the wood, and it wabbled loosely.

"A horseshoe for luck!" he exclaimed under his breath, his mind leaping to the opportunity. Out darted Tip Eaton's hand and took possession of Gallopin's .45. The latter was waiting for that, knowing the man would relax caution once that was done. A sharp twist of the fingers and the horseshoe came loose.

"Can I put down my hands, officer, now that you got my gun?" he inquired meekly.

"Yeah, put 'em down," rasped the other.

Gallopin' did so with promptness and dispatch. Every ounce of his arm-strength went into that sweeping downward motion that crashed the curved U of his weapon hard against the top of Tip Eaton's head. Even the heavy felt of a sombrero was not sufficient protection to break the force of that blow, and Lem Yancy's hireling went down with a grunt, never able to explain to

his own or anybody else's satisfaction what had happened. He was knocked cold.

"Who says horseshoes ain't lucky?" chuckled The Gallopin' Kid as he hooked the shoe across his gun belt and bent down to retrieve the .45 that the other had taken from him a moment before. "Reckon I'll take this along with me. Mite heavier'n a rabbit's foot, but a dang sight luckier."

Tip Eaton, limply sprawled across a bale of straw, did not move nor was there any indication that he would return to life very soon. Nevertheless, Gallopin' took the precaution of removing Eaton's gun also, and making a bit of haste as he saddled Flash.

The Gallopin' Kid slept on the trail that night and the following morning, getting his bearings, discovered that he was not more than two or three miles from the Denton sheep ranch.

"Allow I'll be just in time for breakfast," he told Flash, "and I got a feelin', old-timer, that me and a certain young lady is goin' to get a lot better acquainted. Somethin' tells me my fate is writ this time fer sure."

Half an hour later he was within sight of the Denton place and he paused, grinning, to tie the horseshoe to his left leg beneath the cover of his chaparajos. A horseshoe, worn openly, is a bit conspicuous.

"Ain't nothin' like a horseshoe for luck," he chuckled.

As he had expected, he was just in time for breakfast; he could smell the cooking food before he reached the kitchen door. He sniffed appreciatively and thrilled at the thought of having breakfasts like this prepared for him the rest of his natural life. That would be the sensible thing for him.

The kitchen door was open and he saw the girl at the stove, looking even prettier than she had the previous afternoon. At his rap she turned.

"Mornin', ma'am," said Gallopin', an enraptured smile spreading over his face. "I reckon you didn't expect to see me so early in the mornin', but I was ridin' past——"

His words broke off and a disheartening premonition began to engulf him as he caught sight of a man who had risen from a chair at the table. Not old enough to be her father and not, something told him, her brother, either. His guess was quickly confirmed.

"Jack," the young woman said, "this is the nice young man who came to my rescue in town yesterday." And then to Gallopin', "This is my husband." She dimpled mischievously as she said it, being at heart a coquette.

Jack Denton promptly and cordially invited Gallopin' to come in and have breakfast, but Gallopin' mumbled something about already having had a snack on the trail, adding that he had just dropped in to say "Howdy" and report that he had come to no grief at the hands of Lem Yancy.

Riding away from the Denton ranch, a glum and heavy feeling depressing his usually buoyant spirits, he became aware of the weight of the horseshoe tied about his left leg. Reaching under his chaps, he jerked it loose and flung it out onto the trail.

"Horseshoe for luck!" he exclaimed scornfully. "That stuff's the bunk." He had ridden but a few yards farther, however, when he became more philosophical about his frustrated romance.

"Mebbe it was lucky after all," he said aloud. "I never yet seen a cowman get along with sheep folks. Yeah, I dunno but I'm kinder lucky she was married."

He turned back, recovered the horseshoe, and put it into his saddle pack.

Face the Gun!

by Edward Leonard

Author of "Too Strong to Break," etc.

"IT ain't so much brains that gets a feller ahead in this world; it's cold nerve," remarked the man from Sawteeth Ridge. "Yeh, that's all a feller needs, and it's the same in love as in business. And if you don't mind me getting personal, brother, I might add for your own good that's why you've never been able to get nowhere with Bonita Dawson. You're minus that necessary thing in your system that's known as nerve."

Jerry Kennedy looked into the cold, gray eyes of the man from Sawteeth Ridge and saw there the steely gleam of the sort of thing that had just been recommended to him as his greatest need. This stranger, Bart Lamar, had nerve all right. It showed all over him. And already, though only two days had passed since he had come riding down unknown into Blue Valley, he had been making love to Bonita Dawson right under the resentful eyes of her fiery old dad. Jerry had heard about that and had been trying to pick up courage enough to tell him what he thought about it.

Furtively, he looked Lamar over and decided he would be a dangerous person to quarrel with. The two were of about the same size, big and strongly built, but Lamar packed a six-gun at his hip and he looked like a fighter—like a man who might be uncannily quick on the draw. And equally formidable and forbidding was that thing that seemed to bristle out all over him—cold nerve.

"Maybe you're right," Jerry mumbled moodily. "Some fellers manage to get a long ways ahead of the ruck just on nerve alone."

Listlessly, he turned his eyes from Lamar and gazed out over the wide valley to a distant range of rugged mountains. It was growing dark. A lone, white star was shimmering in the pale sky. A quarter of a mile away, lights were burning already in the little bungalow of "Limpy" Dawson. Close behind the spot where the two men were standing, loomed the Lancaster stables on one of the few great stud farms of the West. In those stables to-night were Dan Lancaster's finest thoroughbreds, which in a few more days were

going to be shipped to Eastern race tracks.

"Yeh, brother," said the philosopher from Sawteeth Ridge, turning a watchful eye to the cow pony from which he had dismounted only a few minutes ago and which stood near with hanging reins trailing the ground. "With men, the same as with horses, that thing, nerve, is what makes all the difference between thoroughbreds and scrubs. And I've got it. That's what makes life for me soft and easy. While a poor bozo like you is slaving away here as old Lancaster's head groom and makin' no more than enough to live on. I can pick up the mazuma with scarcely no trouble at all. I'm on the road to fortune, brother. You just hang around with me a while and I'll show you how it's done. Some day before very long, I'm going to be riding a thoroughbred myself."

"If you can show me how a feller can get ahead in the world as easy as all that, just on nerve, I'd be glad to know," remarked Jerry skeptically.

For a moment the ghost of a smile hovered on the grim face of the man from Sawteeth Ridge. His eyes swept the valley, lingered for an instant on Limpy Dawson's bungalow, and traveled on to the big house of Lancaster, where not a light showed, for its owner was away. He and Jerry were alone, and, as far as he could discover, nobody was nearer to them than Dawson, the boss of the farm in Lancaster's absence and probably with his daughter now in his bungalow.

"I'll show you how it's done right now, brother—how a bozo like me can pick up a fortune in a night on nerve alone," said Bart Lamar, his voice suddenly harsh and rasping, and he swept a swift hand to his gun.

Jerry Kennedy's heart gave a jump and he shrank back startled, bewildered. The gun was pointing now straight into his face and there was a fearful menace in the long, straining finger on the trigger, yet he was not quite convinced that this was more than a playful demonstration of the stranger's quickness on the draw. It was for only an instant, however, that he was left in doubt.

"You let so much as a peep out of you and you'll never speak again!" The words came in a hissing snarl. Clearly the man from Sawteeth Ridge was no longer in a playful mood. "Traipse along now quick over to those stables. And I'll be right at your heels, bo, with the gun handy."

"What do you want of me?" Jerry asked sullenly, for he was still uncertain of the stranger's purpose. "I've got no money with me."

"I said be quick!" growled Lamar. "You've got just another second of standing here before this gun goes off."

For an instant Jerry hesitated, searching himself for a bit of the cold nerve so highly recommended by the man from Sawteeth Ridge. Then the long finger on the trigger seemed to quiver.

"I'll go," he muttered, starting for the stables. "You've got me all right. But what's the big idea?"

"Brother, don't waste your breath with questions," replied Lamar, who, leading his horse, was coming along behind him. "You're about to see me demonstrate how a feller can get himself up a long ways in the world just with cold nerve and a six-shooter. You're goin' to find out I'm no piker. I'm all set to make a big clean-up tonight. It's Lancaster's thoroughbreds. I'm after, you bonehead."

The thoroughbreds! They were worth a fortune! For one of them, the magnificent Black Emperor, Colonel Lancaster had refused only recently an offer of twenty thousand dollars. Some of the greatest aristocrats of the turf were here at the mercy of the man from Sawteeth Ridge. The other

stablemen had gone to the nearest village to spend the evening, leaving Jerry Kennedy alone. A feeling of desperation came over him. For a moment, his thoughts turned to Bonita Dawson, the lovely, black-haired girl over in the lighted bungalow. For her sake he would like to play the part of a hero to-night, but he had seen sure death in the cold, gray eyes of the man from Sawteeth Ridge. He couldn't be a hero and live. Bonita might shed tears over his dead body, but there wouldn't be any consolation for him in that.

"Now, brother, get out the racers, the whole lot of 'em!" Lamar ordered as they arrived at the stable doors. "And don't forget that I'm a bozo who's willing to take chances of swinging from a rope and that my trigger finger is awful nervous. So don't get reckless."

"You're going to ruin Colonel Lancaster and me, too," Jerry pleaded.

The man from Sawteeth Ridge gave a grunt. "Brother, there's one piece of advice about getting ahead in the world that I forgot to add," he returned grimly. "On the road to fortune, you've got to think about nobody but yourself. That's my policy all the time."

Though the gun was still pointing at him, Jerry hesitated once more. "I'd rather be dead than have to face the colonel after those horses are gone," he cried.

"Well, suit yourself," Lamar told him softly. "You'll be dead all right if you don't help me to get those racers away from here pronto. Better decide to live, brother. There's that nice kid Bonita to think about. You don't want to make that girl feel bad by getting croaked."

Jerry gave a gulp. Would Bonita ever speak to him again, unless with contempt, if he helped this man to get away with the colonel's thoroughbreds? Would he ever dare come back to her as a coward? Again he tried to find in himself the cold nerve, the daring spirit, that made Lamar so formidable. But desperate though he was, he could not muster up the courage to risk death.

"You don't have to keep me covered with that thing," he mumbled at last. "There's no gun on me, and you've got me dead to rights. I'll get the horses out, seeing there's nothing else I can do."

"And you're going to throw a saddle on one of 'em, for you're going to do some hard riding to-night along with me, brother," explained Lamar.

There were tears in Jerry's eyes as one by one he brought out the eight beautiful horses that had been left in his charge, for he loved them all. Not even Colonel Lancaster himself took greater pride than he in that celebrated string of thoroughbreds, and the thought of delivering them to this bandit from the hills was agonizing. He was like a mother about to be robbed of her children.

Was he ever going to see them again, these pets of his? There was not one of them that would not come at his whistle, not one that did not return his affection. He had thrown a saddle on the Black Emperor, who was standing now with muscles rippling under his satiny coat, head high, nostrils quivering, every nerve alert as if he, too, sensed the menace of the man with the gun. What could Lamar do with such a horse as this, with any of them, in fact? How could a thief expect to gain enough by such an exploit to make his risk worth while?

"You're a fool, Lamar," said Jerry in a last desperate attempt to reason with the man. "You couldn't sell these horses for anywhere near what they're worth, for nobody's ever dare put 'em on a track. They'd be recognized right off."

"I've managed to think all that out

for myself, brother," Lamar returned with a grin. "You can't tell me anything I don't know already. You're not smart enough. Maybe old Lancaster'll offer a reward big enough to tempt me, but he'd have to show me how I could collect it without any risk. And I dunno as I'd want a reward anyhow, for I've got a hankering for a stud farm of my own. I'm headed a long ways from here, where I'll be safe and where before long I'll be raising a new string of racers."

Almost hopeless and knowing that an attempt to escape would bring a shot from the bandit's gun, Jerry, riding the Black Emperor, started off presently with a lead string of four horses, while Lamar followed close behind with the three others. A moment later in the gathering darkness, a figure appeared, near enough for Jerry to recognize. It was Bonita Dawson, walking from the direction of the bungalow.

"Ride fast! And not a whisper out of you if you want to live!" growled Lamar.

Bonita, who had not yet reached the road they were following, stopped and stood staring after them as they dashed on toward the hills. Then as Jerry, sick at heart, glanced back at her, she was running to the bungalow, and he knew she understood what was happening—that there could be only one possible explanation of why he and Lamar were riding off at this hour with the Lancaster thoroughbreds. But the alarm would be spread too late. Limpy Dawson had not been able to ride a horse since the accident that had crippled him years ago, and there was not another man within miles. Before pursuit could be organized, the stolen racers would be many miles away in the dark mountains, and Lamar, with many lonely trails to choose from, would be out of danger.

The night had deepened by the time they had crossed the valley, and their pace slackened as they began to pick their way along a dim, narrow pass through the foothills. Back in the valley, Jerry had been trying to screw up his courage to make a dash for liberty, but Lamar had been too close behind him, too watchful and alert. In a few seconds the Black Emperor could have left the bandit's cow pony, fast little scrub though he might be, far behind, but it would have taken less time than that for the bullets from Lamar's gun to catch them. And here even that slender, desperate chance was gone. The way was too narrow, too rough, and close behind him was his captor, whose vigilance never relaxed for an instant.

"We ride all night," said Lamar. "And in the morning I turn you loose. But the Black Emperor stays with me, and if you want to go back and show yourself to Dawson and old Lancaster you'll have to walk. By the time you get there, I'll be beyond finding."

The night was growing blacker and blacker. The stars were no longer shining, and in the soft wind that came sighing through the pass was a smell of rain and of wet pine forests. Before long, came a muffled roar of thunder reverberating from canyon walls and towering heights. Somewhere not far off, one of those sudden mountain storms that come almost without warning was breaking violently, but Jerry, absorbed in bitter thoughts, was scarcely conscious of it. Gradually, the trail became steeper and rougher. Slowly, they were climbing out of the foothills, and, after a time, would be among the lofty peaks of the range. And from up there, far faster than they could travel, the storm was coming down upon them. The Black Emperor's nerves were on edge as he sniffed the breeze, and every horse in the string was beginning to show signs of alarm.

A few miles farther on, the trail

spread out into a small mountain park from which the peaks rose abruptly. And here suddenly the storm came crashing down from the crest of the range. Sharp flashes of lightning revealed the bleak summits, and, with a terrific thunderclap, the rain came like a cloud-burst. For an instant, startled and quivering, the Black Emperor stopped. Then he gave a leap, and only the tightened reins kept him from bolting. The four horses behind him began to rear and plunge wildly.

The next moment the lead rope was jerked from Jerry's grasp and the string of racers, finding themselves free, went dashing ahead into the valley. Jerry had not made much of an effort to hold the rope, and now, instead of setting out in pursuit of the fugitives, he held the Black Emperor in check. With a few seconds of start, he reasoned, the runaways would make good their escape and might find their way at last back to the Lancaster stables, and already close behind him the other string of horses was making trouble for Lamar. The terrified thoroughbreds were tugging at the lead rope, to which the bandit, half blinded by the rain sweeping against his face, was clinging desperately.

In that moment Jerry saw his chance. Lamar was too busy to keep his eyes on him—too busy to pull his gun even though he should discover he was being deserted—and, feeling the sudden loosening of the reins on the bit, the Black Emperor plunged off into the dark.

The next instant Lamar discovered that his captive was escaping, and risking the loss of the plunging string of horses he reached for his gun. As he fired after the fugitive, the shot added to the terror of the racers, and, with wild leaps, they broke loose from the hold of the one hand the bandit was able to give to the lead rope, and went tearing off after the four others.

Horse and rider unscathed by the bullet that had been sent after them, the Black Emperor was showing all the speed that had made him famous, and Lamar and his cow pony were soon left far behind. In that unknown spot where there was no longer a trail to guide them it was a reckless pace in the dark, but luck was with them for a time at least and the ground lay smooth and safe under the racer's flying feet.

Presently, Jerry turned the Black Emperor to the other side of the valley, where, confident at last that he was safe from Lamar, he swung round and headed for the trail that would lead him down through the hills and home. Around him the storm that had burst so quickly was still roaring furiously. He heard the crash of falling trees and the rush of torrents of water surging down through deep arroyos. But, before long, the Black Emperor's fright had spent itself and his pace slackened, and half an hour later, when the home trail had been found and the mountain valley was being left far behind them, the storm, too, was losing its greatest force.

Then, at last, in the narrow pass through which Jerry had ridden with Lamar's menacing gun behind him, he caught sight of a horse and rider approaching rapidly. The horse, as he discovered after a moment, bore a strange resemblance to Bonita Dawson's fast gray mare. And then the rider's face appeared out of the dark. It was a girl—Bonita Dawson herself.

"Bonita!" Her name came in a gasping whisper from Jerry's lips and his face flushed with sudden shame. She had seen him riding away cowed by Lamar's gun, meekly submitting to the theft of Colonel Lancaster's racers, and now the bandit and the thoroughbreds, all but the Black Emperor, were gone. And he himself was coming back in disgrace while she was evidently riding

in pursuit of the bandit and the stolen horses.

"Bonita!" he cried aloud.

As she drew up before him, he could see her dark eyes flashing scornfully. "So you let him get away!" she exclaimed in a voice that rang with withering contempt.

"He had me dead to rights, kid," Jerry tried to explain. "What else could I have done with his gun covering me all the time? But he's lost the horses, the whole bunch. They broke away from us in the storm."

"And you've left him back there to round 'em up," said Bonita with a sneer.

"If I'd stayed with him, he'd have had the Black Emperor, too," Jerry argued with a weak effort to show himself in a better light. "Give me credit for a little sense anyhow, kid. An unarmed feller up against a bad, quick-shooting hombre like Bart Lamar would have a swell chance, wouldn't he?"

"That bird's not going to be up against somebody who's unarmed when I get sight of him," Bonita declared grimly. "I'm packing a gun myself. Since dad couldn't come himself, I just lifted his six-shooter and sneaked out without his knowing it."

Jerry stared at her in alarm. "Bonita, you wouldn't have no chance at all against a bozo like him—not even with that shooter. He's as quick on the draw as they're made, and he'd send a bullet into you sure if he had to. You come back with me and we'll get help. Be sensible, kid."

"You poor prune!" she cried. "I'll let you do the riding to get help. By the time you're back with it, it'll be too late. I'm going on after those horses."

"You're not going alone!" Jerry protested.

"Sure I am. D'you think I want a bird like you along with me? You'd be a whole lot of help, you would. Go on back to the valley and tell the story of what a hero you've been."

Without another word, she dug her spurs into the gray mare, and, dashing past Jerry and the Black Emperor, went riding swiftly on into the hills. For a moment, Jerry hesitated. Then he swung the big racer around and followed her. But on that rough, ascending trail, which steadily grew steeper and steeper, even the Black Emperor, tired now and unaccustomed to the hills, found the fast, wiry, gray mare a hard horse to overtake, and the girl and her mount had already disappeared into the darkness. And when the trail spread out at last and was lost in the mountain valley where the strings of thoroughbreds had made their escape, there was still no sign of her.

"She'll never find Lamar," muttered Jerry in an effort to still his fears. "He's a long ways off through the mountains by now chasin' those horses. But I can't leave her up here alone. She'll ride all night, that kid, if I don't stop here somehow."

As he came to the far end of the valley, some barely audible sound came to his ears, and, startled, he pulled the Black Emperor to a standstill and sat listening with bated breath. And after a moment, he heard the sound again, more clearly. It was the whinny of a horse. Convinced that not far ahead, at least, one of the runaways was roaming, he rode on. But, presently, it was not one of the missing thoroughbreds he discovered, but Bonita, standing beside her gray mare.

"I thought I told you to go home!" she whispered fiercely as he rode up to her. "Now you've come just in time to spoil everything if you don't keep quiet. He's over there with the horses —over there under that ridge just ahead of us. A horse gave a whinny a minute ago, and then I heard Lamar's voice."

"Kid, if he's there get out of this

quick!" Jerry pleaded. "You can't do nothing—nothing at all. And you're liable to get hurt, or killed maybe."

Bonita's gun was in her hand and she was peering ahead through the dark. "I wish you hadn't come," she muttered. "A poor timid bird like you is no use to me. Go back and leave me alone! This is my job."

"Kid, have you gone crazy?" asked Jerry. "That bozo is a killer."

Without a word, she swung the reins over the mare's head, left her standing and walked on alone. If it had been any other girl but Bonita Dawson, Jerry would have run after her and dragged her back. But he knew he couldn't drag Bonita back—not while she had that gun in her hand. He knew what sort of indomitable spirit could blaze in the dark eyes of old Limpy's daughter. But, swinging from the saddle and leaving the Black Emperor with the mare, he followed the girl slowly, cautiously, his heart beating fast with alarm. She was a good many steps ahead of him as she drew near the ridge and the distance between them was widening steadily, for Jerry's feet were dragging and his fear of Lamar was growing fast.

Faintly two figures, shadowy and almost indiscernible, loomed before Bonita in the dark—a saddled horse and a few feet away from it a man, standing rigid as a rock. Evidently, he had either seen or heard something that had roused him to watchful attention. And then, after a moment, came from the dim figure of the man a mocking laugh.

"So it's you, sister!" came the voice of Bart Lamar. "Another thoroughbred! Yeh, kid, you're a thoroughbred I'd give the whole bunch for. And you've come to me. You've come to the bozo that'd rather have you than all the racers in the world."

"Yes, I've come to you, Bart," said Bonita softly. "I told you I would if I couldn't stand living without you."

For a moment Lamar was silent, puzzled, it seemed, by a confession he had scarcely expected.

"You—you mean that, kid?" he stammered, drawing closer to her while Jerry remained out of sight in the dark. "You mean you've come here because you want me? I figured it was the horses you was after. I'd made up my mind you wouldn't have no more likin' for me at all after that trick I pulled down there in the valley to-night."

"I want you, Bart."

Bonita's voice was quivering, and there was a yearning in it that, as it floated back to Jerry Kennedy, turned his heart to lead. So this was why she had insisted on riding on alone! She was in love with Lamar. That was why she had followed the bandit—not because of Lancaster's horses. Jerry had suspected as much almost since the day the stranger from Sawteeth Ridge had come riding into Blue Valley.

"It's too late to change your mind, kid," said Lamar fiercely. "I reckon you understand that. You're coming with me to-night whether you want to or not."

The man from Sawteeth Ridge reached out his arms for Limpy Dawson's daughter; then drew back from her with a startled curse, for Bonita's gun was pointing in his face.

"I said I wanted you, you pesky horse thief—and now I've got you!" she cried. "Throw up your hands!"

But in that tense moment the cold nerve Lamar had boasted of to Jerry Kennedy as his chief asset, asserted itself. His hands did not go up, neither did he budge a muscle. His hard lips moved in a slow smile.

"Baby, you wouldn't use that thing on me," he remonstrated. "You wouldn't kill the bozo that loves you—not while he's looking into your eyes. Drop the gun, kid, and come to me. I don't scare easy."

"I will shoot!" she gasped out. "I'll

sure shoot to kill if you come one step nearer. And, if those hands of yours don't go up pronto, there's going to be a dead horse thief in these hills. If I ever cared anything about you, I don't no more since I've found out what kind of a hombre you are. I mean every word of it, Bart. Put 'em up now quick while I frisk you for your gun, for I'm here to get those horses."

Lamar's face hardened. "I've never yet put up my hands for anybody," he growled, "and I don't begin now—not even for a girl as pretty as you. Shoot if you want to! I'm game. I've got to die some time, and it might as well be now."

Bonita's gun hand was beginning to tremble, and she seemed to find something hypnotic in the cold, gray eyes fastened so steadily upon her. But there was only fierce determination in her voice when she spoke again. "I'm going to shoot, Bart! One more second you've got—that's all!"

Lamar's right hand was twitching. And that lightning-quick hand could have pulled the gun from his belt perhaps before Bonita's quivering finger could pull the trigger of her own weapon. If she had been a man, he would have taken the chance. For a moment he seemed to be calculating whether there was a bare possibility of pulling the gun and disarming her before she would shoot.

"No, baby, I won't draw on you," he decided with a sigh. "Shoot when you're ready!"

But it was his eyes that were disarming Bonita. With that cold, steady stare of his upon her, she knew she couldn't shoot to kill. Already her trembling gun hand was almost beyond control. Another moment, and the weapon might slip from her fingers. And then she would be at Lamar's mercy—his prisoner—and she knew there would be no escape, for she could expect no help from Jerry Kennedy, standing off in the dark in terror.

From behind the ridge, came the whinny of a horse.

"You've rounded 'em up!" she cried. "I knew you must have found 'em or you wouldn't have been waiting here."

"Yes, they're all back in there, sister, the whole bunch. And they're all yours if you kill me. I've got 'em trapped. They ran back there into a little bowl in the hills, and the narrow pass they went through was the only way in or out. And just after they passed in, the cloud-burst started a little landslide, and that pass is blocked now by rocks and silt. You'd have hard work getting 'em out alone, kid."

"I don't want your help, Bart Lamar!" Bonita's voice rose shrill and hysterical. "And your time is up! I'm going to shoot!"

Yet she knew now she couldn't shoot to kill—not while those steady gray eyes were fastened upon her. She must look away from them—free herself from their hypnotic spell. She turned her own eyes into the darkness and pulled the trigger of the shaking gun. And, as the report rang out, Lamar sprang at her.

"Missed me by a hair!" he cried, knocking the gun to the ground and fastening a grip of iron on her wrists. "Instead of death for me, sister, I've got the only thoroughbred I really want—the finest girl on earth!"

Off in the darkness, Jerry Kennedy had seen courage incarnate in the dim figure of the man from Sawteeth Ridge. He had seen demonstrated that cold nerve Lamar had boasted of, and the sight had thrilled him. He had seen two thoroughbreds facing one another with grim challenge—Lamar and Bonita Dawson. He had seen indomitable daring such as he had never dreamed of—the reckless daring of a thief who was not afraid to die.

And now he saw the girl he loved in

Lamar's power, helpless, doomed to be carried away captive by the man she had come here to kill.

"Cold nerve!" muttered Jerry Kennedy. "Cold nerve! That's what I've got to show, or life won't be worth living for me."

Silently, he ran toward the ridge, where Lamar was struggling with Bonita. The bandit was too busily occupied with his fighting, clawing captive to discover that the girl had not come here alone. It was not until Jerry was scarcely ten feet away that Lamar became suddenly aware of the intruder. Then, with a curse, he loosened his hold on his prisoner and pulled his gun.

But Lamar, quick though he was, was a fraction of a second too late. As he raised the weapon to fire, Jerry was already upon him, pinioning his arms to his sides. The gun went off, but the bullet buried itself harmlessly in the ground.

"Cold nerve!" thought Jerry. "That's what I've got to have now or I'm a dead man. He won't miss me if he gets a chance to shoot that thing again."

Then Lamar wrenched himself away, and the muzzle of the gun was thrust into Jerry's face.

"Two seconds to say your prayers, brother!" cried the man from Sawteeth Ridge. "And then it's going to be—good-by."

"Cold nerve!" breathed Jerry Kennedy. "Cold nerve!"

If he had to die, he would die as Lamar would have died, without flinching, with unshaken courage; and, with this thought in his mind, he sprang at the gun.

"You poor fool!" cried Lamar, and raising the gun he brought it down with a heavy blow on Jerry's bare head. And the man who suddenly had decided to die like a hero, dropped senseless to the ground.

Then Lamar turned to Bonita. "Kid, he's the bozo you want—not me," he said. "That's why I didn't send a bullet clear through him—because I'm fond of you, baby, and I didn't want to break your heart. Take him back to Blue Valley when he comes out of his trance and tell him he's a hero—a man with cold nerve who's not afraid to die. For that's what he is, sister—a thoroughbred like you and me. And because I don't want to ruin the hombre you're going to marry, you can take the horses with you—the whole bunch of 'em. I reckon I'm right, ain't I, sister, that Jerry Kennedy's the bozo you've always wanted—want now more than ever, since you've seen the stuff that's in him?"

"You're right, Bart," said Bonita softly. "He's the man I've always wanted. And now I know he's a thoroughbred—like you."

HORNED OWLS ON THE RAMPAGE

THE horned owl is, at present, on a rampage of destruction in southern British Columbia. And, since he represents a decided menace to all animal life, he should be repulsed immediately, according to a member from Victoria who recently addressed the Provincial Legislature on the subject.

The bird's taste seems to be quite omnivorous, since quail, pheasant, grouse, and the more common wild fowl, as well as dogs and cats, fall victim to his appetite. The Victorian member of the Provincial Legislature declared that he had recently detected one of the owls in the act of carrying off his pet cat!

The habitat of the horned owl is, normally speaking, the Far North, where its natural prey is the wild rabbit. Every four or five years, however, there is a shortage of rabbits, which sends the birds southward in search of food.

Silver Trail

By Max Brand

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

HAVING shot a man in self-defense, John Signal flees to the mountains and there meets the famous Henry Colter. Refusing to join him, Signal goes to Monument, a mining town, to look for work. At an employment agency he gets the name "John Alias." His horse is stolen, and a bystander mentions Sim Langley as a lover of horseflesh. The sheriff proves of little help, but promises to make Alias his deputy if he recovers the horse. John rides off with his mount under the nose of Langley and his helpers, and has a glimpse of a beautiful girl, Esmeralda.

As deputy, John is posted by Sheriff Ogden on the feuds of the Bones and the Eagans. Ogden favors the former. John is approached by the leaders of both gangs, but declines to join either.

Young Pancho Pineta is brought in wounded, with a tale of the holdup of his brothers' mule train by a cowardly fellow with masked aids.

CHAPTER XV.

DRIVEN TO THE WALL.

THEY carried young Pineta to the hospital—there were half a dozen volunteers for that work of mercy—and he was taken off, raving vioently, and shouting: "All is lost!"

Peter Ogden, in the meantime, was left behind with his deputy. The sheriff was in great trouble and confusion of mind, apparently. He said, with bitterness: "They drive me to the wall, John Alias! They drive me to the wall. Haven't I showed them that I'll put up with smaller things, but I won't stand for murder?"

And Signal could not help asking tersely: "Is it true that men are killed nearly every day in the streets of Monument?"

The sheriff turned a clouded eye upon him.

"And why not?" said he. "Isn't it better that they *should* die every day—crooks killing crooks—poison fighting poison? But the honest men—and here are ten of 'em butchered, by heaven!"

"How do you class smugglers?" asked Signal quietly. "Are they among the honest men?"

"You can't be too absolute," answered the sheriff, sighing. "Of course, they're doin' crooked work, but not so very crooked. I bust them up when I can, but I don't hunt 'em too

hard. They bring in goods that we need. They take out goods that they need South across the border. What harm did these Pinetas do? By their way of thinking, it was as honest work as any man could want, with just enough danger splashed in to make it fun! And ten of 'em murdered! Ten!"

He raised his fist above his head.

"I'm going to smash somebody for this!" vowed Peter Ogden. "I'm gunna smash somebody!"

Then he turned to the boy.

"Scatter down into the town. Keep your ears open. Find out what you can. Pick up some sort of a trail. Ride to San Real Canyon, if you have to. It's only five mile out. Look over the ground!"

Nothing was more to the mind of young Signal. He took the roan horse and rode out to the place, quickly directed by the first passer-by.

He found it all taht the wounded boy had claimed. A narrow trail, worn deep into the rock, descended into the canyon, which wound back and forth uncertainly. It was a naked, sun-blasted place, with not a tree in sight, only shrubs which had taken a precarious finger-hold here and there among the boulders. And along the trail the dead lay. Ten men, as the boy had declared, all Mexicans, seven of them ragged peons, and two others—the brothers of Pancho, no doubt—dressed with more care. Every item of value had been stripped from them.

On the trail was also a dead mule, and four others lay in the hollow of the canyon, where they had fallen, toppling from the trail above. All was silent. And overhead the buzzards were circling in narrow loops, ready to settle to the feast.

But as for clews, they were hard to come at. There was a jumble of sign of men and horses. It was only by dint of careful trailing that he was able to find the place back among the big rocks where the horses of the killers had been held while the butchery went on.

Anger such as had possessed the sheriff now was rising in the young deputy as well. With all his heart he searched the sign that remained between the rocks for some token worthy of following, but there was nothing to be discovered, except, where the trail thinned out at the point where the victors had ridden off in single file, a small bit of iron—the calk and end of one side of a horseshoe.

It was recently broken. There was no doubt of that. The crystallized metal shone sparkling in the sun. So Signal sat down to think over the thing. It was a shoe for a right forehoof, snapped at this point by being planted with force on the face of a hard rock, and there was no doubt that very skillful trailing might enable him to run back this clew to some important source.

He could hear men coming down into the canyon, now, men sent out by the sheriff from Monument. The sheriff himself was among them, but the boy did not waste time talking with them. He hoped that this clew might lead him on to some deed of importance, that he might prove to Monument that he stood definitely upon the side of law and order, and so choke off such further articles upon him as the *Recall,* in its venom, might be apt to print.

For a quarter of a mile he had no difficulty at all. Again and again, where the animals stepped on impressionable ground, he discovered the incomplete mark of the broken horseshoe. And his heart was beginning to rise high when the sign showed where the whole procession entered a region of well-compacted gravel—hardly gravel, indeed, but rather a strewing

of small rocks such as are rounded and milled by the action of running water. There he lost the trail utterly.

He rode in circles, beginning at the center, but though he found several of the trails again, issuing from the rocks, he could not find the sign of the broken shoe.

Might it not be, indeed, that the rider had dismounted here and pulled off the telltale shoe?

For two long hours he labored; and then, with deep disgust, he gave over his work and turned the roan back toward Monument. If that eagle-eyed man, his father, had been with him—ah, that might have meant a different result!

Back to Monument, then, hungry, hot, and tired. For it was a blazing day, with no wind blowing across the hills. Where the big teams were hauling up and down the grade to Monument, the dust they raised mounted slowly straight up. Every wagon was lost in an unpleasant mist, with the leaders of the team walking continually out of it, powdered white. Monument itself glistened in the sun and the windows flashed blindingly where the rays struck them. And there appeared to the boy something so monotonous, so humdrum about this picture, that he felt despair of ever accomplishing any feat worth recording. Other men, keener and stronger than himself, filled that city. Men keen and strong enough to murder ten men, and wound another, and come clean off. And this within an hour's ride of the town!

A downhearted man was John Signal as he entered the streets of the town, keeping to the shady side and using a bandanna to mop his streaming forehead.

And as the horse went on, he was aware of other riders coming behind him. He turned a little and saw that one was Charley Bone, dressed as brilliantly as ever, snapping a quirt with his left hand and controlling his beautiful black horse by means of his knees alone. He seemed quite uninterested in Signal. For that matter, so did the man across the street from Charley Bone. Never before had Signal seen the fellow, but he could recognize him well enough from the photographs which he had studied in the office of the sheriff earlier that morning. It was "Doc" Mentor, famous among the adherents of the Bone tribe for relentless ferocity.

What kept the two riders in this fashion just behind the deputy sheriff?

Signal turned down a side street, and instantly there was a sharp whistle, twice repeated, behind him. He did not look back. He was tempted either to put the spurs to his horse, or else to back against the wall and draw his guns to settle the matter then and there. Instead, he took the more moderate course of bearing straight forward, not letting the roan hasten a step.

He was halfway down the block when he saw a rider jog on a piebald, ugly horse into the middle of the street at the next corner, where the anvil of a blacksmith was clanging. And this rider dismounted quickly, threw the reins of his horse, and stood at the head of the animal, resting on a rifle.

It could not be said that in this town such a maneuver was suspicious. The man might simply have dismounted to enjoy the shade here, while waiting the turn of his horse to be shod. But then again, it was very doubtful if he had not some connection with that sharp and repeated whistle which Signal had heard from the rear.

The deputy sheriff turned his head enough to glance back down the street again; and there behind him, still riding as far apart as the width of the street permitted them, he could see Charley Bone and Doc Mentor.

It was good tactics which separated them as much as the street allowed,

of course. For in case the man they stalked should turn, he could not cover them both with one gesture. He would have to swing his gun in a wide arc, if he attacked one and then the other. Bitterly, Signal wished, then, that he had mastered two-gun play. His father had spoken scornfully against it.

"Two guns are like two tongues. If you had 'em, what would you do with 'em? Speed is mostly bunk, too. Accuracy, my boy! Accuracy is the thing. Hit a dime at twenty yards; punch a button through the chest of a man at the same distance. That's what wins a fight!"

Signal was plainly cornered. No matter what explanation might be made of the man who stood in the shade of the tree at the next junction, it was very odd that he should need to sling his rifle across the crook of his left arm, which was exactly what he was doing now!

John Signal grew cold. If a fight started against two such men, so skillfully placed, he would have to go down, and he knew it. And now he saw to his right a narrow, open gate which led into the rear yard of the blacksmith's shop. He did not hesitate, but turned the roan straight into it. A convulsive shudder went coldly up his back as he approached the gate. From the tail of his eye he saw Charley Bone bringing his horse to a trot.

But no bullet was fired, and he rode safely through the entrance. Once inside, however, he well understood why he had been allowed freely to pass into this cover. For the yard behind the shop was entirely closed around with a smooth wall of wood, six feet high. The roan could jump, but he could not jump that. He might, of course, abandon the horse, and go on alone over the fence, but he felt that this would wreck his reputation as a fearless man in this city of men without fear.

So he dismounted and walked straight into the shop itself, leading the horse behind him.

CHAPTER XVI.

RE-ENTER HENRY COLTER.

IT was by far the largest shop in Monument. Two thirds of the mule teams passed through the hands of the smiths here, who stripped off the tattered shoes and trimmed the hoofs and hammered and banged the new shoes into place. When Signal stepped inside, he was caught on a wave of crashing sound that never died. Shouting voices—for ordinary speech would never be heard—and the screeching of bellows, and the trampling and snorting of horses, and above all the ceaseless shower of blows which fell, with eight or twelve-pound hammers, upon six echoing anvils.

In the bright sunshine of Monument, this shop was a sort of little Hebrides, perpetually dim with clouds of smoke that rose from the six forges as the flames bit through fresh feeds of coal. Blue-white, thick and stifling, the mist curled outside the chimney hoods which vainly strove to draw up the smoke, and the great rafters above were seen by glimpses, clotted with soot. The great double doors at front and in the rear were always open, and through them wisps and puffs of smoke continually rolled, so that the only sunshine which entered was sifted through that veil. It left the interior a place of shadow in which men and horses were confused silhouettes and through which the red pulse of the fires gleamed wildly. This babel of voices and action and hopeless confusion made Signal feel as though there had just been an explosion—the smoke of it was aloft, the ruin of it was scattered upon the floor.

Along the walls appeared a tangled frieze of horses, ever shifting as they swung from side to side to avoid the

blacksmiths, kicking, stamping, whinneying with terror. The smiths, hot iron shoes glowing upon their drill points, advanced upon their victims with one hand extended soothingly, and imprecations upon their lips; and in the center of the floor were impatient cowboys and teamsters waiting for the completion of their individual jobs, bribing, entreating, threatening to have the thing pushed through more briskly.

Signal, passing down the center of the shop without haste, glanced back, and he saw behind him the outlines of Charley Bone and of Mentor, with the gleam of their rifles still in their hands as they entered. They were following to the finish, whatever that finish might be. And, staring forward, he saw the third rifleman standing with gun ready at the other mouth of this inferno.

Panic jumped up in the throat of Signal. He set his teeth and quieted himself with an iron effort of the will. If the thing had to be fought out, what better time than now? He halted the roan, and put his shoulders against its ribs. Then he dropped a hand on his hip, conveniently near the handle of his weapon, and waited.

One would have thought that a blacksmith's shop would halt its business for the sake of looking on at a first-rate murder; but not this one! The hammers clanged and the voices roared as loudly as ever!

"Hey, you brindle-faced fool! Here's half a dollar, old-timer, if you'll—Jerry! Oh, Jerry! You said eleven. Look what time it is now! I told you calks! You poison bronc! You jerry-built man-eater, stand still!"

Roaring near by, or wildly shouted in the dim distance, so these voices rushed through the mind of Signal like the sound of the ocean among hollow rocks. He felt as one feels wakening from a delirium, or sinking into the fever again.

And still the three advanced straight toward him, and still he waited. He could see their guns more plainly now, and now he could make out their faces.

He ought to begin! He made up his mind that he would take a snap shot at the single rifleman first of all. Then, pitching forward upon his face along the floor, he would open upon the other two—and Heaven send him luck!

With danger walking so close upon Signal, finally some hint of what was coming dawned upon the other men who were grouped and clustered about him. For they gave suddenly back, with oaths and exclamations.

"What sort of a place is this for a fight?" "Give 'em room!" "They'll be some good hosses shot up before this is over!" "It's the kid deputy! It's that John Alias, the fool!"

He heard such phrases as these, and they seemed to him detached sounds, without meaning—voices, let us say, out of the sea. For all that was in his brain, burning bright, was the advancing picture of those three warriors. Should he open fire now?

Some one had said, somewhere: "Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes!" He remembered that now. He would wait until they came as close as that. Then he would get one of them first. Of course, two bullets would plunge through and through his body, but as he fell, he would be deliberate, certain—if there were any life in his body—and try to bring down all three before his death. That would be a fall worth while!

A greater space had opened now, when from the side, straight toward him, walked another man. Four, then, to finish him off? He could have laughed. It was too perfect and too complete a trap, and with what ease they were prepared to swallow him!

Let him kill but one man before he fell!

Upon either side the three killers

were terribly close, when the newcomer stepped up to Signal and turned toward the pair who advanced cautiously from the rear.

"Hello, boys," said he. "What you come for in here? Me?"

It was Colter!

But how different from the ragged, tattered, hunger-pinched man of the mountains! He was like a cavalier; he needed only plumes in his lofty sombrero. Even young Charley Bone was not more splendid. Yet, within this casing of glory, there was the same lean, hard, handsome face.

He stood now with his feet spread a little apart, and his hands dropped upon either hip, which was girdled with the most brilliant of silken scarfs. And, strapped to his hips, there were two guns, just under the tips of his fingers.

"Henry, what the deuce do you mean?" cried Charley Bone, angered at this unexpected interruption.

"I mean what I say. Have you come here for me?"

"It's the deputy! It's that darned new one! I'm gunna get him now!"

So said Bone, and Henry Colter nodded.

"All right, boys," he remarked. "You can have him any minute, when you're through with me. But not until I'm down—and I'll go down smoking, I warn you that!"

They had halted.

Signal, dizzy with relief, turned toward them. Their features contracted and worked with malice now. But the fellows had halted.

Suddenly, Signal cried over his shoulder softly: "Colter, if you'll stand with me, let's clean them up! The sneaking murderers! They laid the trap for me. Three to one!"

"Come, come!" said Colter. "These ain't bad boys at all. I know 'em all. They're all friends of mine, I tell you! Don't you go worrying and bothering about them. They're all right. Look here, I'll introduce you!"

"Henry," said Mentor, seconding Charley Bone, "are you really going to gum up this here deal? We got him spread out for a wind-up!"

Colter replied genially: "The man that takes a shot at John Alias is taking a shot at me. And the man that takes a shot at me is gunna live in an atmosphere that's blowin' lead for a considerable spell. Now, I tell you boys the straight of this, and I mean it! Step up here and shake hands with my friend, 'John Alias.'"

They had come to a pause. They formed a tight little circle of five, glowering at one another. In the distance, the spectators no longer crowded back against the horses along the walls, but moved nearer, to hear what they could, now that it appeared there would be no shooting.

"You all ought to know each other," said Henry Colter. "Here's Doc Mentor. You can tell him by the scar on his face. And here's 'Santa Claus.' He's got a kind face, ain't he? All he needs is the whiskers! And of course you've met Charley Bone before! Shake hands, boys!"

"If you're right with Henry," said Charley Bone, "you're right with me. If you're good enough for Colter, you're good enough for Charley Bone. And let's shake hands on it, John Alias!"

"Good for you——" began Colter.

But Signal struck the proffered hand away and stepped closer to the handsome face of Charley. In the smiling youth of Bone he felt now more danger than he ever had felt before in any man—unless it were Henry Colter himself, and great Fitz Eagan. But he welcomed that danger with a wholehearted hatred.

"I'd rather," said Signal, "shake with a sneak of a coyote just in from killing chickens! I'd rather shake hands

with the fangs of a rattlesnake than touch you—except with my fist, Bone!"

Charley Bone looked him up and down, contented, still smiling.

"You take it hard," he commented.

"They would have murdered me!" said Deputy Sheriff John Alias. "You hear me, Colter? They trailed me through the town. Three against one is their idea of a fair sporting chance and an even fight!"

"The point is," said Colter, soothingly, "that you ain't been touched. Don't you let your imagination start running away with you. These here boys, I'll swear, was only playing a little sort of a game of tag with you. They was trying out your nerve."

"Of course," agreed Santa Claus, smiling in turn. "And we found that the kid was made of the real stuff, he didn't run."

Said John Signal: "I've heard your say. I've seen all your lying faces. Mind you this: The next time that I see two of you together, I start shooting, and I shoot to kill! You, Bone, I've written down specially big and clear. And you, Mentor! This is the second time that you've tried to get me. And the third time, one or the other of us will have to leave town!"

An angry answer came upon the lips of Mentor, but Henry Colter waved him away.

"Get off, the three of you," said he. "I'll handle this colt, if I can!"

And the three drifted off in one ominous group.

CHAPTER XVII.

STRANGE COMPANIONS.

NOW, released from the presence of the would-be killers, it appeared to Signal that the rest of the crowd would soon flow back toward their old place in the center of the room, but there seemed to be no desire on the part of any one to come too close to them.

Colter was saying quietly to his companion: "You've made a big mistake to-day, son. Those boys would have been your friends. They would have stuck to you through thick and thin!"

"I don't want such friends for a gift," replied Signal. "Every one of the three is capable of mob murder. You saw them all come at me! Thank Heaven I had you here, Colter. And that's one thing that I'll never forget. Mind you, I'm going to show you what I'll do to all of 'em, before the finish; and I'll try to show you that I never forget a friend, Colter. It was a fine thing to see you stand them off!"

Signal was on fire with enthusiasm, but Colter said quietly: "I wasn't in the least danger. Those boys are all old friends of mine. And whatever I've done, it doesn't more than balance against what you did for me in the mountains. You took me in, kid, I tried to double cross you, and then you gave me another chance. Any way you figure up this account, I'm still in debt!"

Signal protested.

"You're in the sheriff game for what you can get out of it?" asked Colter suddenly. "Or are you in it for glory?"

The boy laughed lightly. So great a burden had been lifted from him in the past few minutes that he could have laughed into the face of a dragon.

"I'm here for the glory," said he.

"Well, then," said Colter, "I don't know how you and me are going to get along together."

"Because I work for the sheriff?"

"No. Ogden is a good friend of mine. I never bother Monument, and Monument never bothers me. There you are! How are you going to stand toward me?"

"I've taken an oath," answered the youngster. "Lord knows how close I'll come to living up to it!"

"And friendship, John?"

"Aye, that's the other thing! But after

what's happened between us, how could I ever want to lay a hand on you, Colter?"

Said Henry Colter gravely: "You know my line partly. I'm not a saint. I've raised a good deal of trouble. I expect to raise a good deal more. I won't ask you in to cut the melons with me because I see that you ain't that kind. But if it's agreeable to you, suppose we say: 'Friend'! and shake permanent on that?"

"I never was gladder to do anything!" replied the boy, and their hands closed strongly.

Colter nodded, highly pleased.

"That's that," said he. "We'll have to solder that handshake with a drink; but first I want to see how that bone-headed blacksmith is gunna fit my hoss with shoes. Will you come over and take a look?"

Colter's mount was a splendid bay, wedged sideways against the wall, head thrown high and strained back, ears flattened, nostrils dilated with fear.

"*That's* a horse!" commented the boy with much enthusiasm.

"That's a horse," agreed the other. "I can't afford to ride cheap horseflesh. I have to cover too much ground. This brute is a little too nervous."

The blacksmith, approaching at that moment, laid a quieting hand upon the flank of the bay, and then picked up a fore foot to take off the old shoe.

"It's the other foot that needs a shoe," pointed out Colter.

The blacksmith shifted to the other side of the horse, and after working a moment with his tool, he pried off the shoe and cast it on the floor—a freshly made shoe, at that, but the tip of one side had been broken off.

"There's a sign of the shoddy work that they do now," explained Colter, picking up the shoe. "They don't temper the iron with any care. Look at this one! Chilled it too quick, and took the life out of the metal, the fools!"

But the boy stared in a maze of wonder. For he recognized that shoe. In his pocket, at that moment, was the fragment which had been broken from it!

He knew, therefore, who had organized that murderous attack upon the Mexicans in the canyon of San Real: who had shot them down, and gone back and forth, murdering the wounded who lay on the trail. It was Colter and his crew! Colter, with whom he had barely finished shaking hands, with such a warmth and swelling of his heart!

Colter, in the meantime, was examining the shoes out of which the smith intended to pick a new one, and when the selection had been made to his taste, he carried Signal away to the nearest saloon.

At the door he paused with a broad grin.

"You know what this saloon is?" he asked.

"Well?"

"It's Mortimer's."

"I can't go in here then. This is the Bone hang-out!"

"Of course it is. But you're drinking with me, and while you're with me, there ain't a Bone in the world that would raise a gun at you. Come on in. It'll give the boys a little shock. They'll kind of half figure that I'm throwin' them down!"

They passed inside.

Mortimer's saloon was as fine an emporium of liquor as stood in the town of Monument. Ninety feet of varnished bar ran down one side of the room, with four bartenders working busily behind it, their images rising and bowing rapidly in the big mirrors at the rear of the bar; but what Signal saw, first of all, was a white-bearded old man, with a benevolent aspect, and a gentle eye.

He smiled upon them and waved them forward for a drink.

"This is Daddy Bone," said Colter. "Dad, this is John Alias that you've heard about. This drink is on me. Alias and me are turning bottoms up to a long friendship and a smooth one!"

Old Bone nodded again in his amiable manner.

"It's a kind of a drink that I dunno that I could swaller," said he. "I jest finished drinkin' with Mentor and Charley to the quick scalpin' of this same young feller. But I'll drink mine afterward!"

This singular remark made Signal chuckle. He observed that he had become a bright center of interest all along the bar. There was a shifting away from the end at which he stood with Colter.

"They don't know whether I'm going to pull a gun on you and try to blow your spinal column apart, or *what* I'm after!" said Colter, smiling. "This here bothers them a lot. Here's to you, Johnny Alias—a long life and a straight one to you; a short life and a bright one for me. Will you drink that?"

And down went the whisky.

Old Bone, in the meantime, waited until the liquor of the first pair of glasses was exhausted. Then he raised his own brimmer.

"Here," said he, "is to the hand that holds the gun that shoots the slug that finishes the fight in Monument."

He tossed off the glass and coughed.

"And I dunno that I could've drunk nothin' more grand and impartial. Boys, will you have another on me?"

But Colter answered: "I've got something else to do with the kid."

He pointed about the room. There were at least two score of men of all sizes and ages standing before the bar or sitting in the leather-upholstered chairs, for Mortimer had spent a small fortune to equip his place with the utmost comfort.

"You look around you, John," said he. "Write down their faces in your mind. These fellers are all friends of mine and friends of old Dad Bone, here. You take a long think. Maybe you'll make up your mind that you'll want to pick more than me for your friend out of the lot."

He took the boy back to the street and there found his horse waiting. They mounted.

"You better come along with me," said Colter.

"And where?"

"Out to old Pineta's house. I gotta see Esmeralda. She's cut up a good deal right now."

"And why?"

"Because for two reasons. One is that it's pretty near six weeks since I asked Esmeralda to marry me, and she'll be kind of peeved if I don't pay her that little attention now and then. The other is that she needs cheering up. She's had a couple of cousins killed in that gun fight in the San Real Canyon. You heard about that from Pancho Pineta, I guess."

"Gun fight!" echoed young Signal. "From what I heard of the thing, it wasn't a fight at all. It was a massacre, Colter!"

"Massacre? Massacre?" echoed Colter amiably, as though he hardly placed the word. "I'll tell you what, I don't get your drift there."

"Murder then. That's better, I'd say," said Signal, and looked keenly from the corner of his eye at his companion.

The face of Henry Colter was totally unmoved.

"I dunno," said he, "but I never quite been able to call the killing of a greaser or two murder."

Undoubtedly he spoke, to a certain extent, from the heart, and great wonder come upon Signal. He remembered the scene as he had come upon it, and the dead men lying where they had fallen in the hopeless slaughter.

"Ten men!" cried the boy. "Ten human beings! Great Heavens! And all for the sake of a few mule loads!"

"Few mule loads your head!" retorted his companion. "I know one of the boys who worked in that job. They split up sixty-four thousand Mexican silver dollars among the lot of 'em. Was that worth while? It was, I'd say! What right had a lot of greasers to that much money? Come along. I'm overdue at the Pineta house already?"

So young John Signal allowed himself to drift on at the side of his companion, the roan swinging out freely, reaching hard at the bit.

Never, he felt, did an officer of the law ride more strangely fitted with a companion who was a wholesale murderer, but against whose arrest his hands were so securely tied by the bonds of mutual service, and by a deeply pledged word of honor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE PRECIOUS THAN PEARLS.

IT was a moment in the life of the boy when he felt that he could add up the list of the forces which were working upon him, though he could not tell the direction in which they would eventually cast him, for though he could enumerate so many, yet he could not tell how each would be applied to him, and how one might reënforce or nullify another.

Yonder was the shooting scrape which had driven him across the mountains, above and beyond the law as he had known it all his life. And here in Monument, he was living in the service of the very law which he had offended.

To Fitz Eagan he was a friend, or wished to be one. But Fitz Eagan was an enemy of the law and, therefore, his own professional enemy!

To all the Bone tribe, and particularly to Charley Bone, and to Mentor of the scarred face, and to Joe Klaus —otherwise Santa Claus—and to Sim Langley, he had devoted his particular hatred. But the chief of all that faction, Henry Colter himself, was his boon companion and sworn friend. Colter, murderer in chief, with the blood of San Real Canyon still fresh upon his hands and upon whatever conscience he might possess!

It bewildered Signal to think of these complications. And there was the sheriff himself, vaguely fumbling ahead, striving to bring law and order to Monument, while he sustained one faction of these villains consciously, and set his face against the rest!

In this wild confusion of impulses and impacts what, therefore, would be the ultimate conclusion? Where was he bound, and how long would he be able to sail with the whirlwind before he struck upon a reef?

He began to surrender all hope of solving the problems. But he told himself that he would follow what compass he could, pointing due north toward his duty. For youth continually struggles toward the absolute; only middle age accepts the world as it finds it and is more or less content to drift with life, asking no perfection, no sky-towering standards.

So the deputy sheriff rode out with Monument's greatest criminal and came to the house of Pineta, cool and retired in a cloud of trees.

They found Esmeralda Pineta all in black, which made her face seem pale, and her eyes and her hair more shadowy dark than when Signal, fleeing from Langley's Mexicans, had had his first glimpse of her.

She greeted them cheerfully enough, but turned her attention to Signal at once. She had been waiting eagerly, she said, to see him. Their first meeting had been only an exchange of glances. However, Mr. Langley had

had a great deal to say about him. So she laughed with Signal, and softened her eyes at him, and told him as plainly as a musical voice and a beautiful face could that she liked him very well indeed and that there was really no other man with whom she would more willingly spend these minutes of this particular day.

And out of the cold darkness of his doubts and his perplexities and his fears, Signal stepped as it were into a pleasant sunshine, and unfolded, and laughed back at her, and years disappeared from his stern young face.

Colter bore this with a degree of good-humored impatience. At length he said: "He ain't the only hoss in the corral, Esmeralda. You might look around a little."

"Don't bother me, Henry," said the girl. "I'm trying to get acquainted. Haven't I known you a long enough time?"

"Esmeralda is like poker," said Colter. "Everybody has beginner's luck with her. But after a while she wraps 'em up and puts 'em on a shelf, and the dust begins to filter down on 'em, and the spiders, they come along and spin webs all over 'em, and it takes a dog-gone good man to get dusted off and brought to light again, once Esmeralda has got tired of him!"

"You're rude, Henry," said the girl. "You'd better go out and try to find Langley. He's somewhere about. Keep him from blundering in while Señor Alias is here!"

She chuckled at the name, but Colter refused to budge.

"If Langley sees that roan hoss he ain't gunna come near," said he. "You take a dog that's been stung on the nose, and he never takes kindly to bees. Look here, Esmeralda. You gotta take me off the shelf right pronto. I brought these out to get your eye, says the fly to the spider!"

And he took from his inner coat pocket a string of pearls that glimmered from his hand and then fell into his palm and made a pool of rich light.

The girl looked at them critically from the distance.

"They're fine old pearls," she said.

"Fine they are, and old," said Colter. "They oughta be old, I guess."

"Family heirloom, Henry, I suppose?"

"It sure is," he answered.

"And what family?" she asked.

"I disremember," answered Colter. "I wasn't properly introduced at the time the lady give them to me. Afterward I seen the name in the paper, but I forgot."

He leaned back in his chair, chuckling.

"You take a popular gent like me," said Colter, "he can't remember the names and the addresses of all the ladies that gives him presents!"

She, chin on fist, regarded him half soberly, and half in a sort of critical amusement.

"And I'm to wear these, Henry?"

"The minute that I seen them, I knew they belonged around your throat, Esmeralda. And here you are."

He dropped them into her hand, and then turned with a broad grin to the boy.

"Come over that in the line of conversation, if you can," he invited. "Trot out all your smart talk, young feller, but I aim to say that I've made the hit of the day with Esmeralda. Am I right?" he concluded, swinging back toward her.

"You almost always do," said she.

She held out the pearls toward him. "They're as pretty as can be," said she.

"Of course they are. But it ain't a joke, Esmeralda. Those belong to you!"

She shook her head, still smiling.

"I can't wear pearls that—have been given to you by admirers, Henry."

"Do you mean that?"

"Suppose she should see me wearing them? It would hurt her feelings, I imagine."

He made a gesture of the utmost earnestness.

"You don't understand, honey. The lady that gave me those was on a train. She just got off for a few minutes and gave them to me, and then she went on again. She wouldn't 've been stopping this side of Frisco."

But the girl shook her head still.

"You have to understand, Henry. It's the way such things are given that counts, you know. There's so much associated with them—so much feeling, Henry. I couldn't wear them, really!"

And she forced him to take them back, while young John Signal, entranced by her beauty before, was still more delighted by the mingled good-natured humor and cleverness with which she had finally refused the gift.

Colter groaned as he received them.

"I'd counted on this for a fine welcome, a smile or two, and a walk under the trees in the evening," he said with his peculiar frankness, "me holding your hand and wanting to know when we'd take the same turning on the long trail, Esmeralda."

In that oddly effective way which Signal had noticed before, she made her eyes gentle as she looked toward Colter, and that worthy stirred uneasily in his chair and flushed with pleasure.

"Of course, we're always glad to have an old friend like you here, Henry."

"*We!*" said Colter. "Oh, stop it! Don't talk to me like a dog-gone editor, Esmeralda! Save that for my pal, John Alias, will you?"

At this she straightened a little in her chair and looked right at Signal, all softness gone, her glance wonderfully bright, and as direct as the stare of a man.

"You two are partners, then?" she asked.

"We're friends," corrected Signal.

He was uneasy. Colter, however, explained: "He's a deputy sheriff, Esmeralda. He's nothing else. On no side, particular. Refused to hook up with me. Refused to hook up with Fitz Eagan, even. He wants to walk his own dog-gone straight path to glory, and I suppose it'll take him all of three months to get planted where the other suckers have been buried before him. I only hope that don't make you romantic and interested in him, honey."

The girl listened to this mingling of banter and truth with her head canted a bit to one side, and her eyes half veiled with thought as she watched the boy.

"I think I understand," she said at last.

"What *do* you understand about him, Esmeralda?"

"That he's an honest man!"

Colter sank back in his chair.

"You can always find a settler for me!" he admitted. "But this here honest man hasn't got a background that's strictly Sunday school, y'understand?"

"I understand that from Langley," said the girl, smiling again. "Henry!" she said sharply.

"Aye, ma'am!"

"You can give me something that is a thousand times more valuable than pearls!"

"Whether it's in a safe or a wallet," said he, "it's yours, Esmeralda."

"It's in neither place. *They* are in Monument, no doubt, drinking with stolen money."

Colter sat rigid, saying not a word, but his face was calm, though he must have guessed what was coming.

"Gregorio and his brother were raised with me, Henry! I loved them! They've been horribly murdered! *You* have men and cleverness to help you. Find the men who did the thing. That will be a present worth more than pearls!"

CHAPTER XIX.

SO IS A TIGER'S PAW.

HOOFBEATS paused before the house; steps came up onto the porch.

"That's Fitzgerald," said Esmeralda Pineta. "That's Fitzgerald Eagan."

"If you know him by his walk," suggested Colter, with some sourness, "I should say you know him pretty well all around!"

She answered with her usual calm: "A dog can learn that much about a man."

"Sure," said Colter, "if the man's his master!"

Here followed a tap at the door and then the entrance of the mighty form of Fitzgerald Eagan. He paused there for an instant, blocking away the light, except for what entered about his head, and it seemed to Signal that just as his shadow now was filling the room, so his personality pervaded the place also, and made other men seem pointless and weak. Even Henry Colter, famous for cunning, famous for crime, seemed no more important than a boy as the big man stood before him.

Eagan looked deliberately at Colter and at young Signal, smiling and nodding at the boy. Signal, in the meantime, was sitting forward on the edge of his chair, very ill at ease. It was generally conceded that Colter was the leader of the Bone faction. Certainly, he was their most outstanding figure, and the general talk in Monument was to the effect that all the battle between the two factions would culminate and die when Colter and Fitz Eagan fought it out together.

But there was no token of such a battle at hand now. Colter said: "Hello, Fitz! How's things?"

And the great Fitz Eagan waved his hand almost cordially toward Colter. He said to Esmeralda: "I brought out the kid. He's been wanting to meet you for a long time. Be kind to him, Esmeralda."

He stepped into the room as he spoke, and behind him came a boy of twenty, much shorter than Fitz Eagan, rather of a stocky build, but with the look of a brave man and an athlete. The stamp of the lion was upon him; it was no surprise to hear Fitz Eagan introduce the youngster as his brother, Dick. The boy flushed very red, bowing before Esmeralda, and she with a light in her eye like the flicker of the sun on a sword blade, looked young Dick Eagan through and through. Very glad was John Signal that he had this opportunity to see her when, for a fraction of an instant, her guard was down. It made a great deal of his own enthusiasm about her evaporate.

Plainly, she was a queen to all these rough fellows. Colter paid homage here, Sim Langley, and even that man of men, Fitz Eagan! The deputy sheriff, keen in observance, watched the girl and Fitz Eagan with all his powers of discernment, and it seemed plain to him that, though Esmeralda took the big man seriously, she regarded him with far less intense interest than he bestowed on her.

"You're getting news from Colter, too?" he asked.

"Henry hasn't a word of news for me," said the girl. "Or perhaps he is holding something back. Perhaps he's heard that *you* know something about San Real Canyon, Fitz?"

Fitz Eagan looked across the room at Colter, who said with some irritation. "I've hinted at nothing like that, Esmeralda!"

"One of the two of you must know," she insisted. "There's nothing that happens in the whole range that one of you doesn't know all about it. If I draw a blank with you, Henry, then surely Fitz can help me out!"

She leaned forward a little, her eyes keen and expectant; but Eagan replied:

"I don't know a syllable. I know nothing whatever about it. But I came out here to tell you, Esmeralda, that I've had nothing to do with that butchery. My methods ain't shaped that way, and if you can tell me what trail to follow, I'll ride it! I'm the marshal of Monument, you know!"

He ended with a faint smile, as though ready to join in any mirth that might be aroused by his legal position. But no one laughed.

"You'd ride for me?" asked the girl.

"I would!"

"And Henry, you'd help me?"

"I? Sure!"

"And you, John Alias?"

"It's my business," the boy assured her.

Dick Eagan said nothing. He did not have to. With his eyes he was drinking up the beauty of the girl; plainly he would be the first tool for any of her purposes.

"Then with all this help," said she, "I can't fail. I simply can't fail! And if any of you can find even *one man* who had anything to do with that—murder—I'll never forget! I'll be his friend to the death of me! Poor Pancho would take the trail, but he's shot to bits. And because of Gregorio and Manuelo, some one has to die!"

She said this with a fiery enthusiasm that shook all her body, and again something in John Signal shrank from her. He thought that she was the most beautiful creature he ever had seen; he felt that she was also the most dangerous, like some wild mustang, hunted by every puncher of the range, but useless when caught, except to put a bullet through its wicked brain. Now she was gathering all her forces to send vengeance down the trail of the murderers of her cousins, and these fighters of Monument were all willing to ride in her behalf.

Signal looked again at Henry Colter. That gentleman was as cool as could be, as though he had not the slightest thought that any danger might be gathering upon his path. He now stood up.

"There's no place for us here now, Alias," said he. "When Fitz Eagan walks in, sensible gents walk out. Lemme know your dates with Esmeralda and I'll call in the off season," he added to Eagan.

Signal took the hint and rose in turn, but the girl would have stopped him. They had not had a chance to talk together. Or, if he went now, he would come again? There was no more danger of Sim Langley about the place, she assured him. Besides, Langley was not such a bad fellow—just a little overbearing at times!

"Listen to her purring," observed Colter. "Do you hear that, Fitz? She wants to have Alias on her staff, and I suppose she'll land him! But he's fighting for his head now. He'd even swallow the hook if he could break the line afterward. You're right, kid. It's better to have indigestion than Esmeralda!"

At this very pointed banter she laughed, but her glance dwelt wickedly upon Colter as the two left the room. They stood on the porch for a moment, Colter mopping his forehead. He had maintained his poise perfectly, but there was no doubt from his compressed lips and his uneasy eye that he realized that the clouds of trouble which this girl was raising might very soon blow in his direction. However, he merely said to his young companion: "You've seen her now. Better'n a view of the mountains at sunset time, eh? There's only one Esmeralda; and there's plenty of mountains, even of volcanoes!"

He waved his hand before him.

"Up here on this here veranda, there ain't a man that would take a pot shot at us. Once down the steps, there'd be a plenty! There by that

rose bush is the spot where young Sam Channing dropped and kicked up the dirt until he died. And where the walk turns a little, that's where 'Push' Aiken flopped when Langley shot him through the brain. Langley had been waiting out yonder where that brush stands. A grand killer is Langley! He's got an Indian streak in him, and he takes no chances! Far as that's concerned, he's apt to be lyin' out there now, with his rifle butt cuddled under his chin, waiting to raise a little dust for us! But so long as we're in or on the house of Esmeralda, we're safe!"

"Will you tell me why that is?"

"Why, the trouble began to rise too fast. There was four gents shot up and laid away in the hospital from gun fights here, to say nothing of Channing and Aiken that was killed. After Aiken died, the boys all got together and agreed that so long as Esmeralda was pulling the boys in like moths around a candle flame, we'd better make it a rule that her house was peaceful ground. That rule has held ever since. And a good thing! Some of the worst enemies in the world, that wouldn't 've spoke a first word outside of with a gun have met here at the Pineta place and have made up. She's a great hand at getting the hatchet buried!"

As he spoke, he had been scanning every feature of the landscape before him, from the ground to the tips of the trees, as though he suspected that fighting men might be hidden away up there, waiting to kill him the instant his foot descended from the front steps of the veranda. However, he seemed assured, at last, and went down to the garden level. There he and his companion took their horses, and they rode down the driveway to the outer road.

There, Colter shrugged his shoulders with a shuddering force.

"I always feel a pile better," said he, "when I've sashayed down that avenue of trees and got into the clear again, where my rifle would have a chance to keep things at a distance! Now, tell me what you think of Esmeralda, kid?"

"She's beautiful," said the boy.

"Go on. That's only a starting point."

"I don't know," said Signal. "I've said that she's beautiful. I don't think that I could say anything more about her. I was a little afraid of her!"

"Afraid?"

"Yes."

"Why, kid, she's like velvet! Expensive, sure! Expensive kind of a wife, but for three years everybody around Monument has been trying to get her. Maybe—maybe you'll be the lucky man?"

John Signal smiled and said nothing. In fact, he was unwilling to let his mind dwell upon the thought of this lovely, strange woman, as a man who loves wine too well dreads the tasting of the first glass.

"But you're right," said the other in a sterner voice. "You're dead right! She's dangerous. Velvet. So is a tiger's paw. And as for the price of her—why, I think that she'd throw herself at the head of the gent that managed to kill a couple of the boys that shot up her cousins! I never seen her worked up so much. Who would've thought it?" moralized he in wonder. "Who would ever 've guessed that she was so dead keen on them greaser cousins of hers?"

And he looked up at the sky and shook his head, a little mournful at the strangeness of this world.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GOOD OF FRECKLES.

THE heart and the brain of young John Signal still were heavy with his problem when he parted from Colter at the edge of town. He said to the outlaw seriously. "They would have

shot me to bits, to-day, except for you."

"I dunno. Maybe they would," replied Colter. "Take it another way. Maybe that was your chance to get famous. You might 've tipped over all three of 'em, and after that, you'd 've lived in books."

The boy shook his head.

"Anyway," said Colter, "don't worry about gratitude. The most that I've done don't balance what you did for me. I keep a pretty straight set of books about things like this, and I know that things still lean your way. It's tit for tat."

"And so we're square?" asked young Signal.

"Of course we are! So long, and take care of yourself. Mind you, I can oar in and keep back the Bone tribe when I'm around, but not when I'm away. They want your scalp. They're afraid of you, son! And there's nothing more dangerous than a gunman that's scared!"

With this he rode off, and Signal found himself, in another few moments, at his boarding house. It was a plain wooden building, shingled on the outside, with one turret rising from a series of bow windows. Those were the selected and most expensive rooms in the house. He had been surprised by the grandeur of one he had glimpsed in passing, but on the whole, he was well satisfied with his own chamber, in the third story and at the back of the house. It looked upon the laundry lines, the sun-faded, unpainted, high, board fences to the rear of the houses, the garbage cans, the wood and horse sheds, the dogs that wandered and the cats that stalked through this wilderness of wood. Above all, from his window he could watch the door of the shed in which the roan horse was quartered.

As he went up the stairs, he passed at the first hall that same crisply pretty girl whom he had seen on the street in the morning. She shrank back from him with a little exclamation, and he hesitated.

It was not her prettiness that held him. It was sheerest irritation.

He took off his hat and turned toward her.

"Are you afraid of me, ma'am?" said John Signal.

She retreated yet another step. Her eyes glanced toward the head of the stairs with a hunted look, as though she were estimating the probable chances of escape by bolting. Then she gave up and, turning, she fled into one of those large corner rooms which have been mentioned.

He, angered more than ever, strode on to his own cubby-hole and sat down to take his head in his hand and ponder. He could see no solution for his problem and he had not long to dream over it, for a heavy hand struck his door. He sang out, and immediately there stood before him the alert, strongly-built man of middle age whom he had seen with the girl that morning.

"My daughter!" began the other.

John Signal looked at him with expressive eyes.

"And who are you?" asked Signal.

"My name is Morley Shand. Did you ever hear it?"

"I never did."

Mr. Shand seemed gravely taken aback.

"Mr. Alias," he said, "since you choose to pass by that name, I wish to tell you that no matter how you may behave among the ruffians of Monument, with me it will be necessary for you to take a different line. And when it comes to bullying my daughter in this very house where——"

"Is that she waiting outside the door?" asked Signal.

Mr. Shand turned and snatched the door open. He revealed the chambermaid. She was a brown-faced girl

from the range, obviously pressed into this work on the spur of the moment. She had not yet had a chance to turn pale.

"What will you have? Why are you here?" asked Mr. Shand in increasing anger.

She leaned her hand against the door jamb.

"I heard him speak to Miss Shand," said she.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Morley Shand. "If I have a witness of this affair, I think that I can make life fairly hot for you in Monument! No matter what else Westerners may be, they don't allow insults to——"

"Hold on," said the chambermaid. "You start drifting like that with your head down, and you'll hang up on wire before long. I heard everything that was said, and I seen it all. I was cleaning the next flight of steps up. Miss Shand shied when Mr. Alias come upstairs to the landing. He only asked her if she was afraid of him."

"And that was enough to make my girl run for her life!" shouted Mr. Shand in increasing fury.

"When a pony ain't bridlewise, you can't blame it for bolting," said the girl.

Mr. Shand, thus balked, turned his anger upon the newcomer.

"I've never heard of such infernal rudeness!" he declared. "I'll let your mistress know about this, my fine girl!"

He burst from the room; from the door the calm voice of Signal pursued him:

"You'd better think that over twice, before you start yapping about her," said Signal.

Mr. Shand whirled about. He was fairly explosive with his fury, but suddenly he turned pale and retreated.

"He thought about guns," said the chambermaid, nodding confidentially at Signal.

"Who are you?" asked the latter.

"I'm Polly. I do this floor and help wash up after meals, and keep the vegetable garden."

"Is that all you do?"

"That's all."

"And what do you get?"

"I get forty."

"A week?"

"What d'you mean? A month, of course."

"Come in and sit down," said he coaxingly.

"Is it right?" said Polly.

"And why not?"

She grinned at him. Freckles spotted the nose and the upper cheeks of Polly. She had hair redder than her freckles. Her nose had never grown up.

"It might get you talked about," said Polly. "Having a girl into your room, I mean."

She walked straight in as she spoke. Before the window there was a plain wooden kitchen table. Against this she leaned.

"Besides," said she, "I might get fired."

"For what?"

"Aw—sassing his lordship, you see!"

"I don't think he'll talk."

"He will, though. You take a law-and-order gent like him, he can't help talking, no more than a calf can help bawling, or a burro braying."

"If he says a word——" said the boy darkly.

"What could you do?" she asked calmly. "He's too tenderfoot to pack a gun, except in a bag. And he's too old for you to hit him. If you whacked him in the stomach he'd have indigestion the rest of his life."

"Sit down," he invited, smiling at her.

She perched herself on the edge of the table.

"This is breaking all the rules," said she, "confabbing with men guests and sitting on tables!"

"You're fine," said the boy, admiring her heartily.

"Get out!" said she. "I'm all full of freckles!"

"What are they?" said he gallantly.

"They're a lot. Sulphuric acid and lye won't take 'em out."

"Did you try?"

"Both ways, and it wouldn't work!"

"Suppose," said he, "suppose you lose your job here?"

"Well, what of it? It's a pretty big country!"

"Look here. Are you alone?"

"Me? I should say not! I'm with the celebrated gun fighter, John Alias. Is that being alone? It is not!" she answered herself.

"I'm not celebrated," he told her, "and I'm not a gun fighter. You remember that."

"I'll try to," said she, "but other people won't let me! Not since they've got you into the papers!"

"The papers are fools!" said he.

"Sure they are," she agreed, "but they're giving you a lot of free space. I could use some of it, I can tell you!"

"For what?"

"Me? For getting on the stage."

"And what would you do on the stage?"

"I gotta swell voice," said she. "Let me sashay out onto the stage of that opera house and I'll tell you what, they'll put me on the pay roll."

"Have you tried them?"

"Who, the manager?"

"Yes."

"I tried the manager. He'd been down at Mortimer's saloon drinking gin fizzes. He remembered right away that he'd known me since I was a little girl. He started to hold my hand."

"The coyote!" said the boy with earnest anger.

"I told him that I wasn't a two-year-old and that I didn't need gentling, but that didn't stop him. So I slapped his face and beat it!"

"A man like that ought to be run out of town," declared the deputy sheriff.

"Aw, leave him alone!" said she. "He's all right. Only he was a little sappy that day. He was not seeing his best and didn't spot my freckles!" she concluded with a smile.

Then she added: "But if they run me out of this job, I'll call on him again."

"If you do, I'll take you there," said John Signal.

"Would you do that?"

"Of course I would."

"Well," she said, "*that* would put *me* in the papers. 'Our distinguished young deputy sheriff took a day off from man-eating and sashayed up to the opera house with Polly Noonan, the well-known chambermaid!' Say, John Alias, could you stand for that?"

"I don't know," said he, thoughtful. "I don't think they'd drag any woman into print through me. I don't think that even these newspapers would dare to do that!"

"Wouldn't they? I hope they would."

"Well," said he, "I'd have to take my chance on that."

She regarded him with a thoughtful frown, her chin propped on one palm. It was not a graceful position in which she sat, but there are some so gifted in creation that they cannot be awkward. And the eyes of young John Signal having been opened toward the beauty of woman upon this day, he had regard to the hand, like that of a child, and the roundness of the wrist. Her smile, moreover, was a flash of good cheer, and her eyes were blue beyond belief. Neither could one say that her hair was sheer red, but it was golden where the sun touched, dark copper in the shadow. For the first time in his life, John Signal thoroughly enjoyed a color scheme.

"You're all right," said the girl. "You're a straight shooter and a good

fellow. I'd like to have some way of paying you back, if you would take me down there to the opera house."

"You could pay me back," said he.

She looked down at the floor, and then straight back at him.

"And how?" said she.

"I need advice," said John Signal.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Advice?" said she. "I'm fuller of it than Monument is full of dust. You're in trouble?"

"Yes."

"I've seen all the kinds of trouble there are. Go on, Johnny Alias. Maybe I can show you the way out."

CHAPTER XXI.

GOLD AND DREAMS IN MONUMENT.

HE looked at her with such appreciation of her cocksureness and poise and with such a growing sense of her charm that she shook her head at him and gave him a dark look.

"Don't do that!" she said.

"Don't do what?"

"Think about yourself, not about me. What sort of trouble are you in? With the Bone outfit, I hear."

"They don't bother me much—just now. I'm in trouble with myself."

"That's the worst kind," she agreed. "Take a horse that interferes—he's always liable to give himself a bad fall, isn't he?"

"All right," said he. "I'll put this straight. Suppose you did a man a good turn."

"How good?"

"Well, had him under your gun—and didn't shoot. And having a reason to shoot, say."

"I follow that. Go on! Who was it?"

"This is all supposing."

"All right."

"And afterward you fix him up a little."

"Well?"

"Then suppose that you get into a corner afterward. A mighty bad corner. Life or death for you. And this same fellow drifts in and helps you out of the pinch."

"I can see that! It squares you both up."

"Then suppose that you got a lot of bad information about that fellow, and it's sort of your duty to go out and arrest him——"

"You being deputy sheriff?"

"That's it."

She took this gravely under consideration. Then she said: "I'll tell you what: There's a lot of different kind of people floating around in the world."

He nodded.

"They're like money."

He nodded again.

"Some of 'em are just copper. They got a face printed on 'em, and they're round as a gold piece, and got the same kind of milling, and all. But they're cheap stuff. They don't amount to much, except just to fill in and make change."

He smiled.

"Then there's paper money. Some of it's worth a dollar. Some of it's worth a thousand. According to the print that's put on it, and who put the print. You pass one ten-dollar bill and get change for it. You pass another and get jailed, because the money's crooked. And there's a lot of men that way. According to the way that you read 'em, they may be worth something, but at bottom they're just made up of paper junk; touch a match to 'em, and a lot of million-dollar people would go up in a couple of whiffs of smoke."

"That's right."

"Then there's some coin that's silver. It's all right. It means what it says. It's worth something. But you'd have to have a whole train of mules to carry away a fortune in it. And a lot of people are that way, that I've met.

They look pretty enough and bright enough, but you'd have to have a thousand of 'em to get anywhere with such friends."

"That's true as a book. I've known that kind, too. That's the common or garden sort of a man. Every place is full of 'em."

"But on the other hand, there's gold," said the girl. "There ain't a lot of it, but there's some. It's real money. You can rub it thin, and it still passes. With a pocketful of it, you can go around the world. You can take a golden coin and batter it out of shape. You can stamp on it and twist it crooked—but still it's worth just the same. You can't light it with a match, and you can't show it up with acids and what not. And some people are that way. And when you've tried 'em, and stamped on 'em, and picked 'em up crooked, even—if they've got the real stuff in them, they're worth something! That's the way, it seems to me, with this fellow that you stood by. That must've been pretty fine, and I wish that I'd seen it. But along comes his chance, and he stands behind you, just when you need him. Well, it seems to me, sort of, that if I was a deputy sheriff, or deputy any one else, I wouldn't harm that man. I'd just let him alone. I'd keep him for a friend. I'd put him in my pocket and hope that maybe, some time, I could pick up one more friend just like him, because that would make the real music!"

He waited for a moment, turning the idea in his mind, and at last he said to her: "I think you're right. This thing was spinning around in my brain. You see, I'd taken an oath to do certain sorts of things."

"I know that. But an oath is words; guns can say a lot more; you and your friend have done some talking with guns, eh?"

"You've helped me a lot," he assured her. "I'll go down there to the opera house with you, whenever you say the word. Is that a go?"

"It is! To-morrow morning?"

"Right!"

She slipped down from the table.

"They'll be calling for me pretty soon. I've got to get along. I'm glad I met you."

"And me the same."

"So long, Johnny."

"How old are you?"

"Me? I'm nineteen."

"Nineteen!" he cried.

"Is that so bad?"

"Floating around in the world all by yourself."

"Well," she said, "a young horse can stand a terrible lot of bad weather."

"You were raised on the range?"

"The range raised me," she answered. "And by the way, how old are you, John Alias?"

"Oh," said he, "I'm twenty-two!"

She paused by the door and made a face of pretended gravity.

"Oh," said she, "you're all of that, you are? Why," she added, "you're a real growed-up man, ain't you?"

She slipped through the door and into the hall.

"Hey, Polly!" he called, and followed her in much haste.

At the door he saw her scurrying. But she paused at a little distance.

"What did you mean by that?" he asked her.

"By what?" said she.

"By laughing," said he.

"Ain't that allowed in the game?"

"Wait a minute, Polly, will you?"

"I'll see you to-morrow," said she, and slipped from view around the corner of the hallway.

He hesitated, and then he went back into his room and began to pace up and down.

He felt the oddest change in his mind and in his whole being. He had been, before, vastly depressed, confused, bewildered. He had been walk-

ing through a room of darkness. Now the door suddenly had been opened and he stood in sunshine and heard the song of birds.

In his walking, he found himself snapping his fingers softly, smiling to himself. The problems were solved. The difficulties were ended, and that complicated Gordian knot had been cut.

All this change had been effected he hardly knew how.

It appeared now perfectly patent that he could not betray his friendship with Colter by arresting him for the murder of the Mexicans in San Real Canyon. There was no necessary plan for his action except to drift with the current of events. Perhaps he would have the fortune to stumble upon others of those who had waylaid the Pinetas. At any rate, he would keep his eyes wide open and hope. Furthermore, there was plenty of crime and criminals about Monument, outside of Colter and his crew!

Then he stopped. He opened his eyes, as it were, and saw that he had been walking all this while in a happy trance.

Who had done this thing to him and touched him with such magic? Why, who else but the red-headed, freckle-faced, blue-eyed girl called Polly? Polly who? Polly what?

He sat down on the window sill and rolled a cigarette, whistling to himself, and as he lighted the smoke, he saw an arm, a shoulder, and part of a head appear around the corner of a barn; also, the sun gleamed on a long, steel barrel. He flung himself backward to the floor of the room as the rifle clanged. The bullet clipped the sill and a splinter of wood struck him in the face.

Springing up, he flattened himself against the wall and peered cautiously out, but he had only a glimpse of a man darting around the corner of the horse shed.

It did not pay to fall into dreams in Monument!

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

THE EVER-TREELESS PRAIRIES

THERE has been much speculation upon the subject of the treelessness of the prairies. And now Shirley W. Allen, forester of the American Forestry Association, advances the theory that forests have never existed on the treeless prairies of the West except along the river bottoms and on certain isolated highways. He believes that a prairie grass type is a perfectly logical type of vegetation, and that we need seek no reason for its occurrence as against the forest type.

"On the other hand," he states in the "Pathfinder," "there is a possibility that swamp lands during the dry season have been ignited by lightning, and that prairie fires of gigantic size removed large stands of timber before white men ever saw the country. These fires, since they probably occurred annually or periodically, established a prairie type of vegetation.

"As an illustration, I may point to the great bush fields on the slopes of Mt. Shasta. We know that, here, timber once existed in almost solid stand; stumps and snags are seen everywhere, most of them badly charred. The vegetative type at this time was called chaparral, a group of brush species totaling about twenty in number and dominated by manzanita and snow brush. While they may be a transition type whose function is to reëstablish fertility in burned-out soil, the existing forest makes practically no inroads against it, the few conifers which are found underneath the brush being very scrubby."

Pages From the Old West

(*The* Foot Race at Jacksonville)

By Larry Reddington

Author of "The Iron Breed," etc.

DURING the colorful epoch that closed when the continent was spanned by railroad steel, many lurid episodes transpired and were chucklingly related along the wilderness trail between the California diggings and the far North. Most of the facts relating to these episodes have been lost in the mist of years. Others have become distorted with the passing of time, garbled in the retelling until they represent only a species of myth, or folklore, vague reminders of a bygone age and a mighty race.

The record concerning that stirring interval is dim. Yet a few incidents have been handed down that are typical of the sturdy adventurers who tamed a wilderness whose area exceeded a million square miles, typical of their downright temper, their rough humor, their coolness in the face of danger. Significant, too, these incidents become, in relation to the emotional equipment of members of this frontier race—the fine line dividing their likes and dislikes, the ease with which they turned from laughter to rage. More than once, in a frontier camp, a cool jest on the lips of a prisoner averted the vigilantes' rope; and, conversely, on more than one occasion, a careless remark unloosed in a genial conclave precipitated a riot.

Take, for example, the story of Beekman's famous foot race at Jacksonville, and particularly its startling anticlimax. Such an incident could not have occurred in this softer generation. Not only is the setting for such primitive dramas gone, but the temper of men and the times have changed. Only in the unchanging facts of mob psychology, the quick and dangerous shift from one extreme mood to another that is a phenomenon of a gregarious animal, can the record be understood.

The truth of the Beekman incident may be assumed from the fact that old-timers differ so bitterly on the place where it was supposed to have occurred

and the identity of the principal character in the melodrama. There are grizzled veterans of the frontier to-day, who were striplings in the '70s, who will aver with profane sincerity that the foot-race imbroglio did not occur at Jacksonville in the Oregon country, but east of the Rockies, or in the Sierras, or in the Frazer River country, or even in the Yukon.

Some of the alleged stage settings are separated by two thousand miles. Of prime significance, however, is that the facts themselves have been handed down unchanged; and this is a crucial test indeed, for an incident must be perfect in all its parts to survive the artistic touches appended thereto by imaginative and genially unscrupulous narrators.

The preponderance of proof as to the stage setting, it appears, points to Jacksonville. To-day, in this dusty Oregon village, Beekman's Bank still stands. Across the way is the ancient building that housed the Miners' Rest, palace of refreshment from whose arched doorways the pocket hunters and prospectors watched the first famous foot race—and the second. Within view of this point in the main street is the gully into which Beekman ran when the enraged populace—but that is the story.

If proof as to the setting is not sufficient, there are a dozen old-timers, prospecting to-day within fifteen miles of Jacksonville, coming in at intervals to buy materials from the hardware store occupying the former quarters of the Miners' Rest, who will aver indignantly that they themselves, in person, stood among the crowd that urged Beekman on.

But let us consider the facts that have come down to us.

C. E. "Banker" Beekman came to the roaring mining camp of Jacksonville as a Wells-Fargo express agent. He was an athletically built young man, hard-featured, hard-fisted, with a sinister unwavering eye. He was taciturn and uncommunicative, attributes highly prized in positions of trust in the frontier, and speedily gained a reputation for square dealing and honest practices.

To-day, long years after Beekman has passed, his name is revered in a region where men are judged, not by speech, personal appearance or boasting word, but by their actions. His name is secure on the roll of empire builders. But on that sultry afternoon, when the flashily dressed stranger appeared in Jacksonville, more than half a century ago, Beekman's reputation had not yet assumed its granitelike and unassailable qualities. He was a young man of good repute; that was granted; but the test applied to his standing was severe.

The flashily dressed stranger let it be noised abroad in those palaces of refreshment standing shoulder to shoulder along the main street, that he was a foot racer of no mean ability. He made no open boasts, yet accidental clews as to his prowess were drawn from him with ease. He was modest in his self-appraisal, admitting that there might be athletes in the Northwest capable of making him eat dust, in a manner of speaking, but he had not yet encountered them; and to back his admissions flashed a large roll of bills—a procedure which aroused instant interest in the energetic metropolis.

For Banker Beekman's fleetness of foot had already become a byword throughout Jackson County. His ability had been discovered by accident, for the taciturn young express agent was averse to occupying the spotlight in any way. By dint of much persuasion and an appeal to his community pride, he had been induced to participate in numerous contests. From these he had invariably emerged the winner, leading the field with an ease that had sold his neighbors on the theory that he was invincible.

Thus the flashy stranger found instant action on his money. In the parlance of the galloping cubes, he was faded. News that an optimistic newcomer was betting on his ability to outrun Beekman brought in men from the adjoining diggings, loaded with nuggets and dust with which to repel an assault on their community pride. Whereupon the stranger, reading correctly the signs which said the camp was ripe for a clean-up, organized a pool among the gamblers and called all bets. Before night, the town was in an uproar, and a delegation called on Banker Beekman.

At first, the hard-bitten youth scowled upon the good citizens, heaped scathing appellations upon them, and averred forcefully that he would have nothing to do with such nonsense. He had work to do, he insisted, and had no time for trifles. But they urged him, pleaded, cajoled and threatened.

When it was pointed out to him that many thousands had been staked upon his prowess, that the contest on his part was in the nature of a public duty and that the race itself, being a distance of one hundred yards, could not occupy more than twelve seconds of his time, he at last agreed to perform. He warned them that it was folly to wager on the outcome, since the capabilities of the stranger were unknown; but they laughed him to scorn, it being believed that he, Beekman, was invincible. He thereupon instructed them to make all arrangements, and returned to his work, muttering.

Arrangements went forward with enthusiasm. The following afternoon was set for the great event. It was to be a hundred-yard race down the main street, beginning at the courthouse and with the tape marking the finish line stretched across the street between the Miners' Rest and the express office. "Lone-star" Charlie, one-time Texas gunman, a fearless and upright man, was named the official starter.

In dance hall and saloon that night, the forthcoming event was the sole topic of conversation, dwarfing the political issues, latest strikes, and crime news of the day. Ere dawn came, three fist fights and one shooting affray broke out along the main street among otherwise orderly citizens whose sporting instincts were fully aroused. These imbroglios did not develop among those who were for or against Beekman; they were all for Beekman; but the differences of opinion were concerned solely with the question as to whether Beekman's prowess was comparative or superlative.

Long before the appointed hour, the streets were crowded from the courthouse to the Miners' Rest. Competition for points of vantage in the vicinity of the finish line grew so hot that a special vigilante group was organized for the purpose of adjusting priority rights, seeing to it that the doorway of the palaces of refreshment were kept clear, and generally keeping the peace. The flashily dressed stranger, whose name it now appeared, was "Lightning" Barnes, had asked that in the interests of humanity, all weapons must be discarded by the spectators. This was judged a fair request, since, in the exhuberance of the moment when they cashed in their winnings, the crowd might fire their weapons at random, endangering property and life. The suggestion was heeded.

Thus, when the hour arrived, it was a weaponless, orderly, but intensely excited crowd that thronged the thoroughfare, waiting for the starting pistol.

Lightning Barnes, the optimistic stranger, was the first on the scene. He was dressed in running trunks, naked to the waist, and with light shoes on his feet. His physique, thus revealed, was superbly proportioned; broad of shoulder and with tapering torso, narrow hips and with tremendous muscular development of thigh and calf. The spectators knew their first qualms as they

eyed this grinning, confident athlete; but a roar greeted Beekman when he strode forth, scowling, from the express office.

Beekman was also clad in trunks and with moccasins on his feet. He, too, was a magnificent specimen of physical strength and coördination. He was as tall as his opponent and a trifle heavier; and the spectators broke into a bellow of acclaim and anticipation as the pair strode together toward the starting line.

There was a moment or two of waiting while Lone-star in his softly modulated drawl, instructed the contestants in the etiquette of starting fairly, and the unfortunate consequences that might result if either attempted to gain an advantage by leaving his tracks before the gun was fired. Then the roar of the crowd subsided to a murmur as the athletes crouched on the starting line and Lone-star raised his gun.

"Gentlemen," came Lone-star's voice. "Get ready! Ra're up!" Bang!

At last the great race was on.

The athletes flew from the mark, legs driving like pistons, arms flailing. Almost immediately their explosive efforts developed into prodigious speed.

The race itself, in measured time, was brief. Yet it was sufficient for the temper of the frenzied spectators to change from triumph to staggering doubt, thence to horrified amazement, and finally to the wrathful bitterness of defeat.

At first, the runners were shoulder to shoulder. Then, inch by undulating inch, the stranger crept ahead. Beekman's features were grim and set, teeth bared as he unloosed herculean efforts to hold his own; but the distance between them widened.

"Beekman! Beekman!" the spectators howled, implored, threatened, but in vain. At least a yard separated the contestants as the stranger forged across the line—the winner.

For an instant, the crowd was stunned. The defeat was crushing, cataclysmic. The excess wealth of the camp had been wagered upon the event. But greatest of all was humiliation and chagrin that follows a mortal blow at pride. Before their eyes an idol had crumbled. The invincible Beekman had lost.

The stranger, having crossed the line, checked his headlong flight, and turned aside through the crowd into the Miners' Rest. He did not pause to bask in the light of his triumph. Unobtrusively, it was learned later, and doubtless inspired by a keen knowledge of the fickleness of losers, he collected his winnings and faded from the scene.

But at the moment, the spectators paid the stranger no heed. All eyes were upon Beekman, who, having achieved a slower stop beyond the finish line, now turned to face them, defiant and scowling, his chest still heaving from his late exertions.

Concerning the reaction of the crowd at this point, it should be borne in mind that it was not the loss of the considerable amount of their wagers that caused the explosion. Money came easily in frontier camps. There was more gold in the hills. But Beekman, up to that instant, they had considered invincible. They still deemed him invincible, such is the blind faith in local gods; and in their bitter chagrin were seeking some logical reason for his defeat.

Thus they were prepared, psychologically, for a harsh voice that came from some unnamed source in the crowd.

"He threw the race!" bellowed this one. "He sold out to the gamblers! String him up!"

"String him up!" It was as though that first voice had raised up a hundred bloodthirsty echoes. "Get him, men!"

In a living wave the mob charged.

Beekman, being a downright young man unaccustomed to sidestep his responsibilities, appeared disposed at first to stand his ground and debate the ac-

cusation. But it would have been obvious even to one uninitiated in the blind temper of human packs, that the time for debate was past. His voice was unheard in the din. He turned, therefore, and fled.

The chase, in which all citizens joined except the barkeepers, the gamblers, and the aged and crippled, led toward the hills. Bellowing, the inflamed mob strove to overhaul their victim. But Beekman demonstrated that he was still a sprinter of no mean caliber. He loped rapidly away from the enthusiastic vanguard of his pursuers. Before weapons could be secured and brought into play, he was out of range and out of sight. He disappeared into a gully choked with stunted jack pine, some two furlongs west of the city.

Disgruntled and muttering, the army turned back. Unlimited horizons lay westward. It was obviously useless to pursue their quarry farther. They marched down the street, deployed into palaces of refreshment, and with feet resting on brass rails, profanely discussed the late imbroglio.

Had the record ended here, the incident would not have become history. Up to this point, nothing out of the ordinary had transpired, for foot races of this type were common in that epoch. Many another frontier camp had paid dearly for their local pride. But the spectacular manner of Beekman's reestablishment in the good graces of his community caused a chuckle to roll from camp to camp throughout the wilderness and etched the narrative indelibly on the meager pages of the past.

The mob had scarcely returned from the chase when hoarse shouts of astonishment brought thirsty ones swarming forth into the street. All faces were turned toward the west, the newcomers were stricken dumb by what they saw.

Beekman had emerged from the gully and was now sprinting earnestly toward them, legs driving like pistons, arms flailing. He ran as he had never run before, for at his heels loped a grizzly bear, a huge, brown rolling mountain of an animal, whose unquestioned zeal in the work at hand was evidenced by his explosive efforts to overtake his quarry. Gaping jaws with great tusks bared were visible even at a distance, seemingly a matter of inches beyond the runner's back.

It was opined later by cynical persons that the chase at first did not lead toward town entirely through accident; that Beekman, having inadvertently disturbed the grizzly as the animal gorged itself on wild berries, could more readily have achieved safety by scaling an adjacent jack pine. Others, versed in forest lore, were of the opinion that the wrathful animal was not, in point of fact, pursuing Beekman when both emerged from the gully; it had charged toward town and Beekman had merely preceded it.

These divergent views have never been reconciled. The stress of the moment left no time for debate. It was obvious that whatever motives the grizzly may have entertained when it burst forth from the thicket, it was now obsessed with a slavering yearning to leap upon and crush its fleeing quarry. Whatever impulse had caused Beekman to lead the chase down the main street, it was apparent both to him and to the horrified spectators, that he was now unquestionably running for his life.

The street was deserted and men sought places of vantage as the chase drew near. For the lumbering monarch of the forest, nearsighted at best and now blind with rage, there were no human habitations at hand, no frenzied spectators. His small red eyes gleamed malignantly in his huge shaggy head. Each leap in his bellowing charge brought him closer to his man. Groaning aloud, it was realized by all who watched that Beekman again was losing.

It was when he passed the Miners' Rest, with mighty taloned paws that could have broken a stallion's back, pounding the dust at his heels, that Beekman made his bid for glory. It enshrined his name forever in a region where the purest physical courage necessary to jest in the face of death was held in the highest esteem.

"Hey, you scissor-bills!" he gasped, turning a white face, truculent still even in his extremity, toward the spectators. "Do you think I'm throwing *this* race?"

It was that iron-nerved and upright citizen, Lone-star Charlie, who rang down the curtain on the blood-curdling drama. He alone among the paralyzed spectators was possessed of his guns. These, fortunately, were of heavy caliber, and it was also fortunate that destiny had placed Lone-star in a doorway commanding an unobstructed view.

At short range, he placed two slugs in the grizzly's shoulder. The monarch wheeled, bellowing, its attention merely diverted by a crashing impact that would have felled an ox. Head-on, Lone-star's cool marksmanship was accorded a better opportunity; he placed a bullet squarely between the red, malignant eyes, and the monarch's race, too, was done.

Thus ended, in the slaughtering of the grizzly in the main street of Jacksonville, one of the most spectacular incidents of the frontier. The crowd, no longer hostile, but babbling incoherently, rushed upon Beekman, surrounded him and bore him into the Miners' Rest. There, it is recorded, he thanked Lone-star gravely, ordered a round of drinks for the populace, which, when imbibed with ceremony, was followed by a second "on the house" and others in regular sequence throughout the afternoon and far into the night. During these jubilant proceedings, faith in Beekman's integrity was reaffirmed. Several minor riots arose in the course of the evening concerning the identity of the person who had first suggested that Beekman was other than honorable and upright; but these were quickly suppressed.

Beekman himself took no part in these festivities, it is said, beyond the first two rounds in the Miners' Rest. Then he shook off his admirers, well-wishers, and fast friends and strode away, muttering about wasted time and work to be done. Hilarious ones, looking in through the barred windows of the express office at a late hour, saw him scowling industriously over his books.

WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED COWBOY WILL WEAR

THERE is something inexpressibly alluring about the costume of the cowboy. It suggests youth, health, high spirits, and indomitable courage and resource, in addition to its undoubted picturesqueness. But any one who thinks he is going to "dress the part" of a cowboy had better first count the cost.

Those spurs which tinkle so delightfully as the cowboy arrives on the scene? Well, handmade silver inlaid spurs cost thirty dollars a pair. Saddles may be had for three hundred dollars—but also, fortunately, for less—and then there are the smaller items, such as hats, and boots, and chaps, and those gayly colored shirts! Altogether, the wardrobe of a really well-turned-out cowboy runs into money. Of course, these are the highest figures, and all the necessary paraphernalia may be procured at a much more moderate cost; but it must be admitted that to be in the height of fashion this year a cowboy's costume not only comes pretty, but comes pretty high!

My Castle in the Hills

By Cristel Hastings

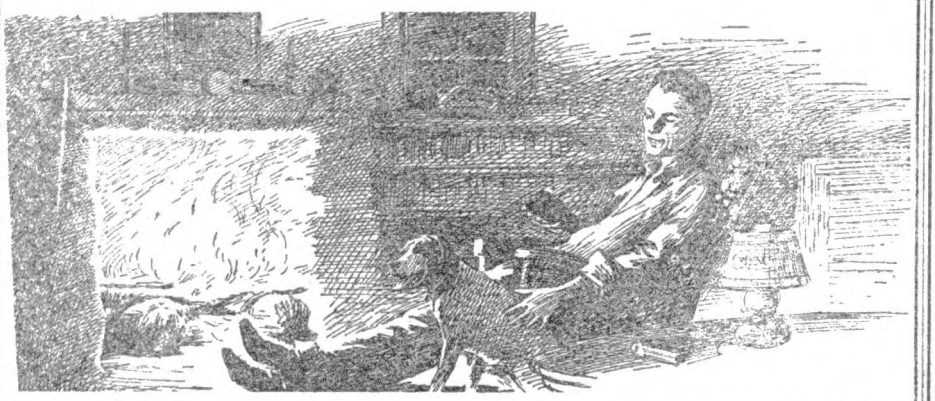
IT'S built of boards that never had
A drop of paint nor stain;
Its silvered walls were tinted by
The sun and wind and rain!

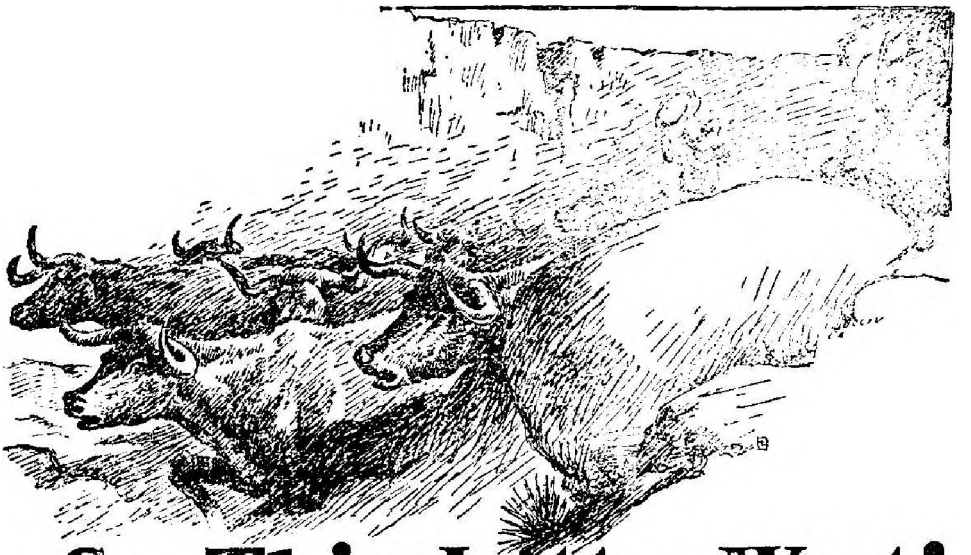
No cupolas adorn its roof,
No minarets nor spires;
But, oh, there is a chimney piece
That tells of warming fires!

No curtains sway with summer winds,
But windows open wide
To frame a woodland masterpiece
Each time I look outside!

No courtiers await my step
When sunset shadows fall;
Instead, my dog comes bounding down
A trail where rose leaves fall!

No lights have I except a lamp
And a bright fire's glow,
And the great blaze in my dog's eyes
That princes never know!





So This Is the West!

by **S. Omar Barker**

Author of "Buckaroo Ballots," etc

OUT of the East, fresh from the campus of a college, Ross McCune was coming into a land of gray mesas and green mesquite, of cliffy canyons and clustered cactus, a land of lone windmills and far-scattered cattle. It was different from the rolling hills of the Wyoming ranch where he had been raised; and though he came as a stranger to this weird country that lies just above the border of Mexico, his gray eyes were alight with the eagerness of one who comes home after long absence. Already his legs were tingling for the old, familiar feel of saddle leather.

Scattered cattle dotted the draws and hillsides, and he wondered, looking out from the train window, whether or not some of them might be part of the two thousand head left him in his Uncle Marvin Gaylord's will. He even fancied he could make out the Circle G on their sides.

He hardly expected any one to meet him at Arenal Junction. Old Sid Billings, in charge of the Circle G since Gaylord's death and until "the kid from the East" should arrive to take charge of it for himself, would probably be too busy. McCune supposed he would arouse some amusement in the tiny cow town, with his baggy, collegiate clothes. Like as not, they would expect Marvin Gaylord's nephew to come dressed as a cowboy. He grinned at the idea of being mistaken for a tenderfoot.

But young McCune did not get off at Arenal as he expected. At a water-tank stop, half an hour before time for Arenal, a brakeman came through, calling his name. A thick-boned, bald-headed cowboy with a red face, and as short-nosed as a prairie dog, came with him.

"You the new owner of the Circle G?" he asked. "I'm Sheriff Jed Brown, an' I'm pleased to meet the nephew of my ol' friend Marv Gay-

lord! Ol' Sid tol' me yuh was due in to-day or to-morrer an' ast me if I'd pick yuh up an' drive yuh out fer him. Seem like business caught me way up the track here, so I reckoned I'd better see was yuh aboard an' take yuh off here. Zuke Baker'll be right proud to have yuh spend the night with him an' me up at his cabin. I've got some business up there. Then I'll drive yuh out to the Circle G in the mornin'."

"Thanks, sheriff, and I'm pleased to meet you, but I'd better go on in on the train. I've got baggage to check out and——"

"Baggage? We'll drive by fer it in the mornin'. I'd be mighty grateful to yuh to come along. Ol' Sid would give me what for if I didn't meet yuh like I promised."

The red face took on a sort of worried grin, and Ross McCune, impatient to get out into this new country that was to be his home, answered with a nod of agreement.

"All right, then, I'll go, sheriff," he said.

He got his hand luggage and went out with the booted stranger to a middle-aged flivver beyond the water tank. In another five minutes they were bumping along a sidling road up a cliffy draw that looked like a weird gash in the settling dusk. They drew up, finally, after what seemed to be several miles and a thousand turns, at a crude stone cabin under a cliff edge beside a grassy meadow. McCune's companion whistled and a chunky-shouldered man appeared in the doorway, silhouetted against the yellow light of a kerosene lamp.

There were two men in the cabin besides the chunky, middle-aged, black-whiskered, unkempt one Brown introduced as Zuke Baker. They were both younger, both in cowboy garb. One was big, monkey-faced and husky. The other reminded McCune of a stunted Jersey yearling. His big, gray eyes showed white at the corners, and his underslung chin, fuzz-whiskered like a boy's, looked furtive and insolent. Yet when he stood up he was, after all, about McCune's size, though less smoothly muscled. He looked the newcomer up and down, noting his Eastern clothes with a faintly concealed sneer when he was introduced.

At supper all three of the men eyed him suspiciously. McCune got a feeling that these, surely, were not typical Southwestern cowboys, and he resolved to have none like them on his place.

"Don't look nothin' like his uncle, does he?" remarked Baker during the meal. His scrutiny was anything but friendly.

"Why, yes!" retorted Brown. "I'd know him any place!"

The chinless cowboy blew out his lips in a noisy, sneering laugh.

"Ain't no tellin', sheriff," he scoffed. "Might be some slick city four-flusher puttin' off on yuh! Ol' Sid had better make him show his brand! I heard McCune was a cowboy—this here ain't!"

All of them but Brown laughed. Ross McCune flushed red with anger. He started to speak, but Brown got ahead of him.

"Listen here, boys," he announced gravely, "I'm vouchin' fer this here stranger, an' I ain't goin' to stand fer no bully-raggin' of the nephew of my ol' friend! Savvy?"

From the first, McCune had instinctively disliked this man who called himself a friend of his Uncle Marvin, and now he felt a strange, unreasonable resentment at the man's standing up for him. Yet he realized a certain obligation of gratitude, too, and in deference to it kept silence. But only for a moment.

"Say!" went on Jones. "If this here bloomer-wearin' lady-laddy is Ross McCune, then Lawd pity the pore punchers on the Circle G! She'll have

'em marcelin' the cows' tails an' ever'thing!"

Evidently, for some unaccountable reason, he was deliberately looking for trouble. He found it. Ross McCune's broad hand stung him suddenly and sharply across the mouth. In an instant both men were on their feet, their fists flying. Yet not for long. McCune, range-raised and tough, was also fresh from the training of college athletics, and fury at this unprovoked insult gave an added bullet punch to his fists.

Suddenly, Jones went down. For a second McCune stood over him, waiting. But the fuzzy-faced man lay motionless, and when McCune straightened to look about him three six-guns were being held on him.

Brown holstered his and stooped over the man where he lay in the shadow of the table. He felt his wrist, shook him, put an ear to his chest. Then he turned a grave face to McCune.

"Great Scott, boy!" he exclaimed. "Yuh've killed him!"

"No! Not with my fist!" cried the young man. He made a quick move toward the inert body. The sharp prod of two gun barrels in his ribs stopped him.

"We'll swing yuh fer this!" snarled Baker.

The big, monkey-faced puncher thumbed back his gun hammer.

"Hot lead in ye, purty boy," he growled throatily, "nll maybe learn yuh manners! Remember yuh ain't back East now!"

As McCune stiffened his muscles to strike away the man's gun, Brown snapped to his feet, pushed back the other two men, and stood between them and the youth.

"Easy, boys!" he thundered. "Cage them guns! The law'll look after any swingin' business hereabouts, I reckon! Now you, Baker an' Bear-face, you look after Jones' body an' I'll escort Mister McCune into jail! He's got his rights fer a jury trial, an' I aim to see he gits 'em!"

The other two men holstered their guns in slow obedience. Brown took McCune by the arm and led him outside. He handcuffed him without resistance. McCune felt dazed. It was all so sudden and unreal that somehow it seemed to him more like play-acting than actuality. Brown made him get into the flivver, cranked up, and drove jerkily down the canyon.

It was a wild, weird journey with only dim, blurry headlights to break the blackness of a thousand-shadowed night. Brown drove like mad. It seemed to McCune that they were not even taking the same rough road they had come in on. He considered trying to escape, but the man had chain-locked his handcuffs to the top brace at the side of the seat and he was helpless.

Finally, almost bang against a sheer cliff, the car jolted to a standstill. Brown switched off the lights and unlocked his prisoner's handcuffs from the brace.

"Climb out!" he ordered in a low tone, emphasizing the order with a gun prod when McCune hesitated. Then he holstered his gun and laid a heavy hand on McCune's shoulder. When he spoke again his voice was throaty and preachy.

"Looky here, McCune," he said, "I'm a officer an' all that, but I ain't aimin' to take the nephew of old Marv Gaylord in fer murder. That there kid yuh done fer has got friends that'll swing yuh shore if they ketch yuh while their blood's hot, jail or no jail. But I'm givin' yuh yer chance. I'm takin' yuh to a hide-out right where nobody kin find yuh. They's grub there—I keep it cached to use when I want rustlers to think I'm outa the country. Nobody don't know where it is but me. You stay hid out here a coupla weeks

—or till I come fer yuh—an' I'll fix things up about the killin'. Prove it wuz heart failure or somethin'. Give 'em time to cool off, anyways. Savvy?"

"But I—it was self-defense—I don't need——"

"Self-defense or not," broke in Brown gruffly, taking off the handcuffs, "If yuh go back they'll put a drawstring on ye. Come on!"

Still bewildered, grateful, and yet somehow doubtful, Ross McCune followed the man's yank at his arm. They went up a twisting trail among boulders, along a narrow ridgetop, down through a long rock gap little wider than their bodies, turned again, scrambled over a low ledge, went humped through a brake of juniper and came finally face to face with a clumpy, black shadow that resolved itself into the tumbling walls of an old stone cabin. Brown shouldered open a warped door. The yellow flare of the match he struck showed a crude camp outfit. He lighted a candle on a table-like stone.

"This is it," he announced. "Yuh'll find water jest back twenty steps. Best not show yerself no further. An', by the way, better gimme yer baggage checks an' some card or other so's they'll lemme hold yer baggage fer yuh till it's safe to come back."

McCune rubbed a hand over his rumpled brown hair doubtfully. Finally, he dug out the checks from a pocket and with them handed over a last-year's identification card from behind the new one in his bill fold. He wrote "Deliver to bearer" and signed his name on the checks.

"Sheriff," he said, "this isn't my way of doing things, but under the circumstances, I'll do as you say."

"O. K.," replied Brown. "Yuh jest lie low till I git things settled. Yuh kin count on me, lad!" He put out his hand: "Good-by an' good luck!"

It was with some misgivings that McCune watched him go into the shadows that were now graying with approaching dawn. Had he, after all, come West again, home to the rangeland, only to become a skulking fugitive, wanted for murder, an uncertain threat of lead or noose to haunt him? Only now did he realize that, alone here in the midst of a wilderness as strange to him as the moon, he was also unarmed.

"Fool! What a hopeless fool I am!" he muttered to himself.

Daylight found him still hunched on a seat, head in hands, his thoughts groping for a trail of some sort out of his trouble.

It was late afternoon of that same day that old Sid Billings, waiting at the ranch house with the Circle G cowboys for the arrival of Marvin Gaylord's nephew, saw a middle-aged flivver coming some distance down the road. He could see two men in it, and there seemed to be a trunk in the back seat.

"That's 'Snub' all right, an' it looks like he's bringin' the new boss," opined "Shorty" Gilliam. "Gimme one look, Sid, an' I'll tell yuh whether the Circle G is losin' my val'able services or not. I ain't stayin' to work fer no candy-faced college kid!"

Old Sid clumped out to meet the car. The grin of pleased expectation on his face changed to a quizzical frown as the car drove up. Snub Carnico, red-faced as a tomato, short-nosed as a prairie dog, drove through the gate and stopped with a grin.

"Meet Mister McCune!" he greeted. "The new boss!"

"That's me!"

A lank man, with whitish-rimmed, gray eyes and an insolent mouth above a fuzz-whiskered chin, climbed with exaggerated snap and vigor from the seat beside Snub Carnico and put out his hand.

Old Sid's eyes searched the newcomer's face in vain for some definite sign of resemblance to his dead friend and neighbor. Somehow, he had expected to find Marv Gaylor's nephew as frank-faced and strong-chinned as his uncle. But he hid his disappointment and put out his hand in welcome. Nor did he question the bruised spot at the point of the young man's chin. The youth, apparently conscious of close scrutiny, laughed windily and explained.

"Li'le rough-house at a party back at college!" he giggled. "*Some* party! So this is Uncle Marv's establishment! Those the hired men?" he asked, pointing at the approaching group of punchers.

Sid nodded.

"Not so hot! Bet they're a bunch of loafers, eh?"

His Eastern clothes, baggy trousers and all, somehow made him look grotesque as well as travel-rumpled. The big .45 showing under his coat looked posed and out of place. He greeted the cowboys as they arrived, with a sneering grin.

"So this here's the West where men are he and cowboys plentiful, eh? Howdy, gang!"

With sober courtesy, the punchers came forward one at a time to shake hands. All but Shorty Gilliam. He gave the new boss one good look and turned on his heel. Old Sid stepped out to stop him.

"Good-by, Sid!" said Shorty. "Afore I'll work fer a guy with a snake face like that I'll go out an' live on stewed prairie-dog tracks! I'm gone frum here!"

Within two days every puncher on the Circle G, except Snub Carnico, had followed suit, and even Sid Billings had grimly resolved not to set foot on the place again to be insulted by the cocky dictator the new boss had turned out to be. Sid had volunteered advice, unobtrusively, and had been called a "goofy old fossil" for his pains. Somehow he could not believe that this young swaggerer was actually old Marv's nephew. But the newcomer had "Ross McCune" on his trunk and suit cases, and he had produced from them some of Marvin Gaylord's infrequent letters as well as the one notifying him of his inheritance.

Swallowing his pride, old Sid made one last effort to talk to the youngster. He found him, with Snub Carnico, a new giant, monkey-faced puncher, and two Mexicans, gathering cattle and heading them in toward the holding pasture at the ranch.

"This here ain't no way to do!" he expostulated. "Leave 'em on the upper grass. Yuh shorely ain't figgerin' to sell anything now, are yuh, before they're fat?"

"What I'm figgerin', old gooficus, is my own business! I'd thank you to quit butting in! This is my ranch and my cattle, and when I want advice how to run it I've got an expert foreman, Mister Carnico here, to ask advice from. Now, take *my* advice an' travel!"

Old Sid fingered his gun a moment before he obeyed. But finally, heavy-hearted, he went and did not return; and the dust-raising, strenuous work of gathering cattle continued on the Circle G.

Ross McCune spent four days of brain-tortured hiding at the lone hidden cabin by the cliff before he could make up his mind what to do. Deeply as he regretted the blow of his fist that had made him a temporary fugitive from both the law and from the vengeance of Jones' friends, the conviction grew, nevertheless, that it had been justified. He had sought no quarrel. He had only fought fairly and squarely, when it was forced upon him. That one of his blows had been deadly

was something no man could have foreseen. Regretful though he was, his conscience, in those few days of solitude, became wholly clear.

He found himself resenting Brown's bringing him off into hiding. Doubtless, the man had meant to be his friend, yet how much better it would have been to stay and face it out, like a man. It was exactly this that McCune resolved finally to return and do.

Shortly after sunup the next morning he made up a little package of lunch and set out. He went stooping through the juniper brake and clambered down over a ledge of rock as nearly as he could remember the way they had come. Thence he turned along the narrow rock gap. At its far end, a man, sitting suddenly upright from a bed roll on the ground, a six-gun in his hand, halted him. The man's face was black-bearded, his shoulders chunky. McCune recognized him in an instant. It was Zuke Baker, and there was a threatening, evil light in his sleepy eyes.

"Ye will walk out on us, will ye?" he rumbled. "Now, turn an' git back to yer hole pronto 'fore ye find yerself packin' bullets! Git!"

McCune had expected Baker, from his former threat, to shoot him on sight. He half expected the shot even now, but the man's eyes were sleepy. Without answering him, Ross McCune dived, in a flying football tackle, into the man's bed roll. Surprised, Baker shot too late and missed. Then he found himself suddenly half smothered in bedding, with McCune, plunging, striking, kicking, fighting like a bogged broncho, upon him.

Smothered in the folds of a thick soogan, Baker's breath was like the muffled blowing of a dog with his nose in a rabbit hole. McCune freed a hand to grope for the man's gun. There was a sudden, smothered boom somewhere under the sougans and through their thickness something thumped like a hammer upon McCune's thigh, making him release his hold and leap back. Before he could lunge in again, Baker, like a cat leaping free of a wet towel, sprang out of the bed roll and fled wheezing in shirt and underwear, with out his boots, up the narrows, his .45 swinging in his hand. Once under cover, he would turn and use it mercilessly.

Then in the second before he leaped out of sight, a fist-size rock, winging fast and straight as a pitched baseball, struck the back of his wrist and knocked the gun clattering to the rocks. Cougarlike, McCune catapulted forward and got it.

But Baker had not stopped. Swiftly, cautiously, McCune followed out over the ridge where he had disappeared. He stood watching a moment, uncertain whether to follow on. Then from over the ridge below him came the quick cluttery sound of hoofs, and he saw Baker, mounted bareback on a gray horse, flash across the little grass meadow and disappear among the boulders farther down.

McCune stood a moment in puzzlement. He had not expected the man to flee, much less to leave half dressed and without his outfit. It must mean he would be back.

A vague, aching stiffness seized McCune's leg as he took a swift step. He gained the cover of the rock gap before he stopped to examine it. He saw to his relief that the bullet, stopped by the cotton batting of the sougans, had only bruised his leg, without even breaking through the skin.

With swift stealth, he returned to Baker's bed, found cartridges and filled a pocket with them. The guard's saddle was up on a shelf of rock with a lariat at the horn. McCune's cowboy instinct told him that to a man afoot, and perhaps hunted, in an unknown wilderness like this, a rope might prove

as valuable as a gun. Swiftly he unbuckled the hempen coil. Then he turned and ran limping out of the narrows and plunged into the cover of junipers and boulders over the ridge.

It was a country mazed with sudden breaks, sharp ridges, and blind canyons, as wild and weird as the jumble of events that had given him grim welcome since he had left the train with the stranger at the water stop. A dozen puzzling suspicions buzzed in his mind now, yet one thing at least was certain: his determination to find his way—fight it if necessary—back to Arenal and get the whole business settled. He would skulk in hiding no longer. And if, as he half suspected, there was something crooked about it, he aimed to find it out.

But he had not the slightest idea where he was—where Arenal was—where the Circle G Ranch was—or which way to turn. He could tell direction by the sun, but he had been brought here in the night, whether from north, south, east, or west he could not guess. He set out, nevertheless, limping with the ache in his leg, to find the old trail road Brown had driven in over and follow it back.

It was no easy task. Sharp, unseen cliff breaks detoured him, and when he had gone around them, as often as not it was to find himself facing a sheer precipice or hemmed in a blind canyon with walls too steep to climb. Cactus in veritable thickets confronted him, and everywhere little gullies that crooked first this way and then that confused his sense of direction. Gradually, without realizing it, he was bearing farther and farther to the right. Thirst was beginning to parch his tongue and weaken his knees. His bruised leg ached. He was already tired out by mid-morning when he found himself face to face with a jagged ledge he could not go around.

It took him half an hour to catch a loop of his rope on a scrubby manzanita and climb up it over the ledge. Once on the ridge top, he could see that both eastward and southward the country broke into longer ridges and bigger canyons. Something white gleamed in the sun a few hundred yards off to the southwest. He had seen such monuments from the train window west of El Paso, and he knew it was the mark of the border. Then Arenal and the ranch must be northward. He turned, bearing to the east to miss the difficult country he had just come out of, and headed northward. A vague dust hung in the heat-shimmered air.

An hour farther on he saw green cottonwoods in a draw and the glint of pooled water. Thirst urged him to climb down, yet he wondered if he could ever make it back out. Then something else caught his eye and decided him. A little bunch of horses, fifteen or twenty pintos and duns, came around a curve in the draw, fighting flies and heading for the cottonwood shade near the springs. McCune turned and clambered painfully down the hill toward the cove.

Once down, he crept on his belly from boulder to boulder toward the ponies. Once he had to crawl back to go around a rattler coiled almost in his very face. Finally, his clothing torn, his hands all but blistered, he managed to creep unsuspected within rope reach of the horses. He watched for a few minutes as they milled and circled, fighting flies. Two of them tossed their heads suspiciously in his direction. They were scrubby ponies, mustangs. Yet on the withers of one of them, a lank-legged dun, McCune saw splotches of whitish hair that must be saddle marks.

He waited until this horse drifted within reach. Then, in one movement, he stepped out from behind a boulder and kirtled a loop at the horse's neck.

To his dismay, it missed. But the little cavy separated and he ran swiftly between them, made another loop and, as the dun came thundering by him, picked up a front foot in it. He gave the rope a quick turn about his waist and sat back upon it.

The pony went over, kicking at the sky, and fell headlong. Before it could get up, McCune had made his rope fast about a cottonwood. The dun's next run flopped him into the mud of bog hole. McCune left him floundering while he got himself a drink. Then he came back and set to work methodically and as swiftly as he could. Slowly, taking slack as he could get it, he pulled the pony up to the tree.

Half an hour later he had a hackamore on him. He mounted him bareback and, with his fingers gripped tightly in the heavy shoulder mane, he put on a grim, unwatched bronc-riding in the midst of spring bogs and boulders. Worn and jarred as he was, he mustered a grin for his sweat-streaked face and a pat for the shoulder of the heaving dun when he had him conquered. Once he was topped off, the horse showed plainly he had been ridden before, for he was fairly reinwise.

McCune rode in switchback zigzags out of the cove and headed on northeastward. Uncomfortable and sore as he was, a light of victory was nevertheless in his eyes. If he hurried, even yet he ought to find Arenal or the Circle G Ranch before dark.

As it happened, he did not. Dropping down to the trail-marked bottom of a long canyon with the idea of following up it to the north, he came upon a couple of cows, dusty and slobber-mouthed as if from driving. They were standing in the scant shade of a manzanita tree. He saw in a flash that they bore the Circle G brand—his brand—on their ribs.

Now he understood, too, the vague dust haze in the air. For all across the bottom of the canyon, all fresh and headed southward, were the tracks of many cattle, and perhaps half a dozen horses. Evidently, these two cows had dropped out from the thousand or more that tracks showed must have passed. These two were his—the others might well be, too.

These two cows were tired. They had been driven fast. The tracks showed it. The border was not far away to the southward. Two and two make four.

Ross McCune, cowboy, suddenly forgot all his other troubles. The cattle his uncle had left him were being driven into Mexico! He yanked his hard-mouthed mount around, and with a rope end beat him into the breakneck speed of a jack-rabbit gallop down the canyon.

He was not long in overtaking them. When he was near enough to hear the echoing of shouts and hoof clatter against the canyon sides, he tied his horse and crept forward on foot to reconnoiter. Five men, three of them startlingly familiar, were driving the cattle. The other two apparently were Mexicans. McCune realized in dismay that there would be hopeless odds against him in attacking them from the rear. Somehow, he must get ahead of the herd and stampede the cattle back.

Unfamiliar as he was with the country, McCune saw that the tops of the canyon rims down here seemed to flatten out more into mesas. His only chance would lie that way. He chose the east side and nose-reined the dun pony up a steep slide rock slant. To his delight the animal, almost goat-footed, made it as surely as he himself could have done on foot.

He rode because he must hurry and he must save his worn strength. Once over the rim he galloped on southward. It was not hard going here. He could

tell that he was passing the herd in the canyon far below, and finally, looking down over the rim, he saw that he was ahead of them. He took the rope from the pony's head, gave the wild horse a farewell pat, coiled the rope, and clambered, almost like a monkey swinging from limb to limb, on down from one ledge level to the next.

The sound of rattling hoofs was already in his ears when he got to the bottom, but the herd leaders were not yet in sight. McCune ran to a place where the canyon narrowed to no more than a fifty-foot passage between jutting *peñascos*. He crouched behind a rock at one side and waited as the leaders, strung out in ones and twos, came down the draw.

A fine, big, white-faced cow came to the narrows even with him, easing her hoofs over the rocky trail. The cowboy hated to do it, but he knew he must. He eased back the hammer of Zuke Baker's .45. The gun boomed. The big cow faltered, then dropped kicking in her tracks. Swiftly, the cowboy shot down another, and another, until five Circle G cows lay kicking on the ground, while three others ran bellowing, wounded and bleeding, back into the herd.

All through the front of the herd white-faced heads went down, then up, high in the air, as the frightened animals turned back from the terror of the kicking bodies of their leaders. Like a wave that breaks on shore rocks and roars back in a mad whirl whence it came, the herd turned in crushing, irresistible stampede back up the canyon. The noise of their going echoed like muffled thunder in the rocks.

As swiftly as his tired legs would carry him, McCune followed, yelling, at their heels lest they should stop. Half a mile up the canyon he came upon the bodies of two men and a horse trampled to death. One was a Mexican. The other, horribly mutilated though he was, showed the unmistakable short-nosed, prairie-dog face of the man who had called himself Sheriff Brown.

From the east side of the canyon there came sudden rattling gunshots. McCune felt lead sting his right foot. He dropped flat behind the body of the dead horse.

The canyon was already in shadow, but even so he could see three men crouching on a low ledge where they had taken refuge from the stampede. Exhaustion shook his hand, but he answered their fire. At his shot he saw a huge, bearlike figure plunge headlong from the shelf to the sandy canyon bottom.

Black curtains suddenly seemed to shuttle back and forth, thicker and thicker, before McCune's eyes. He fired again. He blinked desperately. The second man was down from the ledge now.

Blackness again.

Then in a faint shift of seeing he saw that both men were crawling slowly toward him across the canyon bottom. He had managed somehow to reload. He fired again. But, slowly, surely, the two crawling men came on.

Mingled with the echoes of his last shot there came in sharp faintness another sound: the beat of hoofs at the gallop. And it, too, seemed to be bearing down upon him. Desperately he turned to face this new onslaught from up canyon. But this time the black curtains seemed to buzz shut and stay there; so that Ross McCune, gun in hand, lying like a dead man behind the shelter of a dead horse, did not see the two men crawling toward him suddenly leap up to run, only to stop, hands in the air instead, before the pointed barrels of smoking six-guns.

Ross McCune, his body one solid ache, opened hazy eyes to see the faces of three strangers looking down at him.

Not one of them was handsome. All three were sun-wrinkled, but somehow, compared to the faces that had greeted him that first night at Zuke Baker's cabin, McCune thought they looked pretty fine.

One of the men had the young cowboy's bill fold in his hand and was looking at the identification card in it, while the other two pressed water to his mouth and sopped his head with wet bandannas.

"Y'see, it's him all right!" said the first man. Then went on when he saw McCune's eyelids flutter open. "I'm ol' Sid Billings, son. Seem like we kinder got put off on, boy, an' might nigh let Snub Carnico an' his bunch o' thieves git off with yer cattle. Would 've, too, I reckon if yuh hadn't gosh-amighty-knows-how got here an' stopped 'em. Are yuh bad hurt?"

Ross McCune managed to grin widely enough to show through grime and whiskers.

"Only in my foot—and sort of worn out. I—I guess I'm a sure-enough dub, Mr. Billings, to let 'em frame me for a murder and hide me out that way while they——"

"It's us is the dubs!" snorted old Sid. "We ought to 've knowed no sech a snake-faced lizard as this stranger Carnico brung in could possibly be kin to a man like Marv Gaylord—even if he did have the papers. Him an' Carnico made out they was you, y'know, so's to drive off the cattle without bein' bothered. I suspected 'em right along, but never took no action till I'd dug up a pitcher of you from yer uncle's things that didn't no ways fit this here chinless wonder. Then me an' Shorty rode right over, an' they was already gone with the cattle. So we got Sheriff Brown an' follered right on! Gosh amighty, we——"

"Sheriff Brown?" McCune interrupted quizzically. "Say, is he a tomator-faced fellow, short-nosed like a prairie dog?"

The eyes of the gray-mustached, hawk-nosed man busy dressing McCune's wounded foot, looked up with a twinkle.

"No, young feller," he smiled, "I ain't!"

"That there was Snub Carnico," put in Shorty Gilliam. "The one that hid yuh out fer killin' yer—yer nom de ploom. Snake-face, here"—he jerked a thumb toward two men bound hand and foot—"has confessed it all. Snub, he got trompled in the stampede. Too bad him an' Big Monkey wasn't likewise. Zuke Baker, too. We got him hog tied, pantsless, back up the draw. Sheriff says it'll be anyways twenty year apiece fer 'em all. An' say, will they be a job fer me back on the Circle G now, Mister McCune?"

"I'll be needing a foreman," smiled McCune.

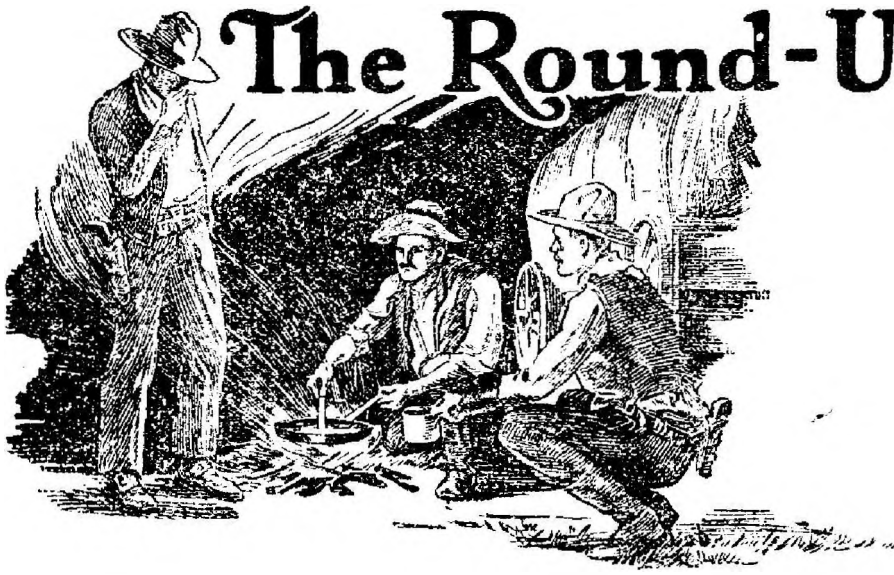
"I'm afeerd Shorty here won't ride fer no college cowboy," put in old Sid with a chuckle. "He's right particler who he works fer!"

"Aw, Sid!" protested Shorty. "Workin' fer *this* college cowpuncher'll be a honor!"

SKIS FOR MONTANA PLANES

OF the many difficulties that the airman has to encounter in his most ticklish of all problems—that of landing on a terrain that is more likely than not to present its topographical obstacles—snow is perhaps one of the most persistent. In Montana, however, snow-covered landing fields don't worry the airman at all. The reason for it is that passenger machines are sometimes equipped with specially built skis that hook on before the plane leaves for the snow fields.

The Round-Up



HERE with us this evening, Folks, is that sterling entertainer, Frank Richardson Pierce. Frank heard something the other night, in Alaska, which he thinks is worthy of repeating here to-night, so let's give him a chance to pass it along.

"Evening, Folks! Here is something for you to talk about, it seems to me. I was sitting in a hotel the other night, when a man, who has spent his life on the frontier, remarked: 'I lived in Montana twenty-five years, and I've never seen a horse fast enough to catch an antelope.'

"A stranger, puffing a pipe, immediately replied: 'I've lived in Montana that long, too, and I've caught many an antelope with a horse. If any horse of mine couldn't catch an antelope, I'd give him away.'

"After much discussion, it was decided that I should put the question up to you readers, the very first chance I got, to spend an evening with you-all at the Round-up."

Well, Folks, get in on this. How about it, can any real good horse run down an antelope?

And now, while we're on the subject of horses, we take pleasure in introducing to you Mrs. Juanita Rico, 942 Broadway, Gary, Indiana, who is a very fine horsewoman. We are all for the methods Mrs. Rico uses, and we're for them every time.

Mrs. Rico, kindly take the saddle and tell 'em:

"BOSS AND FOLKS OF THE ROUND-UP: I am a newcomer to the outfit, so I hope you folks will pardon me if I speak a little rashly; but, as I just got through reading Mrs. Mull's ideas about ways of handling horses and dogs, it has riled me up a little bit, being a lover of horses myself.

"At present I am living in the Hoosier State, but, while I was born in this State on the banks of the Ohio River, I was raised mostly in the State of Texas, and almost always lived on farms or ranches where I was among horses. As I am twenty-eight years of age and have been through forty-two States of the Union, as well as in Canada, Mexico, and Cuba, I believe I am old enough and have experience enough to venture to contradict Mrs. Mull's ideas. So here goes.

"She believes in using force and harsh treatment on a horse. I do not believe it is necessary.

"My father raised his colts to be three or four years old before he put a halter or bridle on them. It was always my delight to catch them and ride them before he knew it. This I did by first winning the colt's confidence with bits of oats and sugar, and gradually fitting the bridle on it, and then riding it bareback. Not throwing any bouquets at myself, I must say I was sixteen years old before I was ever thrown and had always managed to break the colts perfectly without a spur or whip. At the time I was first thrown, it was my first experience in the saddle, and the accident was due more to my ignorance of leather than to the colt's tricks.

"Then, in 1918, at the State Fair at Indianapolis, Indiana, I had my first experience with classic and show riding. Of course, there wasn't much to that, but it was experience. After that, I got into the show business, where I really learned training and riding all classes of horses. In 1923, I married a man from Oregon and went with him on lots of wild-horse chases.

"So I must say that always, whether it was a wild horse I was riding or a show horse I was training, I have always found that kindness was the best treatment to win a horse's confidence. Especially when training blooded horses or those of a good race, I have always found that if you are cruel to them they will hate you and become tricky, watching for their chance, whereas if you pet them and coax them with a little sugar or oats it isn't long before they will look for that bit of sweetness and do their work well to get it.

"At one time in the show world, five other girls and myself were working horses. Every so often, these girls' horses would act up. The girls would give them a whipping afterward and also have to rehearse them, while my horse I never touched with a whip, and she never failed one single act, but always nosed me as soon as we were through for her sugar.

"At another time, I was given a high-school horse to ride that was in the habit of running away and bucking. If you put a curb bit on him he would fall backward. I rode him fine for two weeks; then he tried it with me one afternoon. I made the mistake of whipping him under the flanks. That night he acted up worse than ever, but I held my temper and, instead of whipping him when I put him away, I stayed and talked to him and petted him, winding up by giving him a piece of sugar. While he tried it a few times afterward, I always talked to him all through his performance, and in time he turned out to be a perfect actor and a valuable horse.

"Then, one time in Oregon, we ran a wild stallion for three weeks before we cornered him. He was a beautiful thing but very vicious, so my husband rode him first until he had him pretty well tired of bucking, and then I rode him all day to get him used to me. At first he would always buck when I first mounted him in the morning, but I never spurred him or used a whip, and he soon got used to it. I would always ride him out to get our range stock in the morning and then feed him oats. One time, after we had been in the city for three days, we got home to find that he had all the range stock, mavericks, and wild horses he could find lined up in the corral waiting for his feed of oats.

"So do you blame me when I say kindness will do much more than hard treatment? I believe I have had enough experience to know, and I believe a horse has sense and knows if you are his friend or not. It is the same with dogs. They will do much more for you if they know you are their friend and love them, than they will if they are

afraid of you and just mind because they have to.

"So I beg your pardon for the long talk, but I hope to hear from some real friends out West."

R. M., from King City, California, he wants a song, and a particular song. "Will you please," says he, "if you can find it convenient, repeat for us the words of the song 'Jesse James'?"

Sure we will, R. M., but we'll do more than that, we'll sing 'em, and we want you, R. M., and all of the other folks to join in with us. So, here goes:

JESSE JAMES.

Jesse James was a lad that killed a-many a man;
He robbed the Danville train.
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Poor Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life,
Three children, they were brave.
But the dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

It was Robert Ford, that dirty little coward,
I wonder how he does feel,
For he ate of Jesse's bread and he slept in Jesse's bed,
Then laid poor Jesse in his grave.

Jesse was a man, a friend to the poor.
He never would see a man suffer pain;
And with his brother Frank he robbed the Chicago bank,
And stopped the Glendale train.

It was his brother Frank that robbed the Gallatin bank,
And carried the money from the town;
It was in this very place that they had a little race,
For they shot Captain Sheets to the ground.

They went to the crossing, not very far from there,
And there they did the same;
With the agent on his knees, he delivered up the keys
To the outlaws, Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Wednesday night, the moon was shining bright,
They robbed the Glendale train;
The people they did say, for many miles away,
It was robbed by Frank and Jesse James.

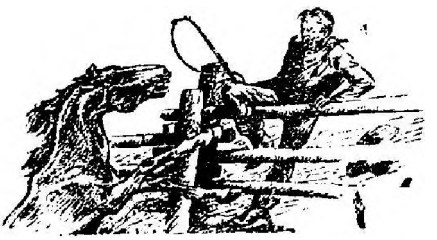
It was on Saturday night, Jesse was at home
Talking with his family brave,
Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night
And laid poor Jesse in his grave.

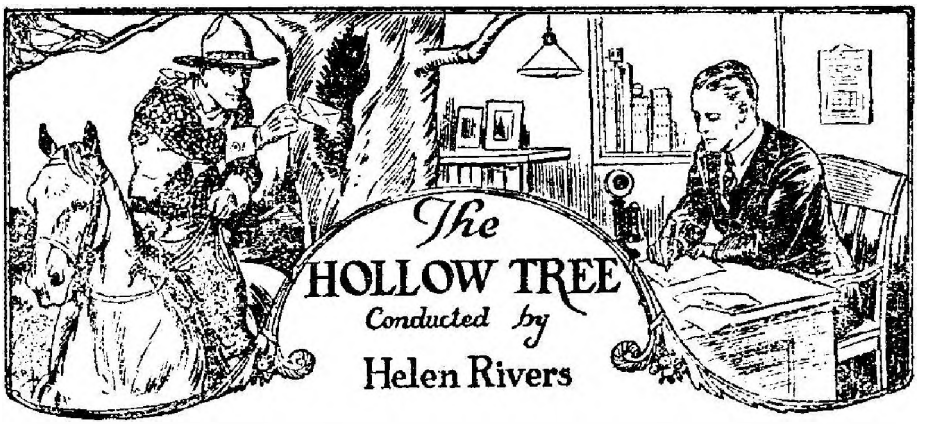
The people held their breath when they heard of Jesse's death,
And wondered how he ever came to die.
It was one of the gang, they called little Robert Ford,
He shot poor Jesse on the sly.

Jesse went to his rest with his hand on his breast;
The devil will be upon his knee.
He was born one day in the county of Clay
And came from a solitary race.

This song was made by Billy Gashade,
As soon as the news did arrive;
He said there was no man with the law in his hand
Who could take Jesse James when alive.

There, how's that? And you-all sure did join in fine.





Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

MONTEZUMA, the old Monte Carlo of the West! To the south—Las Vegas, cow town of the New Mexico range; to the west—the mighty Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Greetings, Gang, from west of Montezuma! You folks who think of New Mexico as a barren waste of sand and sidewinders should travel to Las Vegas, and then ride north six miles to Montezuma, the Monte Carlo of New Mexico. Seventeen miles west of Montezuma is a tiny valley nestled between the towering mountains of the Sangre de Cristo. There isn't a better hunting and fishing spot in all New Mexico than in this valley. Deer graze within fifty yards of the main ranch house, and there are a few cabins here that tourists live in during the summer months in the valley. Six miles north of the valley there are any number of log cabins for those who have come to see the beauties of New Mexico. I myself live in the little valley seventeen miles west of Montezuma!

Las Vegas is a cattle town, and every year a round up is held, which is widely known and attended by cowboys from all over the world. Folks, I know considerable about this plateau State, and I assure you I know what mountain life is.

My great ambition is to teach small children on a ranch somewhere in our Southwest. I am an experienced teacher. A cattle ranch somewhere in Arizona or New Mexico, with a lot of little kiddies in a ranch-house schoolroom, is my idea of a combination that is hard to beat. GIRL OF THE WEST.

Care of the Tree.

Cottonwoods and corrals

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Cottonwood trees lining the banks of a creek, a corral, and a ranch house—doesn't that sound like ranch life? It is, and this is the ranching country—Arizona. My home range is Kirkland, twenty-five miles south of Prescott, the "cowboy capital of the world." All around us is ranch country.

I'm only a girl of twenty-two, but what I lack in years I make up for in knowledge of ranch life, and I'm hoping to find a pard, perhaps a woman of middle age, who would like to take over one of these old ranches near Kirkland and make a "dude" ranch of it. I have in mind an old ranch on the banks of a creek, with big cottonwood trees around it.

We have an almost year-round climate. It's wonderful here in the summer—although it's pretty hot down on the desert—and the winters are very mild. We're only twenty-five miles to Prescott, the mile-high city.

I would like to hear from any one who is really interested—and I'll be glad to tell about

Prescott, Kirkland, and Wickenburg, and about Arizona in general. This is a good place to come to if you are looking to regain your health.

Adios. HERMAN G. KNISLEY.
Kirkland, Arizona.

Out of the wilderness Northland.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I come again—out of the stillness and solitude of my wilderness home—the land of the big timbers, the land of the logger.

We call this part of our little world "out West," too; but it is not the West that the Coloradoans and the Montanans speak of. We are close to the Pacific coast, and Vancouver is the center of all activities for British Columbia. Vancouver lies about fifty miles from where we are—Pitt Lake—and so we are just around the corner from civilization. Until this spring we were located much farther north, also in the timber regions.

It is very beautiful here at the lake. Great towering mountains rise on every side, many of them snow-capped the year round, their peaks rising far up into the clouds and the mysterious blue of the sky line. The lake is about twenty miles long, and we are but a few miles from the head. It is quite narrow, not more than half a mile wide in most places. Our home is on a float of great cedar trees, and when we wish to move from one place to another we tie on with a gas boat and are towed to our new location. Last spring we moved almost two hundred miles. That is not a great distance as mileage is reckoned to-day, but it is quite a trip for a house on a float, and part of the journey was in open water.

In a way it is rather a lonely life here in the North woods, and there are few folks about. Sometimes one goes weeks without seeing a soul outside of those working right here, and so letters from the outside have come to mean a lot to me. YUCULTA.

Care of the Tree.

The wilds of California.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Although I now live in Bakersfield, I have lived in the wildest parts of California. I can supply information about the wild game in the unsettled parts of that big State, and I can also tell about the ranches and the cowboys.

I'm sixteen. And I will answer all the letters that come my way. MISS JACK.
Box 1005, Bakersfield, California.

"I'd like to hear from girls in the West and Southwest who live on ranches. I'd like to know about everything from the ranch house to the round-ups. I'm a girl of twenty, and live on a farm just three miles from Columbus, Ohio." Address this Gangster as Frances W., Care of the Tree.

Most of us who are going into the wilds of a wilderness need a guide. Most of us, too timid to venture alone, need a guide to friendship. Let the little friend-maker Hollow Tree badge be your guide to friendship.

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to The Hollow Tree Department, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you either the pin style or the button for the coat lapel. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.

"Riding is one of my hobbies, and I sure do ride a lot. I'm a farm girl, living in Alberta, Canada, and I'm very much interested in ranching and cowpunching. Will some ranch girl of the West write and tell me about the life? I'm fifteen." This Gangster is Hazel D., and you can write to her in care of the Tree.

"I would particularly like to make Pen Friends with girls in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas. I live in northern Alberta, about four miles from Saskatchewan. I enjoy riding very much," says Nellie MacKenzie, Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, Canada.

"Any of you Gangster girls who would like to hear about the Windy City, just drop me a line. I live in a suburb of Chicago. I enjoy the letters of the folks who live in the West, and would like to have some Western girls write to me. I'd like to hear about the

Republic of Panama, too," says Elnora Maxey, 3111 Wisconsin Avenue, Berwyn, Illinois.

"I would be more than glad to hear from some one in Canada who can give me all the information pertaining to homesteading, leasing, and purchasing of land, and the rights and laws affecting these transactions. I would, also, be glad to hear from some of my old Pen Pals whom I have lost track of." This Gangster is Vera L. Flack, 202 Southlook Avenue, San Diego, California.

"I would like the opportunity of saying that I think that a girl who uses a quirt on her mounts has not the ability to control them otherwise, and that she is most unwomanly," says H. C. Hamilton, of 245 Dunn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This Gangster is a lover of horseflesh and all animals, and is a champion of their cause. Mr. Hamilton is a musician. He'd like to hear from some of the Gangsters who believe in being kind to animals.

Private H. Graham, "A" Company, 1st Loyal Regiment, Gough Barracks, Trimulgherry, Deccan, India, is looking for some Pen Pals. He is a keen sportsman, and a good runner.

"I'm a good cross-country runner, an ex-boxer, and a decent swimmer," says Private S. Gribben, 1st Battalion, the Loyal Regiment, "C" Company, Gough Barracks, Trimulgherry, Deccan, India.

"This town is very lonely. The only important thing here is the stampede once a year. Perhaps the hombres who're interested in Drumheller and in the stampede will get in touch with me. I'm seventeen, and would prefer correspondents about my own age." This Gangster is Roy M. Augey, Drumheller, Alberta, Canada.

"Some good pictures of the timber lands, ranches, and outdoors in general should interest you amateur photographers of the Gang. I have plenty of snaps to exchange, and will give a letter for a letter, and a snap for a snap. Just put my address on the next letter you write," says Edmund J. Peters, R. R. 2, Brownell, Kansas.

Donald Gilbert, 137 9th Street, Maries, Idaho, is a sixteen-year-old Gangster who is interested in music. He is studying to be a banjoist.

"Boxing is my favorite sport, and I'd like to correspond with boxers from all parts of the country," says eighteen-year-old Louis Rivieres, Box 53, East Grand Fork, Minnesota.

"Have you a place in your column for a lonesome marine's plea for Pen Pals? It seems that when mail call is sounded, there is a letter for every one but me. I'm twenty-one, hombres, and hail from New York." This Gangster is Private Carl Tartagalia, 64th Co., 2nd Regiment, Hasco, Port au Prince, Haiti.

"I'm particularly interested in horses and am looking forward to making my way West and getting in touch with a ranch in the not too far-off future. I am of farming stock, and just recently came to America from England. Gangsters, please get in touch with John Liversag—that's me—at Huntington, Long Island, New York, care of H. Gilsey."

"This Gangster is sixteen years of age and would like very much to correspond with some ranch girls of that age or older," says Ernia Caulfield, Box 35, Yerington, Nevada.

WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO GET THERE

by John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THE outdoor West has a strong urge not only for the husky, red-blooded hombre who is searching for real adventure, but also for the chap who is looking for the most precious possession in the world —health. Jack T. and his wife, of Cleveland, Ohio, have made up their minds to seek a cure for their ills in the open and are asking advice about a promising spot to locate.

"My wife and I wish to settle in some good locality where we can get relief from rheumatism and tuberculosis," says this citizen of the Buckeye State. "El Paso, Texas, has been recommended to us as an excellent place for our troubles, and we want some information about this city, also your advice on our problem. We don't want to go where we are going to be treated as if folks were afraid of us and where we will feel like outcasts."

Well, we are mighty glad to do what we can to help Jack and his wife solve their difficulties. We can't say whether El Paso is the best place for them to locate or not, but we do know that many folks suffering from lung trouble have regained their health in the dry, mild, and sunny climate of this Southwestern city. The world's foremost specialists on this disease always advise patients with active tuberculosis to go to a climate where everything is favorable to the leading of an outdoor life, including the temperature, the amount of sunshine, and the amount of rain. El Paso seems to fill the bill.

El Paso is located almost in the center of the arid region formerly called the Great American Desert, and this is partly responsible for its genial climate. It has an altitude of three thousand seven hundred and sixty-two feet, and is in the most southerly portion of the Rocky Mountains, high mountain ranges being visible in all directions, while high, dry plateaus extend for hundreds of miles on every side.

Jack and his wife will find that many of the present citizens of El Paso, who are to-day splendid specimens of robust good health, went to this town as tuberculosis sufferers. Probably this is one of the reasons that the citizens of this Texas town do not have any exaggerated fears of the disease. So although El Paso is not a city of sick people by any means, the sufferer who goes there may be sure of sympathetic understanding and friendship.

There is not space here to say more about this town, but Jack may procure additional information by writing to the Gateway Club of El Paso.

The Lone Star State naturally reminds one of ranches, cowboys, and wild horses, all of which are mighty popular topics with our readers. We've had quite a lot of discussion in this department from time to time about these "scrubs" which run wild on the Western plains, and here is another query on this subject from Harry H., of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "What is done with the wild horses which are rounded up every year in the Southwest, Mr. North? Are these animals any good for ranch or other work?"

Our latest information on this subject comes from Arizona, where recently fourteen carloads of scrub horses gathered from the area of the Sopori Ranch and the Indian Reservation, were shipped to the reduction plant which has been installed at Cactus, Arizona. This plant, which is a recent innovation, has been erected as an answer to the question of what to do with the wild horses which are becoming numerous in some portions of the Apache State.

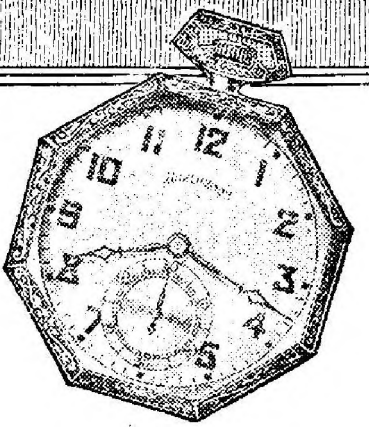
As Harry probably knows, every year forest rangers and ranchers gather large numbers of the useless stock from the ranges of the national forests, shooting the undesirables and selling the few which are worth something at public auction. Old-timers report that very few of the horses gathered in these round-ups are of any value, the main portion being scrub ponies which have run wild from birth and which have not the size to be of any use for either ranch or work of any other kind.

Western cattlemen are glad to aid in the gathering of wild horses because of the amount of good grass destroyed by them, as they graze over what would otherwise be good cattle range. The reduction plant in Arizona will take care of all the horses gathered in this State, thus making a marketable commodity out of what has heretofore been a total loss in time and money to ranchers and foresters alike.

Men acquainted with the horses of the mountain ranges say that while in some instances there are still real wild-horse bands roaming the hills of the Southwest, few of these horses are to be found in Arizona at the present time. The original wild horse was not a scrub, but an animal of good size and characteristics, which, according to some authorities, dated back to the barb's strain, brought to the Southwest in the early days by the Spaniards on their marches of conquest from Old Mexico northward.

This strain, strong and swift, at one time found a ready sale among the gallant riders of the Western plains, and in many instances wild stallions and mares became the nucleus around which pioneer ranchers built up good horse herds. The same blood lines still prevail in some of the Western horses of to-day, although they have been crossed with the Morgan and thoroughbreds of other types.

The next letter in our mail bag takes us from the Southwest to the Northwest, for George H., of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is asking some questions about a town out in the Beaver State. "What can you tell me about Klamath Falls out in Oregon, Mr. North? I'm



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thinking of trekking out there to locate and would like some points on the town's industries and the opportunities it offers a real lover of outdoor sports."

Speaking briefly about a town which deserves better treatment, we'll say that Klamath Falls is a modern, attractive city in the center of a vast area in southern Oregon noted for its scenic beauty and its productiveness. Surrounded by great forests, this Oregon town is essentially a lumber city, but the country round about is rich in agricultural resources and is also well known as the playground of southern Oregon. It is an ideal spot for a sportsman, for here one may enjoy camping, hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, mountain climbing, motoring and golfing.

BIRDS OF THE WEST AND NORTH AMERICA

The Mallard

(Anas platyrhynchos)

WHEREVER there is a pond or marsh, the mallard, or what is commonly called the wild duck, may be raised easily. New wild drakes must be constantly introduced or the stock will degenerate, but the mallard is hardy and requires little care. The birds will lay their eggs in brush piles, grass, or other convenient spots, and do not seem to mind having the eggs gathered daily by the owners, who sell them to the market.

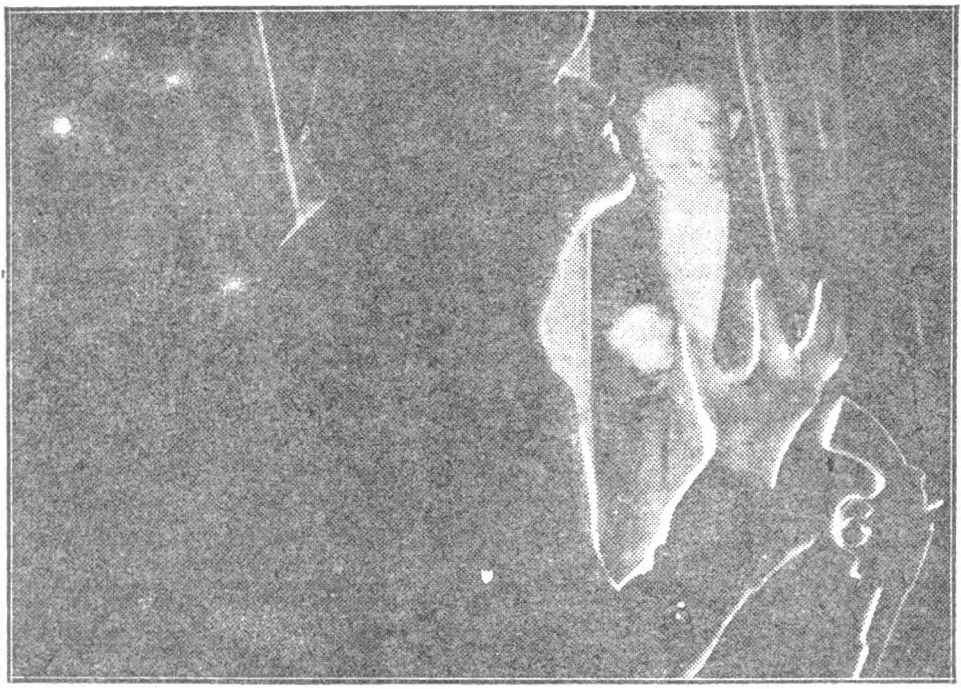
Throughout the West the mallard was at one time very prolific, and many hundreds were being constantly killed by the Indians and white settlers for food and feathers, more particularly for the latter. But the draining and cutting up of the marshy prairies in the West has driven the mallards away. In the Southwest they have also decreased.

The mallards, like all fresh-water ducks, feed mostly upon vegetable matter, but prove a help to the farmer in consuming many locusts and army worms. In the South they eat large quantities of crayfish, which abound in the rice fields.

These ducks breed in the Northern half of the United States throughout the Middle and Western States and in Alaska; also east of Hudson Bay in Canada, west of Hudson Bay, and in Greenland. In a clump of grass near a marsh the mallard builds a somewhat sketchy nest and lines it with down from the mother's breast. The eggs are large, smooth, and of a dusky white, numbering from six to ten. The young take early and easily to the water and are solicitously watched over by the female.

Not until the ponds and marshes begin to freeze over do the mallards begin to fly South to the Gulf States, Mexico, and the Pacific Coast.

In coloring, this wild fowl is adorned with many tints from nature's paint box. The male is far better equipped as a decorative object than his mate. His head is of a glistening green, which color is brought out in varying degrees of intensity in the tail and wings. Around his throat is a distinct band of white, and below this is a brown vest. His body varies from white to gray-white, with brownish stripes across back and tipping wing-ends. The female is speckled brown, shading from light to dark with almost a golden tinge over all. The only note of similarity between the two is a band of purple on each wing. The female is smaller than the male.



$2500 Reward!

For the Capture of an Unknown Man

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Berteau, the famous detective, had warned St. Clair *that the mysterious marauder would come again.* And now—a noise in the passage! The creak of an opening door. A shot in the dark! A capture!

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MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better in the vast majority of cases to use the name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

BALDWIN, ARTHUR.—Born in Suffolk County, England, in 1898. Last heard from in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1925. Information appreciated by H. Baldwin, 162 South Sixth Avenue, Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

JACKSON, FLOSSIE, MARY and KATIE.—Last heard from when they were in an orphans' home in Cairo, Illinois, in 1905. Flossie and Mary were sent to a home in Chicago, Illinois. Information concerning any of them appreciated by their brother, Clyde Jackson, 1663½ East Sixtieth Street, Los Angeles, California.

HUSSEY, FLORENCE.—Last heard from when at the Sacred Heart Academy at Buffalo, New York. Please write to Pal, Headquarters Troop, First Cavalry Brigade, Fort Clark, Texas.

HARVEY, JACK and brothers.—Of Colbert Bridge, Denison, Texas. Very important news. Please write to Mrs. Maggie Gammill Haworth, R. R. 11, Box 58, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

GARRITY, GERTRUDE.—Formerly of Suffield, Connecticut. Please write to H. W. M., care of this magazine.

NOTICE.—Would like information concerning, or word from, the young lady, with right arm missing, who drove a Ford coupe with a New York license in Cleveland, about the first week in December, 1927. H. E. M., care of this magazine.

DOC.—Anxious to hear from you. Please send your address to Sis, care of this magazine.

JOHNSTON, ALBERT.—Lived at Shenandoah, Iowa. Worked at the Kidney Hotel at Creston, Iowa, in 1914-15. Please write to Edna, care of this magazine.

POLLARD, ROBERT.—Last heard from in Santa Barbara, California, in February, 1923. Information appreciated by L. M., care of this magazine.

RUDE, LLOYD H.—Sixty-eight years old. Dark eyes. A carpenter. Last heard from in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1910. Information appreciated by his son, David Rude, Green River, Wyoming.

KIMBERLIN, JAMES M. M.—Twenty-one years old. Last heard from in Los Angeles, California, in October, 1927. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. W. H. Kimberlin, 311 Main Avenue, Chickasha, Oklahoma.

HAINES, THELMA.—About eighteen years old. A brunette. Worked at one time in a cafeteria in Des Moines, Iowa. Last heard from in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Puritan Hotel, just before she had an operation. Information appreciated by Mrs. Violet Echelbarger Pearla, 820 West Tenth Street, Des Moines, Iowa.

JOHNS, LLEWELLYN.—Born August 10, 1902. Speaks Spanish and French. Left home April 23, 1919. Information appreciated by his anxious mother, Mrs. Emma Johns, care of this magazine.

WHITE, BEATRICE NORMAN.—Last heard from in 1901, at 16 Parkside Street, Portsmouth, England, when she was eight months old. Mother's name was Julia White, nee Hughes. Information appreciated by her brother, Leonard Stanley White, University Hospital, Canadian Legion, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

BOLTON, JOSEPH S.—Formerly of Gorham, Maine. Went to Ventura, California, in search of gold. Later worked for a man named Peeks. Last heard from he was crossing the desert with a herd of horses. Information appreciated by his son, Ralph Edward Bolton, R. F. D., Hampton Falls, New Hampshire.

BOLTON, GRACE.—Last heard from when I returned from Cuba after the Spanish-American War. Please write to your brother, Ralph Edward Bolton, R. F. D., Hampton Falls, New Hampshire.

DAKE, A. B.—Will never forget you. Have good news about myself for you. Please write and tell me about your family and your situation. B. M. M., care of this magazine.

L. I. E., who advertised for G. I. E.—We are holding letters for you at this office. Please send for them. Important.

EVERETT, FELIX.—The past is gone. There is nothing to forgive. Have forgotten all. Shall always love you. Please write to your heartbroken mother, Mrs. Anna E. Kenneke, care of this magazine.

BOY.—Am broken-hearted. No answer to any of my letters. I love you and need you more than ever. Please write to daddy. L. W. C., care of this magazine.

SUGERPALM, FINGAL.—Last heard from in Kato, Pennsylvania. Please write to your friend, Gladys Campbell, 159 William Street, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

M. B.—All is forgiven. Come back East and settle in New York. I know you will make good. This will bring us together again. For both of our sakes please do what I ask. Mrs. M. B., care of this magazine.

CUMMINGS, CATHERINE.—I love you. Mother and every one will be glad to see or hear from you. Please write to Private George Smalley, Fort Monmouth, Ocean Port, New Jersey.

SWIFT, JESS H.—Last heard from in the Nineteth Aero Squadron at Sanderson, Texas. Information appreciated by Jess H. Rose, 113 Moore Street, Flint, Michigan.

BARE.—Have your letters. Would like to hear from you immediately. Important. Love. Russell, care of this magazine.

FIELD, ELMER M.—Eighteen years old. Formerly of Marshalltown, Iowa. Information appreciated by L. M. Field, R. R. 1, Ashton, Idaho.

CROUCH, SAMUEL MARCUS.—Twenty-seven years old. Last heard from in Tucson, Arizona, in 1916-17. Information appreciated by his brother, Dan F. Crouch, care of this magazine.

JEAN.—Two years have passed and many things have happened. Please write to me at the old address. J. M. E.

HEYMAN, JOHN HENRY.—How are you? You need not return, but please write to your mother in Kansas. Mrs. J. C. H., care of this magazine.

BAKER, WILLIAM.—Sixty-seven years old. Last heard from in Harper, Kansas, about seven years ago. News for him. Information appreciated by his brother, Dexter Baker, 15 South Twenty-fourth Street, Billings, Montana.

EVANS, SAMUEL.—Left Aberdare, Wales, in 1894. Last heard from in Rockford, Illinois, in 1908. Information concerning him appreciated by his relatives, Caleb and Thomas Evans, 98 Jubilee Road, Godrosman, Aberdare, South Wales, Great Britain.

MADIGAN, PATRICK.—Left Ireland in 1904. Forty-five years old. Born in County Clare. A bricklayer. Last heard from in Boston. Information appreciated by his son, James Madigan, 13 Moulton Road, North Cambridge, Massachusetts.

MANON, SANTA, or BURKE, JAMES.—A World War veteran. Served with Company K, Thirty-fourth Engineers, overseas. Last heard from when he was employed at the National Home for Disabled Soldiers at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in September, 1925. Index finger of right hand is stiff. Information appreciated by his sister, Alice M. Castle, care of this magazine.

TALBERT, HENRY.—Left his wife, Omar York, in Kentucky twenty-three years ago, two weeks before his daughter was born. Last heard from in Paducah, Kentucky, seven years ago. Information appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Bessie Talbert Perry, Box 122, Wilson, Arkansas.

MANORE, COE, nee LORELDA JESSIE JULIA DALY.—Was married in 1897. Last heard from in Toledo, Ohio, when her son was a baby. Her husband worked in the Milburn Wagon Works, West Toledo, Ohio. Information appreciated by her friend, Mrs. Bertie Maxwell, Scotland Star Route, San Bernardino, California.

MAUER, HARRY.—Last heard from two years ago. There was nothing true in that letter. Leslie Maurer, 342 Pennsylvania Street, Reading, Pennsylvania.

REMES, THEODORE.—Was a cigarmaker in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1914. Died in Boston. A daughter by his first marriage is anxious to hear from any of the children by his second marriage. Address Marie Remes, Dixon Hotel, Jackson, Michigan.

BRODIE, WILLIAM.—Born April 4, 1904. Lived near Dillard, Oregon, in 1924. Has been in Alaska, Washington, and California. Information concerning him or his relatives appreciated by Shorley Clayton, Dillard, Oregon.

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Name.....

Address.....

.....*Age*.....

FELICE, DAISY.—Last heard from eight years ago. Believed to be married and living in Trenton, New Jersey. Please write to your friend, Mrs. Ethelyn Beckman, 22 Delmar Street, Binghamton, New York.

MacDONALD, WINNIE and BERTA.—Formerly of 1052 Melville Street, Vancouver, British Columbia. Have news for you. Please write to Billie and E. J., 4124 Oxford Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

BACOM, GEORGE.—Was separated from his wife, Bertha Giles, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when his daughter, Rosetta, was three months old. Had a sister who lived in Illinois. His daughter, now twenty-seven years old and married, is anxious to hear from him. Please write to Mrs. Rosetta Bacom Christinsen, 300 William Street, St. Paul, Minnesota.

E. N. W.—We forgive you. Have news. Please let us hear from you. H. V. T., care of this magazine.

B. S. L.—Please come home. You are welcome. Send address to Esther, care of this magazine.

BROWN, EDWARD S.—Left Jefferson City, Missouri, June 6, 1928. My letters to you returned. We want you to come home. Papa looks for you every day. You are needed. Sunshine, care of this magazine.

WILDER, JOHN.—Do you remember the girl you met when you visited your Uncle Andrew? Your letters were withheld from me. Please write to Opal, care of this magazine.

POPKE, HANS BERNHARDT, or **BERNHARDT H. PAPKE.**—Believed to be in Los Angeles, California. Information appreciated by Mrs. Anna Bath Bailey, East 180th Street, Globe, Arizona.

MAYBERRY, ROBERT.—Twenty-eight years old. My letters to Detroit returned. Anxious to hear from you. If you are in trouble I will help you. Please write to your pal, M. S., 1221½ Street, Roanoke, Virginia.

LUCAS, MRS. AL, nee **HATTIE RYAN.**—In 1909 she lived in St. George Street, St. Louis, Missouri. Daughter Alice would love to hear from her. Address Alice, care of this magazine.

LALLY, ANTHONY T.—Last heard from he was working on lake boats in Buffalo, New York. Have news for you. Am still at the same place. Your brother, H. J. L., care of this magazine.

De MAR, or **DeMITT, MRS. DOROTHY.**—Last heard from in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in June, 1928. Information appreciated by her son, Russell Beck, 10 Maple Boulevard, Fort Du Pont, Delaware City, Delaware.

WRIGHT, CHARLES.—About twenty-three years old. Last heard from in Hot Springs, South Dakota, in 1926. Have you forgotten your foster mother, Flo? Please write to F. R., care of this magazine.

SULLIVAN, JIM.—Formerly of Rapid City, South Dakota. Worked in a sawmill. Please write to Flo, care of this magazine.

RUMPFF, ALBERT.—About twenty-six years old. Formerly of Sturgis, South Dakota. Joined the marines or navy in Los Angeles. An old pal from the H and Y Ranch would like to hear from you. Address F. R., care of this magazine.

KELLY, or **JACKSON, MAY.**—Lived at 300 North West Street, Syracuse, New York in 1920, and worked at the New York Central depot restaurant and at the Onondaga Hotel. Her home was in Ogdensburgh, New York. Information appreciated by J. P. E., care of this magazine.

WEST, or **RHONEY, LUETTA.**—Last heard from six years ago in Fresno, California, when she divorced Robert Rhoney. Believed to be married again and living near Chicago, Illinois. Information appreciated by her sister, Esther, care of this magazine.

MARTIN, CARL.—Brown wavy hair, gray eyes, and is six feet two inches tall. Last heard from when leaving Chattanooga, Tennessee, for Homestead, Florida, in August, 1925. Please write to Lillie Parker, 400 2-3 Cherry Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

RAWLINSON, BOB.—Have been hoping to hear from you all these years. Please write to Thomas Coffey, 66 Londley Street, North Cambridge, Massachusetts.

WYLAND, NATHANIEL.—Last heard from near Little Rock, Oregon, several years ago. Information appreciated by his nephew, Clifford C. Wyland, 409 West Fulton Street, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

COLEMAN, ELISHA.—Formerly of 2856 Frinkford Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Please write to your old buddy of Governors Island, Elmer R. Williams, Kingwood, West Virginia.

BUCKELEW, ROBERT HALL.—You can come back now, as the old charge is thrown out of court. We love you. Sister needs you. You won't have any trouble finding us, even though we are both married. Please write to H. B. A., care of this magazine.

COOPER, RAY ARTHUR.—Am broken-hearted over your disappearance. Everything is O. K. with dad. He feels sorry for you. Come home as soon as possible or write to Nonnie, care of this magazine.

OLSEN, PETER M.—A Norwegian. About fifty years old. Last heard from in Cosmopolis, Washington, in 1901. Had two brothers and two sisters in Norway. Information appreciated by his niece, Mrs. Ovidia La Rose, 714 Fifteenth Street, North, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

OWENS, JACK and ELLA.—Last heard from in San Bernardino, California. Please write to your friends, Dorothy and Jimmie Keer, 852 East Seventy-ninth Street, Los Angeles, California.

JOHNSON, WRENNIE and MYRA.—Last heard from en route to Los Angeles, California, from Miami, Florida. Mrs. Johnson's maiden name was Myra Hadden, and she came from Fort Myers, Florida. Information appreciated by Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Dixon, Box 161, Fellsmere, Florida.

CHERRYHOUSE, GEORGE H.—Last heard from when he was in Los Angeles, California, in the garage business. Information appreciated by his father, W. H. Cherryhouse, 508 Madison Street, Amarillo, Texas.

JOHNSON, EDNA.—Last heard from in Hollister, Missouri. Information appreciated by E., care of this magazine.

BECKHAM, BERNARD.—A butcher. Last heard from in California. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. J. W. Griffin, 904 Pennsylvania Street, Fort Worth, Texas.

JOHNSON, CHARLIE.—Left Beloit, Wisconsin, in 1883, for Chicago, Illinois, to enlist in the army. Please write to your brother, David Johnson, 170 North Ninth Street, San Jose, California.

RATTIGAN or **RAUGHTIGAN.**—A family of seven brothers by this name left Ireland some time before the Civil War. Believed to have settled in San Francisco, California. Thirty-five years ago a San Francisco attorney was trying to find me. Information concerning this family appreciated by Michael Rattigan, Box 117, Waterbury, Connecticut.

PEYTON, or **MASTERS, RICHARD CROMWELL.**—Formerly of Florida. Plays the cornet. Believed to be with Shan Austin's orchestra. Last heard from in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Important. Information appreciated by Mickey, care of this magazine.

RYAN, THOMAS.—Formerly of 2400 North King Street, Honolulu, Hawaii. Please write to your old friend, Dorothea. Address Mrs. A. A. Constant, care H. P. C. Co., Fifty-second and Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

LANGBRIDGE, JOHN.—Wife's name is Anna. Sad news about your mother. Please write to your niece, Dorothea. Mrs. A. A. Constant, care H. P. C. Co., Fifty-second and Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

NIELSEN, W. O.—Of Meadow, Nebraska. Works for the Rock Island Railroad Co. Remember June 27, 1927? Would like to hear from you. Dorothea, Mrs. A. A. Constant, care H. P. C. Co., Fifty-second and Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

THOMASON, ARTHUR EVERETT.—Remember February 25, 1926? Have important news for you. Please write to Dorothea, Mrs. A. A. Constant, care H. P. C. Co., Fifty-second and Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

WILSON, GEORGE.—Was in the World War, stationed at Camp Dodge, in 1918. Remember July 4, 1918, at Ida's? Please write to Dorothea, Mrs. A. A. Constant, care H. P. C. Co., Fifty-second and Park Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa.

SMITH, DEAN.—Still waiting and hoping to hear from you. Have suffered. Please write to Mother, care of this magazine.

SANFORD, BUD.—Last heard from four years ago when living at Alva, Oklahoma. Please write to your old pal, A. R., care of this magazine.

ROBINSON, JULIAN.—About forty-five years old. Dark hair and eyes. Separated from E. D. Robinson nineteen years ago and married again. Her second marriage name not known. Last heard from in Joplin, Missouri. Information appreciated by her son, Lonie Robinson, care A. C. Young, Mannford, Oklahoma.

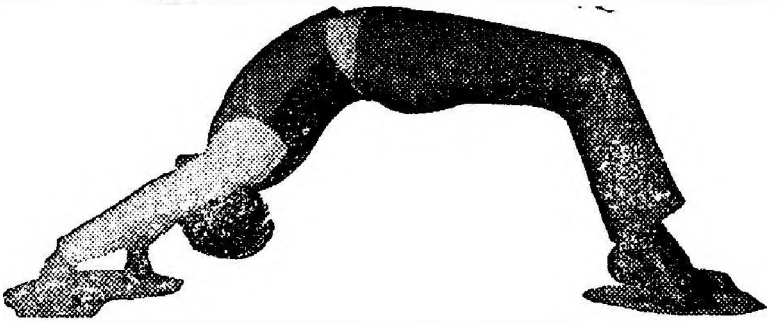
GRAHM, ROLLAND.—An ex-service man of the World War. Was stationed at Camp Lewis, Tacoma, Washington. Last seen in Los Angeles, California. Have news for you. Please write to your cousin, Mrs. Leah Austin Hunter 1910 South Fortieth Street, Tacoma, Washington.

LORDS, NEPHI DELBERT.—Left home six years ago. Information concerning him dead or alive appreciated by his lonesome daughter-in-law, Mrs. James D. Lords, Box 141, care D. Brown, Bymum, Montana.

TAYLOR, DAD and MAMMA.—We are well and doing fine. Please write to Jim and Bob, care of this magazine.

EVERETT, F. E. K.—The past is gone, forgotten, forgiven. There are things you should know before too late. A and K. alone now. Please write to A. F., care of this magazine.

LESLIE.—Nanka's husband is living in the Majestic Apartments, care Mrs. A. Woll, 45 Seventh Street, Weehawken, New Jersey. Almira Hadley.



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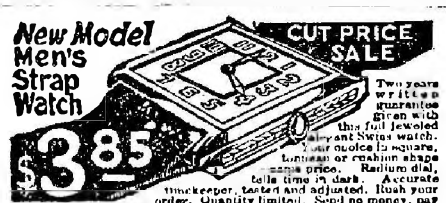

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CAMPBELL, DUNCAN.—Fifty-nine years old. Born in Scotland. Last heard from in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My father, whom I have never seen. Information appreciated by his daughter, C. S., care of this magazine.

CURRAN, PATRICK.—Worked as a puddler in the Southington, Connecticut, Rolling Mills and later in Watcham, Massachusetts, at the Franconia Rolling Mills. Left these places forty-six years ago. Information appreciated by his daughter, Mrs. Mary Curran Lanville, care of this magazine.

DAGGETT, JOHN and **WILLIAM.**—Sons of Edward Daggett, of Nantucket Island. William left for Pennsylvania and John for parts unknown. Information appreciated by their cousin, Mary, care of this magazine.

LANGILLE, JOHN.—About seventy-eight years old. Married Jane Tatcry of Nova Scotia. Formerly of Tatmagarche, Nova Scotia. Believed to have gone West a great many years ago. Information appreciated by his son, John Langille, care of this magazine.

FALKINER, or **FALK, EMMA.**—Lived in Bridgeport, Connecticut, thirty years ago. Her brother was a shoemaker on Park Avenue and Johnson Street. Information appreciated by her friend of many years ago, Mary Curran, care of this magazine.

PEELER, JOHN A.—Please send for letters for you from Bill, held at this office.

LAPP, GEORGE CORNELIUS.—Thirty-three years old. Five feet, ten and one half inches tall, reddish-brown hair, and gray eyes. An auto mechanic. Planned to go to South America three years ago, but never left this country. Anxious to hear from you. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Charles Kolpin, 92 Nelson Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey.

BOX, J. F.—Forty-nine years old. Five feet, six inches tall and weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds. A sawmill man. Believed to be in some oil field. Information appreciated by Mrs. Thelma Tyler, care of this magazine.

HANKS, WALTER.—About fifty years old. In 1927 was a salesman in Reno. Last heard from at the Golden West Hotel, in Fort Bragg, California. Information appreciated by Tomey, care of this magazine.

ANDERSON, WILLIAM.—Please write to your daughter, Mrs. Florence Lilly Jandreau, care Hav-a-Tampa Cigar Co., Tampa, Florida.

HYMAN, JULIUS, or **JOHN ROBBINS.**—Thirty-nine years old. Five feet, eleven inches tall. Last heard from in Milan, Minnesota, in 1917. Information appreciated by his worried mother, Mrs. Pauline Hyman, 67 Tonnelle Avenue, North Bergen, New Jersey.

LACY, JIM.—Left Nashville, Tennessee, February 11, 1927, for the West. No word since. Am worried. Information appreciated by H. M. Cotton, R. F. D. 6, Nashville, Tennessee.

McINTYRE, JOHN.—Last heard from at 3433 Myrtle Street, Detroit, Michigan, in August, 1928. I have your clothes with me. I want you, old pal. Your wife, Nettie, 3095 West Main Street, Columbus, Ohio.

ELLIOTT, JOHN and **THOMAS.**—My two oldest brothers, who would be about twenty-five and thirty years old, respectively. Born in a mining town south of Fort Scott, Kansas, and were placed in the Goodlanders' home when their mother died, in 1908. Information concerning them appreciated by their sister, Mrs. Naomi Elliott Skanks, 925 North Fourth Street, Salina, Kansas.

HARNEY, F. M., or **LARK.**—Please write to your friend of forty years ago. Important. For details write to Mrs. A. M. Garner, 512 Moore Building, Fort Worth, Texas.

HAMMETT, EDWIN W.—Last seen at Langley Field, Virginia, January 8, 1927. His father, W. W. Hammett, formerly lived at 1188 Bronson Street, Los Angeles, California. Information appreciated by his buddy, Alfred W. Anderson, 202 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia.

CONLEY, or **TRUNK, MRS. EFFIE,** nee **JOHNSON** or **JOHNSTONE.**—My mother, whom I have not seen since I was seven years old. My father died last year, and my sister and I are anxious to find our mother. Information appreciated by Veronica and Alice, care of this magazine.

BLUETT, JACK.—Last heard from in Mississippi. Please write to Joseph L. Buckley, 2318 University Avenue, Bronx, New York City.

SMITH, or **HAWKINS, HAZEL.**—Last seen in Cashmere, Washington. Do you remember the Dodge roadster on the Marietta highway in '27? Please write to Claud L. Metzger, care of this magazine.

IMO, FRANK.—Left Chicago, in 1895, to work in the silver mine in Apex, Colorado. Left Apex, in 1905, and has not been heard from since. Information appreciated by Cook of Aurora, care of this magazine.

CLARK, JOHN.—Six feet tall, light curly hair. Last heard from in Salt Lake City. Please write to your sister, E. S., care of this magazine.

COOK, MRS. MARY.—Lived at one time at St. Vincent's Technical School, Buffalo, New York. Last heard from at Morristville, New York. Please write to your brother, Bennie Gifford, Battery B, Tenth Field Artillery, Fort Lewis, Washington.

ATTENTION.—Would like to hear from any who served in G Company, Twenty-ninth Engineers, A. E. F., stationed at Cascere, Turreine, Langres, Haute Marne, France. Earl S. Chase, Soldiers' Home, Bristol, Rhode Island.

HUNT, DWIGHT L.—About twenty-seven years old. Formerly of East Eighth Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Parents separated, and he is believed to have moved to Texas with his mother. Information appreciated by his friend, Guy Chambers, 31 Chamberlain Building, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

MORRIS, WILLIAM.—Five feet, eight inches tall, dark-brown hair and eyes. Served in France with Welsh Regiment in 1915-19. Was wounded through left side of chest. Has small scar on neck. Believed to be in a lumber camp. Last heard from July 11, 1926, at National Hotel, 10401 Ninety-sixth Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Information appreciated by his sister, Ethel Hogg, Holm Lea, Princess Road, Higher Crumpsall, Manchester, England.

McCANN, CHARLES E.—Received your letters August 25, 1928. Glad you are well. T. M owes you money. Come and see us or write often. Have moved. Your brother, John H. McCann, 1727 Fifth Street, Muskegon, Michigan.

RYAN, TOM.—Blue eyes and curly hair. Go to old meeting place. Word there for you that's very important. The Queen, care of this magazine.

GRAVES, R. L.—Left Okeechobee, Florida, in 1926. I love only you. Please let me know where you are. Blanche King, Box 114, Okeechobee, Florida.

BROWN, ROY.—Thirty-five years old. Brown eyes and hair. Five feet, eight inches tall and weighs one hundred and forty-five pounds. Last heard from in Atchison, Kansas, six years ago. Information appreciated by Elmer Brown, Route 2, care A. F. Brown, Pleasanton, Kansas.

HARRIS, FRED C.—We love you. Please come home or write to your Aunt Ethel, Mrs. W. A. McCoy, 211 East Eighth Street, Ocala, Florida.

QUEEN, FRANK or **ANGELO.**—Last heard from in Newburgh, in 1923. Am sorry I let you go away. Have news for you. Please write to Louise Ashton, care Whitaker, 374 North Street, Middletown, New York.

La SHUM, FRANK or **BOB.**—Please write to your brother, George La Shum, Box 83, Commerce, Oklahoma.

SCHEIDECKER, INEZ.—Have been very ill. Have good news for you. Please write to your mother before it is too late. Mrs. J. A. Scheidecker, 1605 Fifteenth Street, Galveston, Texas.

STEED, R. C.—Has not been heard from in several months. Mother is very ill. Please write at once to H. M. Steed, Marietta, Ohio.

MOORE, CLARENCE BERT.—I still love you and want you. If you will come to me everything will be all right. Please write to Myrtle, Box 81, Hamilton, Texas.

ADAMSON, WILSON.—Important news. Please write to your brother, Mike Adamson, Goldfield, Nevada.

BRADSHAW, EARL J.—Last heard from in Kane, Pennsylvania, twenty-seven years ago. Please write to your old friend from Cleveland, New York, May, care of this magazine.

BENTLEY, or **DOUGLAS, AUGUSTA M.**—Born October 22, 1898. Formerly of Freeport, Long Island. Experienced in law, real estate, office work, and switchboard operating. Last heard from March 14, 1927, when living in State Street, Brooklyn, New York. Information appreciated by her sister, Mrs. George Cornell, R. F. D. 1, North Bennington, Vermont.

WILSON, MAUDE.—About thirty years old. Has a daughter nine years old. Was in California, in 1927. Have good news. Please write to H. M. Cotton, R. F. D. 6, Nashville, Tennessee.

CURLEY.—All my letters have been returned. Left San Francisco in June. Everything O. K. Wherever you are, please write to your pal, Sis, care Winston Brothers' Camp, Rockport, Washington.

WALTER, ROSIE.—We do not blame you and are anxious to hear from you. Please write to your worried mother, Mrs. Ada Walter, Box 152, Edwardsville, Illinois.

ROWLAND, HYWELL RYDER.—An Englishman. Was in Bangor, Pennsylvania, a few years ago. Information appreciated by his nephew, Elmore H. Rowland, Siam Station, Port Augusta, South Africa.

NOTICE.—My father's name was William Richard Rowland. About twenty-five years ago he had his picture taken with friends at Roberts Studio, Pesthlion, North Wales, England. One of them went to Nevada shortly after this and I would like to hear from him. Elmore H. Rowland, Siam Station, Port Augusta, South Africa.

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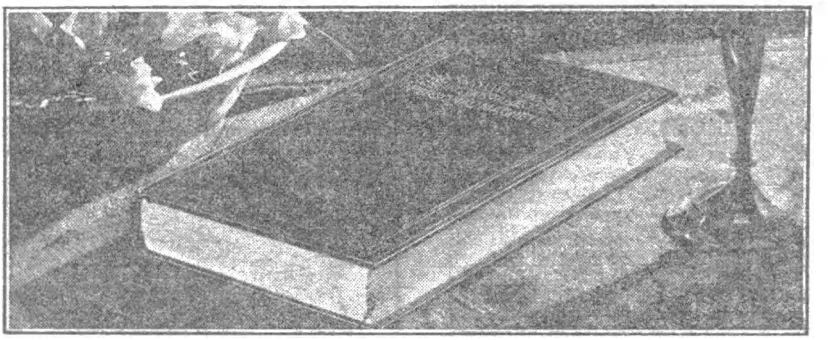

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"I was ashamed to have company—for I was ashamed of my home. I was miserable whenever anyone entered our cheerless, old-fashioned living room. Jim could not understand how I felt. I noticed that he seldom wanted to stay home. And the children were the same—always wanting to go to some one else's house; never bringing their chums home with them.

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"Then one day, in a magazine, I came across an advertisement of Spear & Company. It told how *anyone* could have the home of their dreams. It told about Credit-to-All. It offered me a living room suite that was just what I wanted and only $49.95—lovelier than $90 suites I had seen. And only $1 down! A whole year to pay—30 days free trial.

A Real Surprise

"Jim finally said I could send for it, when he read about Spear's 30-day FREE trial offer. He said it must be all right, if they could make a guarantee like that. But he wasn't very enthusiastic. And I had my misgivings.

"I'll never forget the day our suite came. It was far more beautiful than it had been pictured.

"You should have seen Jim. He was even more pleased and excited than the youngsters. Right away he wanted us to have Mr. Hall, the foreman from the shop, and his wife, come over for a visit.

"They came. We had the nicest evening. Mr. and Mrs. Hall thought our living room was lovely. We soon became great friends. I wonder if that had anything to do with Jim's promotion?

"We've never missed the money—only a few dollars a month. Jim says we used to waste more than that, with nothing to show for it. And we have the best times nowadays. We love to have company. Because we are *proud of our home.*"

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This Overstuffed Velour Suite represents new beauty, new style, new luxury, new comfort in a 3-piece Overstuffed Parlor Suite. Notice the new curving lines, the new inviting side wings, the new contrast of plain blue velour arms and outside ends, against Blue and Taupe Figured Velour seats, backs and wings. A new low credit price—$49.95—a year to pay. New all the way through—with the same quality, same workmanship, same sturdiness found in suites selling for $85 to $90 cash. A saving of almost one-half. How can we do it? Here's how:

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Davenport, rocker and wing chair have comfortable side wings. Sturdy hardwood frames are in rich brown mahogany finish. Inner construction—9 coil springs in seat of each chair, 18 coil springs in seat of davenport, together with high quality sanitary interior upholstering materials. Thickly padded backs and seats—guarantee perfect comfort. Arm chair and rocker, width overall 33 in. Seats 21 x 19 in., height of backs from seats 24½ in. Davenport width overall 63 in., between arms 52 in. Send only $1, use the suite as your own for 30 days FREE. If you don't believe this the greatest bargain of 1928, return it and we will refund your $1 and transportation charges both ways.

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