

WILD WEST



WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc OF WESTERN LIFE.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

No. 716.

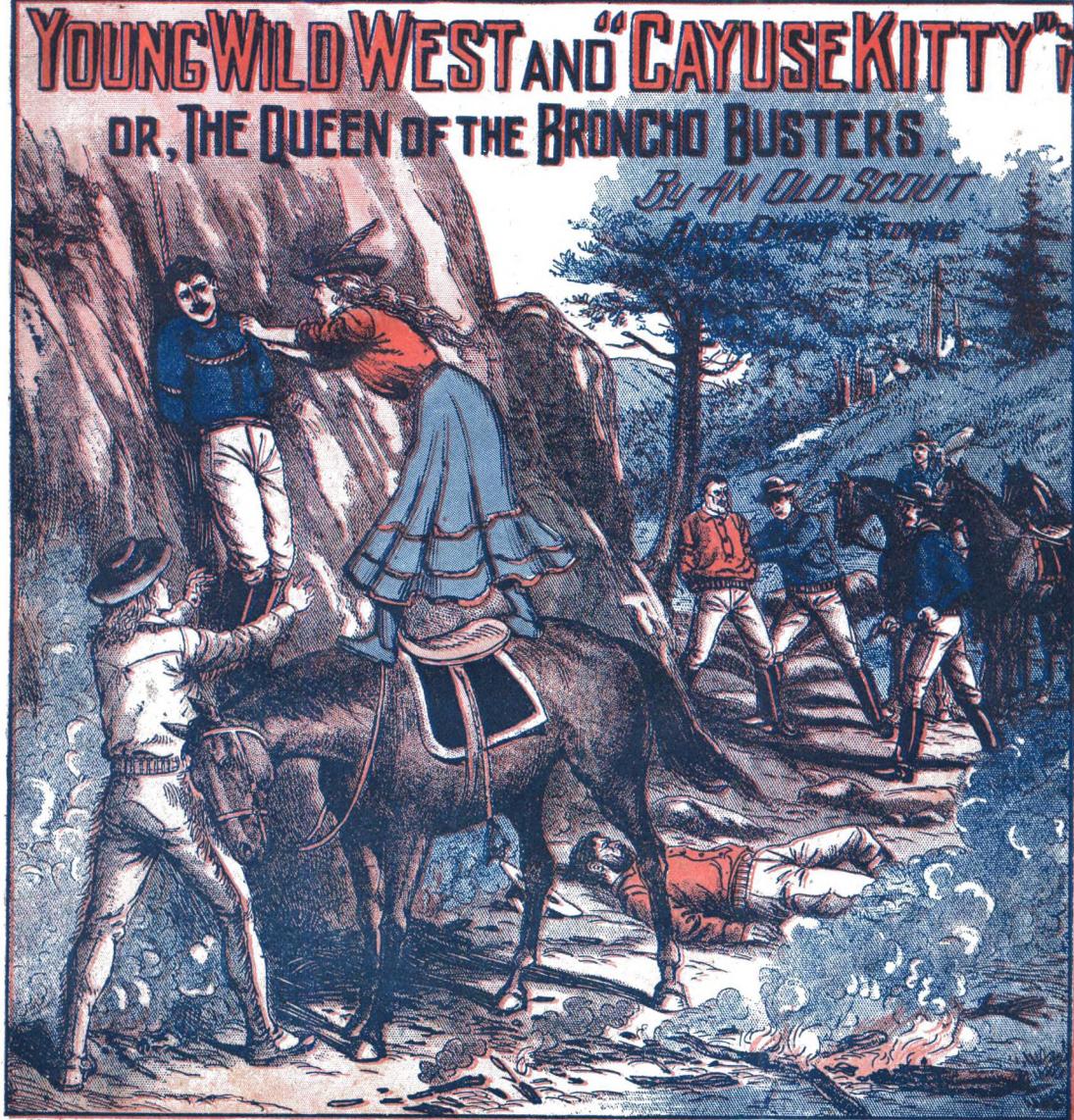
NEW YORK, JULY 7, 1916.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND "CAYUSE KITTY" OR, THE QUEEN OF THE BRONCHO BUSTERS.

By AN OLD SCOUT.

Illustrations by Frank D. Brangwyn



Wild kicked the burning brands away, leaving his companions to attend to the other fellow. Cayuse
Kitty brought her broncho to a halt, and springing to a standing position on its
back, untied the rope that held the man suspended

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Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1916, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Gouey, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York. Entered at the New York, N. Y., Post Office as Second-Class Matter.

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Young Wild West and "Cayuse Kitty" OR THE QUEEN OF THE BRONCHO BUSTERS.

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CHAPTER I.

TAMING A BRONCHO BUSTER.

"Whoopie! Whoopie! Clear ther track, there! Ther Gal Queen has ordered us to go out an' have a good time, an' we're goin' to have it! We're ther Boss Broncho Busters of Arizona!"

These words rang out above the clatter of hoofs as a cloud of dust could be seen rapidly approaching up the single street of a small town in the western part of the Territory of Arizona one fine morning in February a few years ago.

The loungers in front of the shanty-like structure that was used as the post-office and the main supply store of that section looked around and then promptly got upon the stoop to keep from being trampled under the hoofs of the approaching horses.

"It's ther boys from Farrel's Ranch," remarked the postmaster. "I s'pose things will begin to hum now!"

"Whoopie! Whoopie!"

The cloud of dust had arrived, and with it came eight horsemen, who brought the tough little animals they rode to such a sudden halt that it hardly seemed possible that they had not dropped there from overhead.

In spite of the fact that it was midwinter, the weather was very dry and warm, and the alkali dust seemed to be more irritating to the throats and nostrils of those on the post-office stoop just then than it had been in a long time.

"Now, then, boys, ther fast thing on ther carpet is to mail ther letters that Cayuse Kitty sent us over with," bawled out a big raw-boned man of thirty, as he swung himself from his steed and walked into the building with a reckless swagger. "Clear ther track! We're ther boys from Farrel's Ranch, an' we're out fur a red-hot time!"

Among those standing in front of the post-office when the horsemen arrived were three strikingly handsome fellows attired in fancy buckskin hunting suits.

Two of them were rather youthful in appearance and the other was a tall, athletic-looking man, whose every appearance indicated that he had seen much service on the mountains and plains of the Wild West.

One of the boys had a wealth of chestnut hair hanging down to his shoulders, and the other wore his short.

There was something about the boy with the long hair that was bound to attract the attention of the casual observer. There was naught but courageousness, fearlessness and daring depicted on his handsome face, and the gleam that was in his dark eyes showed that he was an earnest advocate of honesty and morality.

This splendid specimen of budding manhood was no other than Young Wild West, Prince of the Saddle, Champion

Deadshot, Lasso King and wealthy young mine owner of the Black Hills.

His companions were his two brave and trusted partners, Cheyenne Charlie, the ex-government scout, and Jim Dart, a dashing young plainsman and Indian fighter.

The three were making a trip through Arizona, and had with them Arietta Murdock, Young Wild West's pretty sweetheart; Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, and Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart.

It was for the benefit of the latter that they had come to the wilds of the great Southwest, she being troubled with weak lungs, and the winter air of Dakota being too strong for her.

Just now the ladies of the party were comfortably located at the hotel of the town, which was called Buck Ridge, and was the center for half a dozen ranches to do their trading.

Young Wild West and his two partners had walked over to the post-office to mail letters home, and they were just leaving when the eight broncho busters rode up in the cloud of dust and made such a noisy demonstration.

Of course, our friends were familiar with the actions of such crowds when they go out for a good time, and they cast nothing more than a passing glance at them.

Even when the big fellow, who plainly was their leader, swaggered into the place and ordered every one to clear the track, they did not pay much attention.

When the rest of the rough-and-ready men dismounted and began singing and cavorting around, raising a fresh supply of the alkali dust, they simply smiled, for they could see that they were a pretty good-looking lot, and that they were apparently good fellows.

The big fellow was not long in mailing his letters, and when he came out he did so with a rush and a roar.

"Take yer partners, an' we'll have a little dance afore we go over an' liquor up!" he bawled out.

Then he caught right hold of Young Wild West and began to whirl him around.

The thing was so unexpected that our hero found himself in the mazes of a cowboy waltz before he had time to brace himself and keep his footing.

"Keep step, there, you dandified jigger with ther silk necktie!" cried the man, as he gave a jerk that almost threw Wild off his feet.

"I guess I don't want to dance, stranger!" the boy retorted. "Just let go of me, please!"

The whirling around had suddenly ceased, and, having exerted himself, Wild now had secured a foothold and was holding the big broncho buster at arm's length.

It now looked more like a wrestling bout than a dance.

"I don't want to dance, my friend," repeated Young Wild West. "Just let go of me, will you?"

"You don't want to dance, hey?" cried the astonished fel-

YOUNG WILD WEST AND "CAYUSE KITTY."

low. "Well, I reckon you've got to dance! That's ther way we do things over at Farrel's Ranch."

"We are not at Farrel's Ranch now, you must remember," was the cool retort. "If you want to make things pass pleasantly while you are in town just let go of me."

"Let go of yer! Not much, I won't! You've got to dance. Come on, now!"

He gave a tug, but failed to remove the boy from his foot-hold.

Then something happened that he had not figured on.

With remarkable quickness, Young Wild West jerked himself from the fellow's grip, and then he caught him by his left wrist and collar and gave a twist and a pull at the same time.

"Wow!" yelled the broncho buster, as he felt a twinge of pain in his wrist.

Then with a thud he landed on the ground at full length.

Those who had been in front of the post-office when the horsemen rode up gaped and looked at each other in amazement.

They had not expected to see any such performance as that.

There were two there who had expected to see something of the kind.

They were Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, the two partners of the athletic boy.

They stood there smiling as though it was very amusing to them and that there was not the least danger of anything disagreeable resulting from it.

The broncho busters had ceased their antics the moment Wild started to argue with their leader, and when they saw how neatly and quickly the boy landed him on his back they were temporarily stunned.

We say temporarily, but really it was not more than half a second.

Then a combined yell went up from them and they started for Wild as though they meant to handle him roughly.

"Hold on, there!"

It was Cheyenne Charlie who spoke, and as the broncho busters paused and looked at him they saw that he had a revolver in either hand.

"I reckon there's goin' to be fair play here," went on the scout. "Ther big feller picked a muss with Young Wild West, an' if he ain't satisfied with what he got, let him look for more. But you fellers jest keep your hands off!"

"That's right, boys!" cried their leader, who had scrambled to his feet in short order. "Ther young feller chucked me off my feet by accident, I reckon, an' I'm goin' to give him a spankin' fur doin' it, jest to show him that I kin handle sich youngsters as him ther same as a mammy handles her child."

The man did not seem to be very mad over what had happened; he simply showed signs of humiliation and an eagerness to set himself right in the eyes of his companions and the lookers-on.

The postmaster stood in the doorway with an expectant grin and the rest of the citizens who had gathered about looked on with the greatest of interest.

They all knew big Dave Rattler, the leader of the broncho busters, and they had often seen him tame the wildest kind of steeds.

Now they were waiting to see him tame the handsome young stranger, who had thrown him upon his back with the greatest of ease, or else get tamed himself.

The postmaster whispered to the man next to him that he was of the opinion that Big Dave was going to have his hands full.

Meanwhile, Young Wild West had been standing there just as coolly as though he was waiting for a friend to come up.

"You sorter give me ther sling an' dip that time, didn't yer, young feller?" observed the big man, hitching up his buckskin trousers.

"I simply tried to make you let go of me, and succeeded," was the reply. "You had no right to take hold of me the way you did, but I shouldn't have minded it if you had let go when I first told you to."

"You shouldn't have minded it, hey? Well, I reckon that when a feller don't want to take a little fun he has to take a lickin'. That's ther way we do it over to Farrel's Ranch."

"But, as I told you before, this isn't Farrel's Ranch."

"Never mind whether it is or not. You're goin' to git a spankin' from me fur throwin' me, d'ye understand that?"

"My friend," said Young Wild West, looking him squarely

in the eyes, "it is so long since I have been treated to a spanking that I can truthfully say that I don't know how it feels. Just as big men as you are have tried it on me, but I never let them do it. Now, you seem to be a pretty nice sort of a fellow, and I advise you not to try to give him the spanking."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the big fellow, and his companions joined in, making the air ring with merriment.

It seemed awfully funny to them.

"That's right, laugh; it's your chance now. There's nothing like doing things when your turn comes, you know. In about three minutes from now I'll guarantee that not one of you fellows will be laughing."

The broncho buster made no reply to this, but, stretching out both hands, he made a dive for the boy who was talking in such a tantalizing way.

It had been quite easy for him to grab Wild when he started his dance on the stoop of the post-office, but now it was quite different.

Wild had not expected it then, but now he did.

Big Dave Rattler, as the postmaster called him, made a miserable failure in his attempt to seize the boy and throw him across his knee, as was his intent.

Instead, he was himself seized, and the next thing he knew his heels went up in the air and he came down on the ground even more suddenly than he had before.

"You are making a mistake in persisting to spank me, my friend," said Young Wild West, calmly. "Now, then, I want to tell you that if you try it again I'll spank you!"

"Tackle him again, Dave," called out one of the rough-and-ready fellows. "He's putty soon, but you're big enough ter eat him."

"You can have the next chance, if you want to try it," retorted Wild.

"Or he kin start right in on me or Jim," added Cheyenne Charlie, stepping out.

The scout's blood was up now, and he felt just in the humor to make the broncho busters hustle a little.

If they undertook to shoot he would be right in his element, too, for he was always ready to fight when he was in the right, or thought he was.

But a swift glance from Wild told him to take it easy.

Anyhow, the man did not accept his challenge, so that left it to be finished by Young Wild West and Big Dave Rattler.

As soon as our hero saw that the man meant to make another try at it he determined to turn the tables on him and spank him before the crowd.

As the broncho buster rushed at him he jumped nimbly to the right, and, throwing his right arm around his stomach and his left across his back, Wild lifted him as quickly as a flash and landed him on his back again.

But Wild did not stop here.

While the postmaster and some of the other lookers-on were giving vent to their feelings by applauding him, he darted forward and dropped upon the fallen fellow.

It was but the work of a moment to turn him over—for Young Wild West had a quick way of doing things—and then with his left hand clutching one of his wrists, which he twisted until the fellow fairly howled with pain, he proceeded to spank him with his right.

Not until his hand hurt him did Wild stop, and then he leaped to his feet and whipped out his revolvers.

"There you are, gentlemen!" he cried, sternly. "Now, then, if this is not satisfactory, lead has got to fly!"

A deathly silence followed this remark.

Not one man moved in his tracks and the smile had entirely faded from the postmaster's face.

Some of the broncho busters had their hands on the butts of their revolvers, but the majority stood with folded arms.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart also had their hands on their shooters, and they were watching the gang as calmly as though they were simply waiting for them to make some proposition of a business nature.

The big man, who had been defeated and then humiliated before the crowd, got up rather slowly.

"I reckon there ain't goin' to be any shootin' done, young feller," he said, casting a sheepish look at his companions. "If you didn't handle me in a fair an' square way I'll never eat beef agin', that's all! I ain't no squealer, but I does know when I've found more than my match, though this is about ther fust time I've ever found it, ain't it, boys?"

"That's right, Dave," answered one.

"Sartin!" cried the rest in unison.

"We're ther Boss Broncho Busters of Arizony, ain't we, boys?"

"Yes! Yes!" came the reply.

"An' I'm ther leader of ther gang, ain't I?"

"Yes!"

"You bet you are!"

"Sartin you are!"

These were some of the replies that came from the men. "What's your name, young feller?" and Dave Rattler turned to our hero.

"Young Wild West," was the reply.

"All right! Now, boys, jest open yer throats an' let out a yell for Young Wild West, ther boy what spanked yer leader!"

He took off his hat and kept time while the three cheers were given.

CHAPTER II.

WILD SHOWS THE BRONCHO BUSTERS HOW TO SHOOT.

Quite a crowd had collected about the Buck Ridge post office by the time the "spanking" scene was over, and Young Wild West was the center of attraction, not to say admiration.

Everybody knew Big Dave Rattler, and when they saw how easily he had been handled by a boy, they concluded that the boy was nothing short of a wonder in coolness and strength.

But the best part of it all was that the big broncho buster never lost a single friend from what had happened.

True, there were lots there who would have been much pleased to see him carry out his threat, for they called it great sport to handle a fellow who objected to their ways of doing things.

The tables had been turned on Big Dave, and he was man enough to propose three cheers for the victor.

That made him hold his place in the hearts of his friends. When the cheering for Wild had subsided some one proposed three cheers for Dave Rattler.

Wild, Charlie and Jim joined in and the broncho buster was given a rousing send-off.

"Boys," said Big Dave, shrugging his shoulders, "I'm mighty glad that Cayuse Kitty wasn't here to see what happened to me."

Some of the men grinned at this.

"I reckon none of yer will tell her," went on the big fellow, who was now blushing like a schoolboy.

They were unanimous in declaring that they wouldn't, and then he looked happy once more, and the recklessness he had shown on arriving at the post-office returned to him.

"Whoopie! Whoopie!" he shouted. "Let's all go over to ther hotel an' wet up. Come on, Young Wild West an' yer partners! Yer welcome as ther flowers in May!"

"All right!" answered our hero. "We'll walk over and have a cigar with you."

"Everybody takes what they pleases when I stands treat," was the rejoinder. "I may be a bad man, but I've got a good heart. Rip her up, there, boys! Ther pizen has got to flow down our throats to git ther dust away! We're ther Boss Broncho Busters of Arizony, an' our Gal Queen has sent us out to have a good time! Whoopie! Whoopie!"

Then they all yelled and sprang on the backs of their ponies, making a big circle around the open spot that was there and kicking up no end of dust.

They halted in front of the building that bore the sign, "Innctell," on it, and sat waiting in the saddle for our three friends and the others to come across and get "wet up."

They all came over, even to the postmaster, who left the boy he had working for him to attend to the business.

Young Wild West had been satisfied from the very start that the reckless fellows were a pretty fair lot of broncho busters, and when Big Dave had acknowledged himself beaten before the crowd and then given him a cheer, he felt it was right to accept his invitation to have something.

Wild had never tasted any strong drink in his life, and he did not intend to now.

Jim Dart was the same way, but both were compelled to frequent the places where it was sold quite often, and they usually took cigars.

Cheyenne Charlie was like nine out of ten Westerners of his type—he liked a little whisky now and then.

But Young Wild West had perfect control over him, and

whenever he saw that the scout was getting more than was good for him he invariably stopped him.

Our three friends walked into the big room that served as a bar for the hotel and lined up at the counter with the rest.

As they were stopping at the hotel, they were pretty well known by the proprietor, who was doing duty as a clerk just then.

"Good-mornin', everybody!" this individual bawled out. "I was jest watchin' ther fun you had across ther street, Young Wild West. I see you don't like dancin'."

"Here! You shot up!" cried Dave Rattler, slamming his fist upon the bar with a jar that shook the building. "It's bad enough to git a likin' afore a crowd, without bein' tantalized after it. Ye set out ther drinks now, an' jest shot up, or I'll begin to shoot ther necks off ther bottles you've got stuck on them shelves!"

That the proprietor regarded this as no idle threat was evident, for he stopped the talk instantly and flew to put out the glasses on the counter.

Broncho busters are a pretty reckless lot, as a rule.

But when they get a little liquor in them they are worse than reckless sometimes.

As they began plying the drinks in them, first one then another would make a remark about taking a shot at the bottles.

What their leader had told the hotel-keeper put this in their heads.

Wild saw that there was going to be some shooting done pretty soon, so he advised the landlord to take down those of the bottles he cared the most for.

This was done in quick order, and then there were but half a dozen left on the shelves, these being empty and placed up there for a show.

Pretty soon one of the broncho busters whipped out his shotgun and let go at the bottles.

The bullet lodged in the partition three or four inches above the bottle it had been intended for, and the fellow was going to fire again, when Young Wild West held up his hand and told him to wait a minute.

"What's ther matter?" asked the man, just the least bit nettled at the interference.

"I just want to ask you a question; then you can go on and shoot."

"Well, what's ther question?"

"Did you try to hit that bottle when you fired?"

"Try to hit it? Well, I reckon I did. You don't suppose a feller kin nip ther neck off a bottle at every shot, do yer?"

"Certainly. If you can't do that you hadn't ought to shoot. There are just six bottles on the shelves there, and a man who calls himself any kind of a shot ought to be able to shoot the necks off them in six seconds by the watch."

A hush had come over the boisterous crowd while our hero was speaking.

"Kin you do that?" asked the man, looking at Wild as though he thought he was getting crazy.

"Can I do it? Why, certainly."

"I'll bet you can't!"

"Well, I won't bet you any money, but I'll pay for the cigars for the crowd if I don't do it, and you'll pay for them if I do."

"It's a go, Young Wild West."

"All right."

"Remember, you've got to clip ther necks off them six bottles in six seconds."

"That is what I said."

"All right! Now, boys, watch ther young feller what wouldn't dance do some shootin'!"

Wild simply stepped back to the center of the room, and, pulling out his revolver, began firing.

Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack!

Six reports rang out as fast as he could pull the trigger, and when the last one sounded there was not a neck left on the bottles.

A hoarse murmur of astonishment and applause went up from those in the room.

Evidently they had never seen such shooting before.

"What is the damage?" Wild asked the proprietor, who was looking at the bottles in open-mouthed amazement.

"Nothing!" was the quick reply. "You don't s'pose I'd change anything after seein' sic shootin' as that, do you? An', another thing, there ain't nothin' in ther bottles, anyhow. Not a cent, Young Wild West, not ther fust particle of a cent is ther damage."

"Oh!" retorted the boy, tossing a dollar on the counter; "I guess you had better give that to your man for cleaning up the broken glass."

"All right, sir. Here, Tom! Git a broom an' clean up behind ther bar a little. Young Wild West has left a dollar here fer you."

Tom appeared from the back room, where he had been reading a well-worn newspaper.

The dollar Wild had placed on the counter was a silver one, and as the man appeared Big Dave grabbed it up and playfully tossed it to the ceiling, catching it as it came down.

"Stand right over there, Tom!" called out Young Wild West, stepping around and drawing his other revolver. "Throw the dollar up again, Mr. Rattler, and I will knock it over to Tom, if he can catch it."

The broncho buster gave the coin an easy toss, and just as it was about to touch the ceiling Wild fired.

As the report rang out the dollar flew across the room and struck the fellow called Tom on the arm.

"Why didn't you catch it?" asked Young Wild West, with a laugh.

"Great snakes!" cried the man, as he hastened to pick up the coin. "What kinder shootin' do yer call that? Blamed if ther dollar wasn't hit right on ther edge! Here's ther mark of ther bullet!"

"Well, I had an idea I could hit it," said Wild, smilingly, "so I thought I would show you something. You should have been ready to catch it when I fired!"

"I hadn't the least idea you was goin' to do what you said," and Tom looked more puzzled than ever.

"Well, never mind. You've got the dollar; now clean up the broken glass for your boss," and our hero proceeded to reload his weapons.

The man who had lost the wager now ordered the cigars, and as Young Wild West took one and lighted it he was more admiring than ever.

"Say!" exclaimed Dave Rattler, when they were all puffing away like good fellows, "Young Wild West, do you an' your pards know anything about bustin' bronchos?"

"Well, not any more than we ought to," retorted Wild, evasively.

"Well, you sartinly kin outwastle an' outshoot any of us, an' I s'pose your pards are up to ther game along with ye. But when it comes to tamin' a vicious cayuse or a stubborn broncho, we can't be ekaled by anything that wears trouser-loons! If you fellers have got ther time, jest take a ride over to Farrel's Ranch to-morrow mornin' an' we'll show you somethin'."

"Thank you!" replied Wild. "I, for one, will be glad to accept your invitation. Suppose we bring the ladies we have traveling with us over, too?"

"What?" cried Rattler. "Bring your ladies over? Well, I should reckon so! Why, Cayuse Kitty will jest be in her glory to meet some gals she's never seen; won't she, boys?"

There was an affirmative answer from all hands, and then our hero turned to his partners and said:

"Well, what do you think about taking a ride over to Farrel's Ranch to-morrow morning?"

"It would just suit me," replied Jim, "and I feel sure that Eloise would like it."

"An' I'm sartin that Anna would," declared Charlie. "How far is ther ranch from here, anyhow?"

"Only fifteen miles," said Rattler. "This here road leads right straight to it. Farrel's is what you might call a cayuse ranch, fur he sells more horses than any two ranchmen in this part of the country. He raises cattle, too, but bronchos is his main hold. We are ther boys what breaks ther bronchos, an' I'm called ther kingpin of ther bunch."

"That's right!" shouted his companions. "Dave is a rip-roarer at ther business, an' no mistake."

Young Wild West was very favorably impressed with the idea of paying a visit to the ranch and having a look at the broncho busting, as the breaking of the savage little horses was called.

Having won the title of the Prince of the Saddle, Wild was, of course, a past master in the art of breaking and riding vicious horses.

And both Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were nearly as good as he at the business.

But they did not think it necessary to let the broncho busters know it just then.

They might take a hand in the game the next day, if they were invited to do so.

Then they would show them what they could do.

Our friends remained in the barroom of the hotel for half an hour longer, and then they excused themselves from the boisterous crowd and went to look for the girls, after assuring the broncho busters that they would ride over to Farrel's Ranch in the morning.

There was quite a pretty little waterfall that tumbled over a cliff along the ridge about half a mile from the hotel, and when they went over to the post-office the ladies had stated that they were going over there.

Finishing that they were not at the hotel now, the three walked over to the glen to meet them.

Just before they reached the waterfall they saw Arietta, Anna and Eloise approaching.

They were in a hurry, it seemed, and when they saw Wild and his partners' cries of delight came from them.

"Oh!" exclaimed the wife of Cheyenne Charlie. "We had quite a time back there. A big brute of a Mexican tried to kiss Arietta."

CHAPTER III.

CAYUSE KITTY.

The face of Young Wild West flushed angrily when Anna said that a Mexican had tried to kiss Arietta.

"Where is the scoundrel?" he demanded.

"Oh, he rode away on his horse, after Et had taught him a lesson. She slapped him soundly on the face and then put her revolver under his nose. He was very glad to get off, I can tell you."

"I thought she would surely shoot him," spoke up Eloise. "I never saw her so angry before, and in her rage she looked too beautiful for anything."

"There!" cried Wild's golden-haired sweetheart, laughing. "Don't make it any worse than it is. All there is to it is that we were seated on a mossy rock near the foot of the falls when a fancy-dressed but repulsive-looking Mexican rode up. He dismounted to allow his horse to drink from the brook, and while the animal was thus engaged he ogled us impudently.

"Finally he selected me, though I don't know just why, and, stepping up to me, asked me to let him kiss me."

"And then you—"

"I clapped him a good one right in the face and pulled my revolver on him!" exclaimed the girl, her blue eyes flashing as though she could see the hateful fellow yet.

"And he went on about his business?"

"Oh, yes! If he hadn't there would have been a dead Mexican for some one to bury!"

"That's right, Et!" said Wild, catching her by both hands. "That's the way to do it! Suppose I take the place of the Mexican now? You won't slap my face, will you?"

"No," answered the girl; "I wouldn't slap you."

Then he kissed her, much to the pleasure of the others, as well as to themselves.

A few minutes later they walked back to the hotel, and on the way Wild told the girls of the invitation to go over to Farrel's Ranch the next day.

They were delighted at the prospect, as may well be imagined. They were getting rather tired of the little town, anyhow, and they all liked life on a ranch.

"It might be that we could get accommodations at the ranch for a few days," said Arietta.

"We will wait and see what kind of place it is and how the people are," answered her young lover. "Then if we like it there we will see what we can do."

"I wonder where ther Mexican went?" spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, changing the subject. "Hanged if I wouldn't like to run agin that feller."

"Well, I don't know as we ought to say anything to him if we should," retorted Jim Dart. "Arietta gave him about all that was coming to him, I guess."

"Et knows how to take care of herself pretty well," was all Wild said.

The broncho busters were still in the barroom of the hotel, but Wild and his partners did not go in again that day.

They knew the men were on a sort of spree, and they did not care to mix with them just then.

Dave Rattler and his men did keep it up all day.

They all got what they called "roaring drunk," and then they made things "hurn," as the postmaster said they would.

But they did not do any great damage, and shortly after dark they set out for the ranch.

The residents of the town, who were disposed to lead quiet and easy lives, were unanimous in breathing a sigh of relief when the last crack of a revolver was heard as the broncho busters disappeared over the hill.

The next morning Young Wild West and his party were up bright and early.

It was a beautiful morning, with just enough of sharpness in the air to make one feel sprightly.

As they had a good fifteen-mile ride ahead of them, they decided to start for Farrel's Ranch as soon as they had breakfast.

It was a little before seven when they mounted their horses and rode off.

Wild, on his beautiful sorrel, Spitfire, and Arietta mounted on a splendid dapple gray led the way, and they made a picture of grace and beauty that was pleasing to look at.

And it was much the same with Charlie and Anna and Jim and Eloise, for they were all accomplished riders and their mounts were the best that money could buy.

It was almost a straight road to the ranch, and in about an hour they came in sight of it.

It was a pretty large ranch, too, and the buildings were many that were on the vast tract of land.

As our friends turned from the road and followed the lane that led to the ranch-house, a dashing-looking girl on the back of a tough-looking cayuse suddenly appeared riding toward them.

"That's Cayuse Kitty, I'll bet!" said Cheyenne Charlie.

"I shouldn't wonder," answered our hero.

"She is the sweetheart of the big fellow you spanked, then," observed Arietta. "Well, she is a fine equestrienne, and is very pretty, too."

The approaching girl was now within fifty yards of them, and suddenly she let out a shout.

"Whoop-ala!" she cried. "I'm glad to see you, girls. Big Dave said you was comin', but I wouldn't believe it till I seen you with my own eyes! You're right welcome to Farrel's Ranch, an' don't forget it! Whoa, Blazer!"

The cayuse came to such a sudden halt that it almost seemed as though it had run into an invisible stone wall.

"I'm Kitty Farrel, ther daughter of ther ranchman," the girl went on, her luminous dark eyes flashing with undisguised pleasure. "The boys call me Cayuse Kitty, ther Queen of ther Broncho Busters, but I don't care what they say. I'm a girl who has been brought up in ther wilds of Arizona, an' I'm proud of it! I kin shoot an' ride as well as the best of 'em, an' I kin bust any broncho that ever humped his back in a corral! Tell me your names, won't you, girls?"

Arietta was quite equal to the occasion, and she promptly introduced herself and the rest.

Cayuse Kitty then kissed the ladies and shook hands with the gentlemen of the party.

Wild was the last she came in contact with, and when she let go of his hand she looked at him keenly and observed:

"I reckon you're about ther kingpin of ther bunch, ain't you?"

"Well, I don't know about that," retorted the boy, with a smile. "I am Young Wild West, just as Miss Murdock told you a minute ago."

"Well, you're ther one who done ther fancy shootin' over in Buck Ridge yesterday, ain't you?"

"Yes, I did amuse some of the fellows from your ranch by doing a little shooting with my revolver."

"You must be a dandy, from all accounts. Big Dave—he's ther feller dad says I kin marry when I git eighteen, if I want to—he says as how you was the best he ever stacked up agin. He says you're a dandy from Dandy Corners, and what Dave says is generally right, leastwise I think so, anyhow."

At this juncture an elderly man came out of the house and beckoned for them to come on.

"Fetch 'em to ther house, Kitty!" he called out. "That ain't manners to stop 'em out there an' talk 'em deaf, dumb an' blind. Fetch ther boys an' gals to ther house an' give me an' ther old woman a chance to git a word in. We're always glad to be visited by strangers. Come on, now, an' quit your talk."

Our friends had dismounted the moment the girl rode up to them, and they now got in the saddle again as she motioned them to do so.

"Dad is always spoilin' things," she said by way of an apology. "He says I talk too much, but you jest wait till

him ar' mother gits at you! They never do know when to stop when they git started. Git up, Blazer!"

She rode off at an easy canter, the rest following as a matter of course.

As they reached the house the ranchman's wife came out to greet the visitors.

Then followed an introduction by Cayuse Kitty, who acted as though they were old-time friends of hers.

The father nearly wrung the hand from Wild, so pleased was he to meet him.

"Dave Rattler, who's my intended son-in-law, you know, said as how you was about the greatest deadshot as ever pulled a gun. He says he took a great likin' to yer, an' that's how he come to invite yer over here. I'm mighty glad he did, 'cause we like company—good company, I mean. I heard one of the boys say as how you was ther greatest wrastler this side of ther Mississippi, too. I like wrastlers, 'cause I used to be good at ther game myself. Jest make yourself to home, now. When you're at Farrel's Ranch yer there 'cause yer wanted there, I kin tell yer that!"

"Oh, hold up, dad!" exclaimed Cayuse Kitty, turning around. "Don't talk ther young feller to death. Give him a chance to look around an' see where there's a place to sit down."

This was pretty good advice, as the rest had all managed to get a chair and Wild was the only one of the visitors who remained standing.

"There you go agin with that awful tongue of yours!" exclaimed the old man. "I reckon I'll have to get a dentist to cut it off, if you don't learn to let it go a little easy."

Every one laughed at this, but the girl did not show the least sign of getting angry.

Our friends had been conducted into what was termed the sitting-room of the house, which was a very neatly-furnished one, the most pleasant of them all.

As Wild sat down the father and mother and daughter started in to talk, each taking a separate couple to exercise their tongues on.

It was very interesting for a while, but at the end of fifteen minutes Cheyenne Charlie began to yawn.

"We'll have to send for ther undertaker; one man's cavin' in!" exclaimed Cayuse Kitty.

There was a general laugh at this, but it had the effect of shutting off the stream of questions the old people were asking so rapidly.

The matron then insisted on fetching out refreshments in the line of ginger cakes and buttermilk, and then our friends began to think that there were worse places than Farrel's Ranch.

While they were partaking of the refreshments a fancifully-attired man came into the room and stared at the visitors.

It was no other than the Mexican who had insulted Arietta.

CHAPTER IV.

A DUEL THAT WAS RATHER ONE-SIDED.

Arietta recognized the man instantly, as did Anna and Eloise.

The three looked at each other, but neither said a word.

"Ladies an' gents, this is Senor Ramones, a feller what's stoppin' here till he picks out ther bronchos: he wants to buy of me," said Farrel, pointing out the Mexican to our friends.

"I have met the ladies before, but not the gentlemen," reported the man, bowing low and speaking remarkably good English.

"Well, ther next time you come in where there's a room full of company you'd better knock, you mixed-faced greaser!" exclaimed Cayuse Kitty. "What did I tell you yesterday?"

"Ah! I do not mind what the pretty American girls say," was the smiling reply. "The señorita with the golden hair, she get mad because I want to kiss her without being introduced to her. Senor Farrel will introduce me; then it will be all right."

Young Wild West sprang to his feet instantly.

"Senor," said he, walking up to the man and retaining his coolness as much as he possibly could under the circumstances, "are you the man who insulted the young lady, pointing to Arietta, 'over in Buck Ridge yesterday?'"

"I meet the young lady and she get mad and say she will shoot me."

"That is all I want to know, then. Please come outside, I want to tell you something."

The Mexican cast a look of contempt at the boy and promptly took the chair he had vacated.

"I don't want to talk to you; I don't like you," he answered.

"Very well, we will meet outside before you leave, I presume."

Wild was getting pretty mad.

His friends could see that.

But he had a way of controlling his temper, and he was doing it admirably.

He was too much of a gentleman by far to pick a row with the Mexican in the house, though he felt like taking him by the throat and forcing an apology from him.

"What's their trouble between you two fellers, anyhow?" asked the ranchman, in surprise.

"It is nothing," said the Mexican. "The young man is crazy, I think."

Wild excused himself and walked out on the broad veranda of the house.

He could not stay inside any longer.

Arietta soon followed him.

"Oh, Wild!" she exclaimed, in a whisper; "don't bother with that man. The look he gave you as you went out makes me think that he would stab you in the back the first chance he got."

"Well, little one, that should make me bother with him, then. But there is no use talking about it. There is one of two things he has got to do."

"And they are—"

"He has got to apologize to both you and me, or he's got to fight!"

"Well, the chances are that he will fight you. You must look out for him, Wild. He is a dangerous man; I can see it by his evil eyes."

"Don't be afraid, Et. There is not a man or boy living whom I would be afraid to meet face to face and on anything like equal terms. If Señor Ramones, as he calls himself, has the nerve to come out here I will make him apologize or fight, and if he fights he must take the consequence, that's all."

While they were talking they heard a cheery "Hallo!" and, turning, Wild saw Dave Rattler, the big broncho buster, coming toward them.

"Good-morning, Mr. Rattler!" he called out. "We have kept our word, you see, and have come over to pay a visit to the ranch."

"That's right, Young Wild West. I'm awful glad you've come! Is that putty gal with her red hair your sweetheart?"

"Yes," replied Wild, laughing in spite of the feelings he had toward the Mexican, while Arietta blushed a deep crimson.

Not that she was insulted by having her hair called red, but because she thought the man was just a trifle too personal, even for Western formality.

She blushed when she saw her lover laugh, and when Rattler halted before them and made an awkward bow, she retorted:

"There are lots of girls who are called pretty, sir, and they have different colored hair. There is a girl in the house with black hair who seems to be a great deal interested in you."

"You mean Cayuse Kitty, I reckon," said the big broncho buster, his face lighting with pleasure. "Did she say she was much interested in me? You see, it's this way: Her father says she kin marry me when she's eighteen, if she wants to, an' what bothers me is that she won't tell me whether she wants to or not. All them broncho busters, tow-punchers, an' even them greasers on them ranches are in love with Cayuse Kitty, but she don't seem to care fur any of 'em, less it is me."

"I guess you're on them right track, Dave," observed Wild.

"I am certain he is," added Arietta.

Just then those whom Wild and his sweetheart had left in the sitting-room of the house came out.

Señor Ramones was the last one to come out, and when he stepped upon the stoop he came with a tread that was cat-like.

There was a wicked, sneering smile on his face, and the instant Wild saw him he knew there was going to be trouble.

The Mexican calmly rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

Then he began walking up and down the stoop, puffing away and acting very much as though he owned the ranch. "The greaser makes me sick, dad," said Cayuse Kitty, to her father, as she caught him by the sleeve. "Do you know that I don't think he wants to buy a lot of horses any more than I do? He's jest hangin' around here fur no good, he is! I'm goin' to set my gang on him putty soon."

The girl said this just loud enough for our friends to hear, but the subject of her remarks was at the other end of the veranda at the time, and, of course, could not hear it.

"He's ther measly coyote what insulted Will's gal yester-day," Cheyenne Charlie whispered to Dave Rattler. "There's goin' to be trouble in a moment, 'cause Wild had some words with him inside a couple of minutes ago."

"Good enough!" grunted the broncho buster. "I ain't got no use fur ther sneakin' galoot. He acts to me as though he's hangin' around here on purpose to make love to ther Gal Queen."

At this juncture the Mexican started back toward them from the other end of the veranda.

As he passed Wild and Arietta he drew the cigarette he was smoking from his mouth and deliberately tossed it at them.

Wild deftly knocked it aside with a stroke of his hand, and then, as quick as a flash, he sprang forward and struck the Mexican a blow in the face with the palm of his hand.

The senor staggered back and turned as white as his sallow complexion would allow.

Then, without a word, he pulled a revolver from his pocket. But Young Wild West was on his mettle now!

A quick blow from his left hand knocked the weapon to the ground, and a straight punch with his right hit the rascal on the chin and sent him flat upon his back.

"Now," said the young prince of the saddle, standing over him and shaking his finger at him, "I demand that you make an apology to the young lady you insulted yesterday, and also to me. If you don't I will thrash you within an inch of your life!"

For the space of half a minute the Mexican was unable to make a reply.

He was speechless with rage.

Finally he got into a sitting posture, and, raising his hand threateningly, exclaimed:

"I will meet you, dog of an American, in ten minutes. We will fight with revolvers. That is the apology I will make."

"No! That is not the apology you will make. You will get on your knees before the young lady and humbly beg her pardon, and then you will do the same to me. But that will be after we fight with revolvers, unless you should happen to die!"

"You now accept my challenge, then?" screamed the villain.

"Oh! I accept your challenge, of course. I just said that after the fight you would apologize."

"Never!" he screamed, and then springing to his feet, he ran off to cool himself sufficiently to be able to fight the duel.

All this time no one had said a word.

But now the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters spoke up. "That sneakin' greaser has got to vacate these premises, if he's alive after its fight with Young Wild West!" she exclaimed. "Dad, it makes no difference whether you say so or not, he's got ter go! Dave, you jest run an' tell ther boys to be on hand. Git a move on you, now!"

"All right, Kitty! What you say has got ter go!" and away went the big fellow to do as the girl told him.

Though a trifle nervous, Arietta did not prevail upon Wild not to fight the Mexican.

She was certain that the villainous Mexican would never have a chance to fire a fatal shot, so long as he was facing her over.

But what he might do behind his back was another thing.

The only two among the spectators who were much agitated over the affair were Eloise Gardner and the mother of Cayuse Kitty.

But they were soon quieted and they then went into the house.

In a little less than ten minutes from the time he had been knocked down by Wild the Mexican appeared.

He had stripped himself of his fancy velvet jacket and looked to be ready for business.

In his belt were two revolvers and a hunting-knife.

Young Wild West took off his hunting-coat and stepped

out in his blue silk shirt, his athletic form showing up to such good advantage that a murmur of admiration left the lips of Farrel, the ranchman.

Senor Ramones cast one glance at Wild, and then he walked off toward an open space between some fruit trees. Our hero followed him, watching every move the villain made.

Just then Dave Rattler came running over from the corral with a score of broncho busters and cowboys at his heels.

The rough-and-ready men of the ranch wanted to see the duel, and they meant to be on time.

As no one appeared to act as a second for the senor, Charlie and Jim did not follow Wild.

It was a case of the two principals only, and no rules to go by.

Wild was now perfectly cool.

He fully realized what he was doing, and he knew that he must keep a sharp eye on the villain.

The Mexican paused at the foot of a tree, and, turning to the boy, exclaimed:

"If you are not a coward, senor, draw your revolver and fire whenever you please. I am going to advance upon you as I shoot!"

"All right!" was the calm retort. "I have an idea that you won't advance many steps."

They were now about sixty feet distant from each other.

Wild drew his revolver, and then he stood waiting for his foe to shoot.

Ramones seemed to be waiting for him to lead off.

They both stood still for the space of three or four seconds, and then Farrel bawled out:

"Suppose I fire a shot to give them signal for you fellers to start ther hot lead movin'?"

"Certainly, Senor Farrel. That will do!" answered the Mexican, while Young Wild West gave a nod of approval.

Crack!

The ranchman fired quickly and then Ramones fired a shot that hit the ground a dozen feet in front of Wild and started on a zig-zag run toward him.

Crack!

Wild let a shot go just as the villain was in the act of pulling the trigger the second time.

The weapon dropped from the hand of Senor Ramones and a hoarse shout of approval went up from the broncho busters.

The Mexican had been hit on the finger by our hero's bullet, but that was not sufficient to stop him.

He jerked out his remaining shooter with his left hand, and was in the act of raising it, when—

Crack!

Young Wild West fired his second shot.

This time the bullet hit the revolver, knocking it out of the man's hand and grazing his shoulder.

Then it was that the boy let some of his anger rise to the top.

He rushed up and sent a bullet in the ground within an inch of the Mexican's foot.

"Dance, you miserable prairie hound! Dance!" he cried. "If you don't dance I'll shoot your feet from under you!"

Crack! Crack!

The heels of the Mexican's fancy riding-boots were both hit fair and square.

Young Wild West was so close to him now that it was impossible for him to miss.

Uttering a string of imprecations in his own tongue, Senor Ramones began to dance as he had never done before, while the broncho busters held on their sides and roared with merriment.

CHAPTER V.

THE MEXICAN LAYS OUT A PLOT.

Arietta and the rest of those who had remained on the veranda now hastened to the scene.

Then Eloise and Mrs. Farrel came out of the house and followed them.

They heard the burst of laughter and they knew that nothing serious was taking place.

Young Wild West was certainly taking satisfaction out of the Mexican.

Every time the villain showed signs of stopping he would fire a shot, and that would start him dancing all the faster.

He did not stop until he had emptied one revolver and fired three shots from the other.

By this time Senor Ramones was perspiring freely and fairly foaming at the mouth with rage.

When Wild told him to stop he dropped in a heap to the ground, almost completely exhausted.

"Rest yourself, senor," the boy said, dropping back to his cool and easy way. "The apology must be made in a couple of minutes, you know."

"I apologize to the young lady," was the quick reply, as the villain got upon his knees and bowed to Arietta.

"All right," answered the girl. "Be careful the next time you meet me."

It is doubtful if he heard what she said, for he was badly scared and in such an exhausted state.

Without another word to her he turned to Wild and humbly bowed his head.

"That will do, I guess," said our hero. "Now, you want to look out how you act in the future, for the next time I draw a bead on you it will be for your heart! Remember that, Senor Ramones!"

Wild now walked over to Arietta and took her arm.

The two led the way back to the veranda, followed by all hands, save Cayuse Kitty and the broncho busters.

They had gathered about the Mexican and were plainly waiting for him to rise to his feet.

He did so about a minute later and proceeded to tie up the flesh wound he had received on his hand with his hand-kerchief.

Then the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters raised her hand and the men took off their hats.

"Boys!" she cried in a clear, musical voice, "jest let yourselves loose an' hustle ther greaser away from ther ranch! Them's my orders, so never mind what dad says!"

"Hooray fur Cayuse Kitty!" yelled Big Dave Rattler. "Ther greaser's got to go, boys!"

The Mexican put up his hands as though to push them back, but they did not heed him.

The ranchman did not say a word, and the next thing our friends saw was the senor being hustled in true Western style, which means that a couple of the broncho busters had hold of his collar and pantaloons and were making him run on his tiptoes in the direction of the road.

"Some one git his cayuse fur him an' ther things that be belong to him," called out Kitty. "Then let him light out fur some place where they want him more than we do. That skinnin' greaser want to buy horses! Well, I should reckon not!"

The girl's commands were carried out to the very letter, and five minutes later Senor Ramones was riding away from the ranch, crestfallen and breathing vengeance against Young Wild West, Cayuse Kitty and the broncho busters, but more particularly against the boy who had turned the duel into a roaring farce.

It will be in order to follow the villain.

Ramones did not take the road that led to Buck Ridge, but rode away in just the opposite direction.

That he was familiar with the way was evident, for he showed no signs of looking around and studying the landscape.

He simply rode right ahead, just as though he knew where he was going.

And such was indeed the case.

The Mexican had become the owner of a sheep ranch that was located about twenty miles to the northeast of Farrel's Ranch a couple of weeks prior to his visit to Farrel.

The fellow had really come there for the purpose of buying some horses, as he needed them on his ranch, but when he saw that Farrel had such a good-looking girl he had stayed around, doing his best to gain favor with her.

But Cayuse Kitty had snubbed him from the very start.

There was only one man in the world for her, and that was Dave Rattler, though it was true that she would not let the big, handsome fellow know that she loved him.

Senor Ramones was pretty patient for a Mexican, and he thought the dash he cut would change the girl's opinion toward him.

But that this admiration was not sincere was more than evident when he insulted Young Wild West's sweetheart by trying to kiss her.

Probably the villain wanted a wife, but had so many girls in view that he could not decide which to take.

But let this be as it may.

The senor rode the twenty miles to his sheep ranch without giving his broncho a chance to rest, and when he finally dismounted on his own premises he was still in a very ugly frame of mind.

The majority of the men employed on the place were Mexicans and greasers, but he had a few Americans.

The latter were of a class that did not mingle a great deal with the honest and better element of the rancheros of that section, otherwise they would not have hired themselves out to mingle with a lot of greasers, who were too filthy and vile in their habits to be associated with.

In the Wild West, as well as anywhere else, there are all classes.

But those of a vicious nature have a better chance to show what they are (or were, at the time of which we write) out of the reach of the law.

As Senor Ramones rode up and dismounted to put his horse in the stable three of these men were seated under a shed close by, talking over the proposition to rob their employer and leave for other parts.

When they heard the hoofbeats and saw the Mexican ride up they changed the subject and walked out to meet him.

The senor's face brightened a little when he saw them, for he was of the opinion that they were men who would do most anything.

"Come here!" he said. "I want to talk to you."

The men cast glances at each other, for it occurred to them that he must know what they had been talking about.

"What do you want, boss?" said one.

"You men are not satisfied with the wages you are getting here on the ranch," he answered. "I can tell that quite easily, and I don't blame you much. You could make more money if you only knew how to go at it."

The three rascals did not know what to make of this, and they simply looked at him in astonishment.

"What do you mean, boss?" one of them, whose name was Mark, asked.

"Well, to get right down to it, I know that you are the kind of men who won't stop at anything to make a little money. Is that right, senors?"

The Mexican had a way of using the word "senor" far more often than "mister," and as they were not in the habit of being addressed that way by a boss, the men were more at sea than ever.

"What are your names?" went on the boss—"your first names, I mean."

"Mark."

"Pete."

"Joe."

"Ah! Well, Mark, Pete and Joe, do you each want to make a hundred dollars?"

"How?" cried the villains in a breath.

"Have you any friends at Farrel's Ranch?"

The men shook their heads in the negative.

"Their broncho busters over there would like to clean us out, if they got the chance," said Mark.

"I reckon they would," declared Pete.

"A big feller named Dave Rattler over there has sworn to drop me on sight, 'cause I tried to kiss his gal at a fandango last fall," observed Joe.

The senor winced slightly when he heard this, for it made him think of the duel he had fought that morning.

"So you don't like the senor they call Dave Rattler, then?" he queried.

"No!" was the unanimous reply.

"Why don't you kill him, then?"

"An' git our necks stretched, or else git riddled with bullets? Not much!" exclaimed Joe.

"Oh! I don't mean for you to do it openly," and the Mexican smiled a sickly smile and nervously twirled the ends of his small mustache. "It could be done so no one would know who did it, senors. Suppose you were to catch Dave Rattler with a lasso some time and take him off somewhere and hang or shoot him? Who would know if no one saw you do it? Then suppose you were to do the same with a young man they call by the name of Young Wild West the same way? Then suppose you caught the daughter of Ranchman Farrel and brought her over to my ranch without any one knowing it? If this was all done you might have a whole lot of sport and get a hundred dollars apiece for it, providing it was done soon."

The three villains were very much interested now.

As dull as they were of comprehension, they quite easily caught on to what the villain was driving at.

"I reckon we understand," said Mark. "Tell us what you want done, boss, an' if we think it kin be done without us gittin' into trouble we'll tackle ther job."

"Ah! You are smart men, if you are Americans!" cried the Mexican, smiling and rubbing his yellow hands in a satisfied way. "I will tell you what I want, then."

In a plain and deliberate manner the senor related all that had taken place over at Farrel's that morning, not omitting the part where Young Wild West had so easily beat him in the duel.

He urged the men to help him be avenged upon Young Wild West, and hinted that it would be a good plan to get all the girls and bring them to his ranch, intimating that he wanted one for a wife, and that it was quite likely that they were not averse to taking brides themselves.

He made it look very rosy to the three rogues, and they readily agreed to do as he wanted them.

"It all must be done before to-morrow morning," the senor said, in conclusion. "The quicker the better. This Young Wild West must die! And he must die by my hand!" he added, vehemently.

"Jest tell us what to do, boss, an' we'll do it," remarked Joe. "If you say that each of us is goin' to git a wife out of this business I reckon we'll go through fire fur yer!"

"There are four handsome ladies to be got, and three of them are but girls. The other is a young woman, but just as pretty as the rest. When we get them we will have a big wedding here, and we shall be married by the medicine man of the Apache band that hangs out about twenty miles south of here."

"You say we, cap—that means us fellers, too, don't it?" inquired Pete.

"Sure!" was the reply. "I, of course, will select the one I want for my bride."

"Sartin!" the three exclaimed.

They were more than satisfied and became quite carried away with the idea.

Then the Mexican outlined a plot by which they were to bring all this villainy about.

"You three must ride over to Farrel's this afternoon. You must hide somewhere till night, and then you must manage to catch Dave Rattler and take him off and hang or shoot him, just as you please. After you've fixed him one of you must ride to the ranch and tell them there that you met the gang that was taking the man off, and that they were such a desperate-looking lot that you are afraid they mean to do him harm. Then Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty will start off at once to hunt up Rattler, and more of the men will go, too. Then I, who will be in hiding near by with some trusted men of my own country, will rush forward and seize the woman and make off for our ranch here."

"An' what will become of Young Wild West, an' Cayuse Kitty?" questioned Pete.

"If I am any judge of human nature, they will be the first ones to run into the hands of the two of you who are waitin' somewhere. Whoever it is who leads them will see to it that they do not escape. Then Young Wild West can be shot and Cayuse Kitty can be seized and carried off, while you, who are with them, can very easily put the rest of the gang on a false trail."

"That sounds all right," said Mark. "But s'pose Young Wild West an' his gals ain't there when we go there to-night?"

"Well, that won't change the programme in regard to Cayuse Kitty and Dave Rattler."

"That's so."

It took the Mexican scoundrel a full hour to get it stamped into the minds of the three men what he wanted them to do.

Then as an incentive he gave them each a hundred dollars in advance.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRONCHO BUSTERS AT WORK.

Both the ranchman and his family and the men employed on it were loud in their praises of Young Wild West's remarkable skill with a revolver.

Dave Rattler took him by both hands and shook them warmly.

"They don't know what a fighter an' wrastler you are," he whispered. "Leastwise, they don't know by experience, like I do. Not one of the boys opened his mouth about what happened yesterday over in Buck Ridge."

"Well, I am sorry the thing happened, but it was all your fault, you know," replied Wild.

"I know it was my fault. But I'm glad it happened, fur one thing. I won't go to interferin' with strangers ther next time I go out on a spree."

"It would be better for you if you never went on a spree," said Wild, looking at him earnestly. "If I understand it rightly you expect to marry the ranchman's daughter in about a year. If you spend your money and make yourself a fool by drinkin' a lot of whisky I shouldn't think Cayuse Kitty would love you any more for it."

"Gee!" and the big fellow blushed a deep crimson. "I never thought of that afore. I know Kitty don't like a feller what drinks a lot of ther pizen. She don't mind a quiet drink now an' then, 'cause her dad takes that. But, when I come to think of it, I reckon you're about right, Young Wild West. I guess I'll drop drinkin' ther stuff. I kin have jest as much fun without it, an' I'll have a level head while I'm havin' ther fun, too. But," and he scratched his head thoughtfully, "I hadn't been drinkin' any bugjuice when I tackled you at ther post-office. I thought I had a level head then."

"Well, I suppose you did. Just think of what might have happened if you had been two-thirds full of tanglefoot whisky!"

"It couldn't have been any worse. But never mind! I'm goin' to quit ther drinkin' game, jest ther same."

"What are you two talkin' so interested about?" said Cayuse Kitty, stepping up and hitting them each a smart blow on the back. "You, Dave! Why don't you take our visitors over to ther corral and show 'em how we break ther ugly cayuses? Maybe they ain't seen it done like we do it here."

"That's it!" exclaimed Arietta. "I guess the Mexican has gone for good, so let us try and enjoy ourselves a little before we go back to town."

"Go back to town!" echoed the ranchman. "Well, I should pick my teeth with ther leg of a tarantula! I reckon you ain't goin' away from this here ranch this day! You kin jest make up your minds that you're goin' to stay here a week. Ther missus an' me was jest talkin' a little while ago, an' we've made up our minds that ther pale gal has got to be fattened up a little afore she goes away. We've got plenty of good rich milk an' fresh eggs, an' them, with good corn muffins an' plenty of honey, will make her a different gal, I'll bet!"

"Them's my sentiments!" declared Mrs. Farrel. "Don't say you won't stay with us, now."

It would have been hard to refuse such an invitation if they had been in a hurry to leave that part of the country, much less now; so they agreed to remain there for a few days.

When it had all been talked over the entire party started for the corral, or big pen, where the unbroken horses were.

The ranchman had about fifty bronchos there that were untamed, and some of them were so vicious that but few of the men were willing to tackle them without plenty of help.

"There's a fine lot of bronchos—or they will be when they've been tamed down a bit," observed Farrel, as they reached the enclosure and stood looking through the big pickets that were twisted in between the wires.

"There's one in there that I want," spoke up Cayuse Kitty. "It's that ugly-lookin' buckskin over there that's pawin' ther ground jest as though he's challengin' some one to come in an' tackle him. He's about ther ugliest one of ther lot, I reckon, an' Dave says that as soon as he has given him a few lessons he's goin' to give me a try at him."

"That's right!" spoke up the big broncho buster. "I'll fix ther beast after a couple of lessons so's he won't be apt to throw you, Kitty."

"Jest tackle him now, to show Young Wild West an' his friends what you know about broncho bustin', Dave."

"All right. If you say so I'll do it. You're the Queen of ther Broncho Busters, you know, an' what you say goes."

The big fellow ran into a shed and soon returned with a couple of lariats.

Young Wild West and his companions looked at the preparations with interest.

They could easily tell that the horses were a pretty bad lot to tackle.

They wanted to see what Dave would do.

One of the men soon appeared with a saddle and bridle. Then the gate of the pen was opened and Dave and he went inside.

The bronchos, of course, scampered off in every direction. The saddle and bridle was dropped to the ground and then each of the men took a lariat and made ready to capture the buckskin.

"Now, then, you'll see some fun!" exclaimed the ranchman. "If Dave Rattler don't meet his match this time, I'm much mistaken."

"Don't be too sure of that, dad," spoke up his daughter. "I reckon Dave kin ride about any broncho that ever chewed stubble grass. Jest wait a minute."

The two broncho busters were watching a chance to lasso the buckskin.

They walked around in different directions, and pretty soon the vicious animal separated from the rest of the herd and came tearing down along the high fence of the corral.

Then Big Dave very neatly lassoed him, catching the noose about one of his forelegs and throwing him.

His helper promptly darted forward and got on the broncho's head.

Then, with a great deal of tussling, they managed to get the saddle and bridle on him.

Our friends watched the proceedings with interest.

"Whoopie!" yelled Rattler, as he placed his foot in the stirrup and vaulted upon the animal's back. "Let him go, Buck!"

Buck did let him go, and then the broncho began to do some great bucking, uttering frightened snorts at the same time.

Dave kept yelling all the time to keep the animal in its nervous, angered state.

Though it was nothing new to him, the ranchman held his hands to his sides and roared with laughter.

But that broncho did not like to be laughed at, it seemed. It suddenly changed its tactics, and, dropping to the ground, rolled over.

But the rider very nimbly kept from under him, and, landing on his feet, waited for the animal to get up.

At the very instant the broncho made a move to rise, he swung himself in the saddle again.

Then the now thoroughly enraged buckskin darted ahead with the velocity of a cannon-ball.

But he did not make more than half a dozen leaps when he dropped to his knees and let his hind hoofs go clear of the ground.

This was altogether too much for Big Dave, and he went sailing over the broncho's head and landed on all fours a dozen feet away.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the ranchman, while our friends joined in.

Cayuse Kitty looked annoyed, but did not say anything just then.

The fellow called Buck swung his lariat at the broncho, but missed him.

Then Rattler scrambled to his feet.

"Hanged if ther critter didn't throw me!" he said, looking at the spectators in a crestfallen way.

"I should reckon he did!" exclaimed Farrel. "What's ther matter, Dave?"

"He's about ther toughest one I ever struck," was the reply. "I'll tackle him agin, an' if I don't manage him then I'll know that no one else livin' kin!"

"Stick to him, Dave!" shouted Cayuse Kitty. "I reckon I'd better come in there an' help you."

Before her father could stay her, the girl opened the gate and ran up to the side of her big, handsome lover.

"Give me ther lariat," she said. "You hold the critter down after I throw him."

He gave it to her and she began coiling it to suit her.

The man had chased the buckskin to the other end of the pen and missed him again, and now the animal, snorting defiance and rearing and plunging, came down beside the fence again.

Then Cayuse Kitty very deftly threw the lasso and caught him about the foreleg.

She tripped the broncho with a quick jerk and the next instant Dave Rattler was holding him down.

The girl quickly sprang forward and seized the bit.

"Let him git up, Dave," she said. "Then you git into ther

saddle and make him light out like greased lightning. It won't do to git throwed agin, not afore our company. I know ther buckskin is about ther worst one we've ever had, but that makes no difference!"

"That's right, gal!" retorted the big broncho buster. "Now, up with him!"

The enraged beast was on its feet like a flash.

But the broncho buster was quick enough to get into the saddle before the girl was compelled to let go the bit.

Away the broncho darted, and when he had gone a few paces he tried the thing that proved so successful before.

But Dave was expecting it, and he kept in the saddle by a great effort.

The angered animal got up with a snort and began bucking at a terrific pace.

But the experienced man on his back only laughed at this. Then the broncho, becoming more determined than ever, began to rear and plunge.

Dave had all he could do to keep in the saddle now, but he kept yelling and using the short whip he had provided himself with.

Suddenly the broncho made a vicious lunge to the left, and, losing his balance, rolled over on the ground.

Big Dave escaped being mashed by a miracle, but he lost his hold upon the bridle in his effort to escape, and the broncho dashed away, kicking his heels in the air and snorting defiance.

The big fellow got up, rubbing his shoulder and limping.

"He sorter done me, I reckon, Kitty," he said to the Gir Queen. "I gave my shoulder an awful crack when I hit the ground, an' my left ankle got twisted a little."

"Never mind, Dave. You kin try ther vicious brute som' other time. Let ther boys go ahead an' tame some of the rest of ther bronchos, an' that will show our visitors that we know how to do it on Farrel's Ranch."

The girl took him by the arm and led him to the gate.

"I had a little bad luck, I reckon," said Dave, with a sick smile, as he looked at Young Wild West.

"Well, that is liable to happen," was the reply.

"I'll tackle ther buckskin agin in a day or two. I've got to conquer him, you know."

"Oh, the chances are that the next time you tackle him you will make out all right."

"I reckon so, anyhow."

Half a dozen men now went inside the corral at a word from the ranchman, and they promptly started in to break some of the bronchos.

They kept it up for about an hour, doing some good work and causing no end of merriment by their antics.

As our friends were thinking of going back to the house becoming tired of the broncho busting, which was nothing new to them, anyway, Cayuse Kitty turned to Wild and said: "I reckon you never tamed a wild horse, did you?"

"Oh, I have tamed a few of them," he replied. "The sorrel I ride was about as wild and vicious as any horse that ever breathed until I tamed him."

"Is that a fact?" and the girl opened wide her eyes. "Was your sorrel anything like as bad as ther buckskin?"

"Quite as bad, I am sure."

"What?"

The girl's father had been listening, and he stepped up. "Then you're a broncho buster, hey, Young Wild West?" he asked in surprise.

"Well, I never made it a business to break wild horses to the saddle, but, to be frank with you, I never yet saw one that could get the best of me."

"Ther dickens you say!"

"You see, my partners and myself have roughed it pretty well in all sorts of games throughout the Wild West. Broncho busting is quite tame to some things we have been through."

The ranchman did not hear the last, for he had turned to call Dave Rattler.

"Come here, Dave!" he said. "Young Wild West is a broncho buster."

"I don't doubt it," was the reply. "He kin do most anything."

CHAPTER VII.

DAVE RATTLER RIDES OFF.

Cayuse Kitty took a critical look at Young Wild West, much the same as if she would have done had a horse been brought before her for her opinion to be given.

"You look as though you might be putty good on ther saddle," she said. "S'pose you try your luck with ther buckskin?"

"Well, I didn't want to interfere with what you were doing, but since you have asked me I will try it. I may be able to tame the buckskin, and I may not. But I am never afraid to tackle anything in the line of horseflesh."

As Wild said this he turned for the gate of the corral.

The buckskin still had the saddle and bridle on and he was about as mad as a horse could well be.

The saddle had slipped out of place and the animal was doing its best to kick it to pieces.

A couple of the men started to follow Wild through the gate.

"Never mind," said he. "Give me a lariat. I guess I can make out alone."

All hands looked surprised at this.

"Let him have his own way," remarked Farrel. "I reckon he knows what he's doin'."

"You'll find out putty soon," nodded Cheyenne Charlie. "Wild will fix ther buckskin in about five minutes, see if he don't!"

"If he does he's a good one," said Cayuse Kitty.

Our hero looked at the girl and smiled.

He was quite certain that she was of the opinion that what her lover could not do in the line of broncho busting no one could do.

He meant to give her a surprise.

Still he did not figure on having a very easy time of it, for, if anything, the buckskin was more vicious now than he was when he had gotten the best of Dave Rattler.

He got his lariat in readiness and then walked toward the east, which was spending its time between kicking and lunging, browsing on the stubble in the further end of the corral.

Wild walked over in his cool and easy way, and just as he was getting near enough to make a cast with his lasso, the buckskin let out a snort and darted around the enclosure.

As he swung around the corner Wild let the lariat go.

It caught the broncho around the neck and then he was nearly dragged off his feet.

But only for a second!

The noose tightened so that it choked the animal, and a couple of good jerks completely shut off the wind.

Before the buckskin could recover Young Wild West leaped forward and had him by the head.

The beast reared up and tried to dash our hero to the ground and trample him under its hoofs, but a quick twist of the bit brought him down to his knees.

Then the boy reached over and gave the saddle a jerk to get it in its proper place.

He failed to do it the first time, but the next, he got it nearly in position.

While this was going on the broncho was dancing around, dragging Wild with him.

But by twisting the bit and tightening the noose alternately, the young Prince of the Saddle managed to get things fixed the way he wanted them.

The remarkable agility and strength he possessed alone saved him from being kicked and trampled by the buckskin, which now seemed bent on doing harm to his captor.

"I guess you are not the ugliest horse that ever was bred, after all," Wild muttered, as he watched his chance to mount.

It came pretty soon, and without bothering to take the stirrup, he vaulted into the saddle.

Then the ugly beast began to buck the same as he had done with Dave Rattler.

But he had a different person on his back now--one who gave way to his every motion and who sat there as though he was really a part of the animal.

In such accord did Wild work with the horse's motions that he had the buckskin puzzled in less than half a minute.

"Get up, there!" the boy cried out. "You stubborn brute, you have got to ride over there by the gate!"

The broncho went ahead a short distance like lightning, and then dropped to his knees.

But Wild threw himself back at full length, and, not having his toes in the stirrups, his feet struck the ground as he slid upon the broncho's neck.

He was back into the saddle instantly, and then he got the chance to take the stirrups.

"Get up!" he shouted, striking his mount with the bridles-rein.

Up leaped the buckskin and then away he went at a swift gallop.

Wild headed him straight for the gate, where the crowd was standing.

"You are doing fine, Wild!" he heard Arietta say as he neared them.

"Oh, I'll have him all right in a few minutes," he answered.

He forced the buckskin to make a neat circle, and then back to the spot where he had lassoed him they went.

When the broncho got there it occurred to him to make another effort to dislodge the rider.

Then it was that some of the worst bucking the crowd had ever seen took place.

If ever a wild broncho knew the game that one did!

But Young Wild West stuck to him like a leech, though the breath was nearly jarred from his body.

He was bent on subduing the horse, and that was all there was about it.

"Go ahead and enjoy yourself!" he said, slapping the buckskin's neck a smart blow with the reins. "You will get tired presently."

The bucking was kept up for about two minutes, the animal dashing here and there in his efforts to dislodge the boy.

Finally he dropped to the ground and tried to roll Wild under him, but that was just what our hero was expecting, and with remarkable skill and agility he kept on top, no matter which way the broncho rolled.

The animal got up without being urged this time and started in to do everything it knew about dislodging a rider.

But at the end of five minutes he gave it up.

Wild had won the day.

He rode down to the gate waving his hat, and Arietta responded with her handkerchief.

"Hooray fur Young Wild West!" cried Farrel. "He's jest ther kingpin of broncho busters, an' don't yer forget it!"

Cayuse Kitty and Dave joined in the cheering as heartily as the rest.

They were of the sort who admire pluck and perseverance.

Though it was humiliating to them because the boss broncho buster of the ranch had failed, they did not feel sore over it.

"I knowed Young Wild West would do it," said Dave. "I could feel it in my bones, Kitty. I might as well tell you that when we was over to Buck Ridge havin' a good time yesterday, I tried to have some fun with him an' he chuckled me around jest as though I was a baby, an' he threwed me afore a whole crowd, Kitty! What do you think of that?"

"Why, you big lunkhead! If that's true I'll never speak to you agin, Dave Rattler!" cried the girl. "You—Dave Rattler, ther boss broncho buster of Farrel's Ranch, bein' beaten in public!"

The girl was talking loudly now and the others heard what she said.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart followed the ranchman as he made his way to them in surprise.

"Never mind!" said Cayuse Kitty. "I don't want to hear any more about it!" and away she ran to the house.

Poor Dave was very much mortified.

"I wish I hadn't told her anything about it," he said, as Wild came up and learned what the trouble was.

"Well, don't worry over it," retorted our hero. "She will soon get over that. Girls are bound to have a little pout now and then, you know."

"I reckon you're ther only one who kin fix ther thing up," said Dave, shaking his head sadly.

"Well, if I can I surely will. You may depend on that."

"Do it, then."

"I will try."

"Thank you, Young Wild West! You're ther smartest an' best young fellow I ever met! You are a kingpin from King-Pinville, an' there ain't no rubbin' that out!"

A couple of the men had the buckskin broncho and were going to take the saddle and bridle off.

But Dave suddenly ran up to them.

"I reckon I'll ride him over to see how ther cattle are," he said. "Young Wild West has broke him, an' I'll take advantage of it."

"Why, if you go now you won't be back by dinner-time," the ranchman remarked in surprise.

"Never mind about my dinner; I kin git that any time," said Rattler, and then, forgetting all about his lame shoulder, he threw himself on the back of the savage broncho and rode off.

"He won't show up before night, 'tain't likely," observed Farrel, as he led the way to the house. "Well, we sartinly

have had a lively time of it here this mornin'. I reckon you visitors must be enjoyin' yourselves."

"Oh! We are having a splendid time," declared Arietta.

It was nearly noon when they went into the sitting-room of the house, and when the ranchman told them that it was a good ten miles to the place Big Dave was heading for, our friends knew he was ashamed of himself and hurt by the actions of Cayuse Kitty.

Wild sought the girl out and had a little talk with her.

But she was one of the kind who are bent on having their own way about things, and she would not listen very attentively to him.

The beating her big lover had received in public was altogether too much for her, and she declared that she would have no more to do with him.

It was nearly one o'clock when they sat down to a regular ranch dinner, which, by the way, can't be beaten the world over when it comes to the eating of food, solid provender cooked in a way that will not bring dyspepsia on.

Mrs. Farrel insisted that Eloise should sit next to her, and the way she cared for her during the meal was as good as the most loving of mothers could have done it.

Cayuse Kitty had very little to say, which was contrary to her usual way.

Our friends could not help noticing that she cast an anxious glance now and then out of the window.

That she was looking for the return of her lover they knew only too well.

When the meal was over Wild explained the whole thing that had taken place at Buck Ridge the day before, making it as light as possible for Dave and not attempting to flatter himself in the least.

Then Cheyenne Charlie told of the several times he had seen Wild handle bigger men than Dave in that way, and then the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters began to grow interested.

"You know," said Arietta to her, "Wild is a little more than ordinary in the line of taking care of himself. He is as strong and brave as a lion and his coolness can't be equaled. That is why he managed to turn the tables on Mr. Rattler yesterday."

"Oh! I don't mind it 'cause he got ther best of Dave. It served him right. But to think that he was blockhead enough to go an' git beaten right before a whole crowd! That jest beats me!"

The girl slapped her hand on the table to emphasize what she said.

"Why, Kitty, how could he help it?" her mother spoke up.

"If Mr. West was too much fur him, how could he help it?"

"That's so, too. But he's a big blockhead of a fool, that's what he is!"

That settled the argument.

The subject was changed, and soon the Girl Queen got into a better humor.

But it was plain that she was very anxious about the return of the big, good-natured broncho buster.

He being the ranchman's right-hand man, he always ate at the table with them, and as he had gone off in a sulk, Kitty was worried over it.

"S'pose he goes off an' gits killed?" she thought. "Then it will be my fault. I reckon I made a fool of myself in talkin' the way I did. What do I care if he did get kicked? It was Young Wild West what done it, an', accordin' to what they say, he could spank a couple like him if he took ther notion. Young Wild West is a wonderful feller, but I like my big, good-natured Dave Rattler better."

It was about the middle of the afternoon when Young Wild West sat on the veranda talking to Arietta and Cayuse Kitty that a stranger rode up and called out, excitedly:

"A man who said his name was Dave Rattler has been taken off by a gang of men! They're goin' to hang him, they say. I was ridin' along with him when they come after us, but I managed to git away!"

CHAPTER VIII. THE RESCUE OF THE BRONCHO BUSTER.

As the man spoke the startling news the face of Cayuse Kitty turned as pale as death.

She staggered back and would have fallen if it had not been for Arietta.

But it was only for a second that she remained thus.

Suddenly she sprang forward close to the horseman, and, looking him squarely in the face, cried out:

"Are you telling the truth?"

"Bartin, miss," was the reply. "I happened to be ridin' along when I met Dave Rattler. He'd been out lookin' fur some cattle, he said, an' was thinkin' about ridin' back to Farrel's Ranch, where he belonged. That's how I knowed he was from here. I'm from ther sheep ranch which adjoins this property, you know, an' I was on my way to Buck Ridge to take some mail there fur ther boss, an' to bring back a few little things. When I meets ther big feller what says his name was Dave Rattler I stopped to talk with him a while. But we hadn't been talkin' very long when a gang of six or seven tough-lookin' fellers comes along an' picks a row with us."

"And you say they took Dave Rattler off with them?" queried Young Wild West, stepping up.

"Yes, they said as how they had a grudge agin him fur somethin' he done afore he come here, an' that was goin' to hang him fur it. They told me to git out, or they'd shoot me, an' I got out, but just as I did I seen 'em git ther best of their big feller an' tie him on his horse. They fired at me a couple of times, jest fur fun, I guess. See! Here's where one of ther bullets went through my hat!"

He held up the hat and showed a bullet-hole.

"Come, Young Wild West! cried Cayuse Kitty, suddenly.

"We must save Dave Rattler!"

"All right!" answered Wild, and he promptly ran to the stable where his horse had been put with those of his friends.

"I'll go with yer," said the man who had brought the startling message. "I'll put you right on ther trail of ther vilians!"

Wild was not long in getting his horse ready.

And the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters was pretty nearly as quick.

Arietta had gone to tell the rest what the man had said, and by the time Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were hurrying for their horses, and the ranchman was yelling for some of the broncho busters to come with them, Wild and Cayuse Kitty were following the messenger up the lane.

The man who had brought the message that startled the Girl Queen so was the man called Joe, one of the three villains who agreed to help Senor Ramones in his diabolical scheme.

When he found that he had the girl and the very one his boss wanted to kill the most—for he was certain it was Young Wild West, from the brief description he had received—he was overjoyed.

He had told the truth to the boy and the girl when he had stated that Dave Rattler had been carried off and that his captors had said they were going to hang him.

That part of it was correct.

Mark and Pete were the ones who had effected the capture of the big broncho buster, with the help of Joe, who had been the one to hit the unsuspecting man on the head with his revolver and knock him from his horse.

Now Joe felt that he would surely be able to lead Young Wild West to his doom, and then with Cayuse Kitty a prisoner, the villainous trio would make for the sheep ranch.

Wild's horse wanted to go, it seemed, and he had to hold him back in order for the girl and the man who had brought the news to keep up with him.

They were over half a mile away from the ranch-house when Wild looked back and saw that his partners and a dozen of the broncho busters were just starting.

"I'll show you jest where it happened, an' then we kin find ther trail, I reckon," said Joe. "It ain't more'n three miles from here."

This was true.

Our hero had not taken time to size the man up, and he had started in such a hurry just to please Cayuse Kitty more than anything else.

He was quite certain that the girl would be heartbroken if anything serious happened to the big broncho buster, and he resolved to aid her in finding him all he could.

"Come on!" he said. "If Dave had really been captured by some of his enemies we won't be long in finding him. Then I guess some of the scoundrels will either light out pretty quick or die with their boots on!"

"That's right!" spoke up the rascal Joe, though he felt just a trifle squeamish when he heard the words, for they sounded a little ominous to him.

They rode hard for five minutes, the girl not saying a word.

She was pale, but a light of determination shone in her eyes, and, equipped with a revolver and knife, she looked as though she might put up a good fight to save her lover.

Three or four minutes more and Joe called out to them that they had reached the spot where the capture had been made.

Wild reined in his horse and took a quick look around.

It did not take his practiced eyes a second to see a trail leading off to the left through a rather sparse growth of pines.

"That's ther way they went!" exclaimed the villain, and then he could not refrain from working his features into a sardonic grin.

Young Wild West caught a glimpse of his face at that very moment, and it instantly flashed upon his mind that the man had been deceiving them.

But he determined to wait and see what he did before he tackled him.

Through the woods they rode up a hill, and then down they went toward the mouth of a gulch, the trail being a plain one.

Just as they reached the gulch Joe forced his horse ahead until he led by a length.

Then he placed his fingers to his mouth as though to give a whistle.

"Stop that!" exclaimed Young Wild West, in a low but commanding tone.

The hands of the villain instantly dropped to his sides, "Halt!"

But it was hardly necessary for him to give the command, for the sorrel had bounded forward, and in two leaps had overtaken the man.

With his left hand Wild caught the bridle and a revolver in his right was pressed against the temple of Joe.

"You scoundrel!" he said, as the horses came to a stop. "You were leading us into an ambush, were you? Stop, Miss Farrel! There is some sort of trick here."

Cayuse Kitty instantly came to a halt and looked in astonishment at Wild.

"This fellow is playing us false," went on the boy, in a low tone. "I am satisfied that he was trying to lead us into a trap. Now, then, you sneaky-looking rascal! Tell us what you brought us here for!"

"I—I have told yer what's ther truth," faltered Joe, who was a cowardly fellow at the best. "I ain't told you no lie. They did take Dave Rattler off, an' they brought him this way, too."

"What were you going to whistle for just now?"

"I wasn't goin' to whistle."

But the man's looks told that he was telling an untruth, and no one knew it any better than Young Wild West.

"Dismount!" he said.

Joe obeyed.

He was now trembling with fear, for he had an idea that perhaps the boy was going to kill him.

He had heard the Mexican say what a dead shot he was, and that thought was uppermost in his mind now.

"What are you going to do?" asked Cayuse Kitty.

"I am going to tie this fellow up and then try and find out what he was leading us here for," was the reply.

Then Wild dismounted and relieved the villain of his weapons, after which he proceeded to bind him securely with his own lariat.

A fire was conveniently close, so he tied him to it.

The boy was positive that the man had been leading them into some sort of a trap.

The exultant grin and the attempt to whistle were enough to satisfy him on that point, let alone the fellow's hang-dog appearance.

And if he was leading them into a trap who could have arranged it all but Senor Ramones, the Mexican?

It was quite natural that Young Wild West should think this way.

He knew the nature of Mexicans, and he was quite well satisfied that Senor Ramones hated him worse than poison.

When he had the man tied hard and fast he turned to him and said:

"Where's Ramones?"

Joe winced, as he had not expected such a question.

"He is somewhere ahead waiting for us, I presume," went on our hero. "Waiting to put a bullet through my heart, probably. Well, I will go ahead on foot and find out. If there is anyone to be shot it isn't going to be me, I assure you of that."

At this juncture the sound of approaching hoofs came to their ears.

"Our friends are coming, Miss Farrel," Wild said to the Girl Queen. "Just go and meet them and tell them to dis-

mount when they get here and come on foot. I will go on ahead."

"All right!" replied Kitty; "I'll do jest what you say, Young Wild West, fur I reckon you know what you're doin'!"

She turned her broncho around and rode back, while our hero started ahead on foot.

As he cautiously made his way through the gulch he suddenly smelled smoke.

"A campfire, eh? I wonder how many there are of them?" he mused.

Noislessly he hurried on.

When he had covered about a hundred yards he came to a little bend, and, peering around a rock, he beheld a startling sight.

Suspended by a rope right against the face of a cliff was the bound form of a man, and directly beneath him was a blazing fire with two men in the act of feeding it to torture him with the heat.

One glance was sufficient for Wild to see that the man who was being tortured was Dave Rattler!

The rope was tied beneath his arms and he was just high enough from the ground to be out of the reach of anyone who might try to cut him down.

As the smoke and flames went up and enveloped him the helpless broncho buster uttered a cry for help.

"Shet up!" cried one of the villains, drawing a knife. "What do yer say if I ham-string him, Mark?"

"Go ahead, Pete!"

Pete was just about to commit the fiendish act when Young Wild West raised his revolver.

Crack!

As the report rang out the scoundrel dropped dead to the ground.

As our hero darted forward he heard a shout behind him and then the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters rode up at full speed, Cheyenne Charlie and the rest following on foot.

Wild kicked the burning brands away, leaving his companions to attend to the other fellow.

Cayuse Kitty brought her broncho to a halt, and, springing to a standing position on its back, untied the rope that held the man suspended.

"Bless you, Kit!" exclaimed Dave Rattler, as the girl let him drop to the ground and Wild caught him. "I'm so glad you've come!"

"That's all right, Dave!" answered the girl, and then she leaped lightly to the ground and caught him about the neck, imparting a rousing kiss on his lips.

At any other time this might have seemed humorous to the lookers-on, but just then it did not.

It simply told of the maiden's love for the man she had turned away that morning.

Dave Rattler soon recovered after his bonds were removed.

Then he told how he had been tricked by the villain Joe, and how the other two had brought him to the gulch and started in to torture him to death.

"I reckon they mean to finish me," he said, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders. "I felt that my time had about come. I'm the luckiest galoot what ever busted a broncho, I am!"

"You're right, you are, Dave!" exclaimed Cayuse Kitty. "You're all right, even if you was beaten in public yester-day!"

There was a smile at this, but the big fellow did not feel at all abashed.

"I reckon I'd like to go an' git my dinner," he said.

One of his pards found his horse for him and led it up. "We will take the two fellows we have captured back to the ranch with us," observed Wild, as he started back for the spot where he had left his horse.

"An' then we'll yank 'em over to Buck Ridge an' let 'em be tried by a judge an' jury," added one of the men.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAPTURE OF THE GIRLS.

When Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and the ranchman started in the wake of Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty all the men in the near vicinity of the house went with them.

We had better say all the men belonging to the ranch, for there were half a dozen quite close by who did not belong long there.

Senor Ramones had changed his plans somewhat, and he

had brought five rascally greasers with him to the strip of woodland that lay almost within a stone's throw of the rear of the house.

They had been within sight of the capture of Dave Rattler, and as soon as they saw Joe start out for Farrel's Ranch they headed that way, too, taking a short cut for the woods.

This strip of woods ran for nearly three miles through Farrel's property, and once they were under cover of it the villains were not in danger of being seen by anyone belonging to the ranch, unless they should happen to be in the woods.

It was not very good traveling through the briars and undergrowth that infested the timber strip, but that made little difference to the senor just then.

He had an object in view, and, spurred on by it, he would have been willing to go almost anywhere and take any kind of a risk.

He wanted the life of Young Wild West and the custody of his pretty golden-haired sweetheart.

The villains rode hard through the woods and managed to reach a point where they could see the front of the house just as Joe rode up on his decoy errand.

The Mexican was jubilant over the capture of the big broncho buster, and he now felt certain of success.

He talked freely with the rascals he had with him, speaking in the language they understood the best and promising them great things if they were successful in capturing the three girls.

"We will surely find the one they call the Girl Queen at the ranch when we get back," he thought. "I don't know whether I like her as well as the golden-haired one or not. I will have to think it over first. One thing, Young Wild West will be in my power, if the men do not have to kill him in order to get him. If they bring him to me alive I will make him suffer a torture that he has never dreamed of before he dies! He has humiliated me before the very ones in front of whom I wanted to appear gallant, and my revenge will be terrible!"

The villain gritted his teeth together as he thought of how he had been made to dance, while the broncho busters roared with laughter.

But when he saw Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty riding away at a furious pace with his man Joe, his face lighted with a fiendish smile.

He felt that the time to act was close at hand.

When he saw the young deadshot's partners and the broncho busters follow them shortly after he turned to his waiting men and said:

"Now, then! We must creep up to the house and get the women!"

The greasers were ready, as a matter of course.

They waited until the horsemen reached the end of the lane and turned up the road, and then, one at a time, they set out to creep to the house.

As has been stated, there were no men in the near vicinity of the house, so they had an easy thing ahead of them.

Mrs. Farrel and her three guests were on the veranda watching the fast disappearing riders as they hastened to overtake Wild and Cayuse Kitty, when suddenly half a dozen men sprang upon the stoop, coming from both ends.

It was so sudden that even brave Arietta could not act before they were seized.

Senor Ramones had come well prepared.

The screams of the three girls were quickly smothered by heavy sacks being thrown over their heads, and then they were borne struggling away, leaving the ranchman's wife in a faint on the veranda.

Three of the greasers each had one of the captives and the others wound ropes around the struggling girls, so they could not use their hands, as they went.

The woods, being so close, was reached without the attention of the few men at the barn being drawn, and once there the rest was comparatively easy.

Half smothered, Arietta, Anna and Eloise were borne away on the backs of the horses that had been waiting, the men who had them in charge holding them tightly.

The Mexican took care that they did not get too near the road that led to his sheep ranch, and in doing this they were compelled to travel further.

At least three miles would have to be put on the twenty, but he cared not for that.

There were six of them, and they could take turns at carrying the captives.

It was a good two hours before they reached the ranch, and his face beaming with joy and satisfaction, Senor Ra-

mones ordered the girls to be placed in the room he had selected and made ready for them before starting out.

He expected that Cayuse Kitty was already there, but what was his surprise when the old half-breed woman, who acted as a sort of housekeeper, informed him that no one had come to the house since he had been away.

The scoundrel was puzzled a little, but he could not bring himself to believe that his plans in regard to Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty had failed.

All the rest of the diabolical scheme had been so successful that he regarded it as an absolute certainty that his three hired tools had done their work.

"I hope they have not been foolish enough to kill the girl," he muttered. "I would not care so much if they have put an end to the boy, but the girl! Well, I want her!"

The room where Arietta and her two companions were placed was a good one for the purpose it had been used for.

There was only one window to it, and this was closed and barred with a heavy wooden shutter that had two small round holes in it to admit a little light.

Eloise broke into a fit of weeping when she was released from the sack and bonds and placed in the room, but Arietta and Anna, though not a little frightened, tried to make it appear as though it was simply an adventure, and that it would terminate all right.

Arietta had been in so many scrapes of the kind that she was quite used to having villains steal her, and as she kissed the weeping Eloise, she said:

"Cheer up, dear. You must not give up so quickly. I did not recognize any of the scoundrels who caught us so quickly, but I did almost certain that Senor Ramones, the Mexican, is at the bottom of this. Don't be frightened," and she lowered her voice to a whisper, "for I have my revolver in the bosom of my dress. You know how straight I can shoot, and if anyone attempts to harm us before Wild, Charlie and Jim come to rescue us, I will drop them as fast as they come near us!"

These words had the effect of allaying the fears of the delicate girl somewhat, while Anna took a new view of the situation.

"It seems to me that the scoundrels, whoever they are, took a big risk in coming right up to the house in that way," Anna said. "Why, I never thought but that we were perfectly safe there. Can it be that the men who captured the big bronco buster and took him off to hang him belong to this gang?"

"There is hardly any doubt but that is the case," replied Arietta. "Now, the only thing for us to do is to keep up a good heart and wait. Wild will not be long in finding out where we are, you can bet. The villains must have left an awful plain trail."

"But suppose—" began Eloise.

"Never mind, now!" and the brave sweetheart of Young Wild West tapped her bosom where her six-shooter was concealed.

Half an hour passed without their hearing a sound that betokened anyone being in the house.

Then soft footsteps were heard and someone was heard opening the door.

Arietta got up and stood in the center of the room, and as she did so Senor Ramones entered, followed by the half-breed woman.

There was a mocking smile on the face of the villain as he bowed to them.

"If I had known I was to have such three pretty guests I would have had finer accommodations for them, señoritas," he said.

"Never mind about the accommodations you have," retorted Arietta, speaking fearlessly. "You just liberate us and give us horses to ride back to Farrel's Ranch, or it will be all the worse for you!"

"Ah!" and the villain placed his hand over his heart. "I do so like to hear you talk and watch your pretty lips as the words come from them, Señorita Golden Hair. Please fly into a passion, just to please me, won't you?"

The brave girl felt like shooting him down right there, but she managed to keep pretty cool.

"I guess we had better go out of this room," spoke up Anna, making a move for the door.

At this the hag gave a savage growl and pulled a big knife from the belt she wore.

"I think you will be wise in staying right where you are, even if I were not to interfere," said the Mexican. "This

woman is your keeper. She is very fond of using a knife, too."

The hag certainly had an ugly aspect, and Anna shrank back in spite of herself.

"The missy will stay right here!" growled the half-breed woman. "They will all stay here. If they try to go out they will get my knife!"

Arietta pondered over it for a few seconds.

Then she decided that it would be best to wait a while and see if Wild and the rest came to rescue them.

If they did not come in a reasonable length of time, then she would make use of her revolver in getting out of the house, and if anyone opposed her they would have to take the consequences.

"I expected to have your friend, the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters, here, to greet you, but for some reason she has failed to get here yet," remarked the Mexican. "Young Wild West is liable to come to the house at any moment, too, but I hardly know whether he will be alive when he gets here or not."

When Arietta heard this her face turned pale:

It flashed upon her instantly that a trap had been laid to catch her lover.

"What if they had killed him?"

The thought was sickening to her, and she took a step backward and sank into a chair.

"Never mind!" exclaimed the villainous Mexican, sneeringly. "If Young Wild West is not dead when he reaches here I will see to it that he soon is. You will soon forget him, my golden-haired angel, and then you will give your love to me!"

The eyes of Arietta flashed dangerously at this.

She was on the point of pulling out her revolver and shooting the scoundrel, but once more she checked herself.

So long as he did not come too close to her she would not shoot.

Senor Ramones did not know how close he was to death at that moment.

He never gave it a thought that either of the captives might be armed.

It is a wonder it did not occur to him to kiss the girl, who had thwarted him the day before.

But he did not think of such a thing just then.

The truth of it was he was much worried over the non-appearance of the three men with the captives he had expected them to get.

After a little further talk in a sarcastic vein he bowed mockingly and left the room.

The hag went with him, grinning and showing her snaggy teeth as she went out.

Arietta took good notice that the door was locked and barred on the outside, and when she realized this she wished she had drawn her shooter and forced the two to let them out.

And if she had done so she would surely have got the best of the pair, for there was no one else in the house at the time.

But she did not know all this.

It was too late now, anyhow.

Senor Ramones was very nervous when he left the fair captives and went out of the house.

He thought it queer that his men did not turn up.

As the hours passed he grew so nervous he could not keep still for five minutes at a time.

He began to think that something had gone wrong with the three villains.

And in that case Young Wild West would be free and quite apt to come to the ranch to look for the missing girls.

Late in the afternoon the senor sent a couple of the greasers out to hunt up the missing men.

They returned two hours later with the body of the men Wild had shot.

Then it was that the Mexican grew thoroughly alarmed.

What if the other two had been taken prisoners and had told his plans?"

He promptly got a hustle on and called all his men into the house to be ready for an attack.

If it came to the worst he meant to put up a fight and not allow anyone to make a search of the premises.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty rode back to Farrel's Ranch at the head of the column.

Dave Rattler and the ranchman himself rode right behind them, and then came the broncho busters, with the two prisoners in their center tied to their own horses.

They had scarcely done this when one of the cowboys belonging to the ranch came galloping out to meet them.

Something is wrong; I can tell by the way that man acts," said Wild.

"I hope nothin' more is wrong," returned Cayuse Kitty. "We've had enough of it fur one day, I reckon."

"What's ther matter?" bawled out the ranchman, when the horseman got a little nearer.

"Ther missus is nigh crazy!" was the retort. "A gang come along an' took away ther young ladies what was in ther house with her!"

A shade of pallor came over the face of Young Wild West as he heard this.

But he remained remarkably cool.

"Boys," said he, "it has been a put-up job all around. Señor Ramones is at the bottom of this."

No one made a reply just then, because they did not know just what to say.

They all urged their horses forward and soon reached the house.

Mrs. Farrel was lying on a couch in the house in a very nervous state.

Her husband succeeded in calming her a little, and then they got the story of the kidnapping from her.

"Did you recognize any of the men?" Wild asked her.

"No!" she replied. "It happened so suddenly that I did not have time to look at them, any more than I saw that they were men—greasers, I guess, fur I did see some of their faces."

"How many of them were there?"

"I don't know. There seemed to be a whole lot."

"Boys," said Wild, turning to his two partners, "we must find the girls!"

"I reckon we had better git right at it," retorted Cheyenne Charlie.

"Let us hunt for their trail," suggested Jim, who, though a trifle nervous, kept all his wits about him.

"I'll help you fellers!" exclaimed Cayuse Kitty. "Young Wild West an' me had such good luck in findin' Dave an' savin' him that I reckon we're goin' to be ther ones to find an' save ther young ladies."

"An' I'm goin' along!" spoke up the big broncho buster.

"Of course you are! We want a dozen to go along with us, but me an' Young Wild West is goin' to do ther head-work, that's what I mean."

"Sartin, Kitty," was the reply. "You've got a level head, if any gal ever did have one."

Wild suddenly thought of the two prisoners they had brought with them to the ranch.

He went out of the house and found the broncho busters anxiously waiting to be told what to do.

But the two prisoners had vanished, horses and all!

In the excitement caused by the disappearance of the girls the men had forgotten all about the two men they had brought with them from the gulch.

They had gathered as close to the door of the house as they could get, leaving the villains tied on the horses, as they had been since they started back from the gulch.

And when Young Wild West came out and asked where the two men were they looked around in astonishment.

"They was right over there, not a hundred feet from here," said one. "We left 'em with our horses."

The broncho busters had all dismounted and had left their horses standing.

Some of the animals had walked off and some were still there.

But the two bronchos the villains had been tied to were among the missing!

"Git a hustle on you, boys. Find ther sneakin' greasers!" cried Cayuse Kitty.

It was astonishing to see how quickly the men got a move on.

Some of them mounted and others ran toward the buildings that belonged to the ranch, thinking the horses had walked over there.

Suddenly a shout went up from a couple of the broncho busters.

They pointed over to the road that led to the north and then Wild and his companions caught a fleeting glimpse of two horsemen riding with great speed.

"Them's ther measly coyotes!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "They must have got loose somehow or other, for their hands ain't tied behind 'em now. Wild, I reckon if we kin catch 'em we'll find out somethin' that will help us git ther gals."

Our hero gave a nod.

Then he mounted his sorrel and rode off with Cayuse Kitty at his side.

The rest followed as fast as they could mount.

As Mrs. Farrel was in such a nervous state, the ranchman was advised to stay there with her.

There were enough without him to tackle the villainous gang that had kidnapped the girls in such a daring manner.

The escaping men had easily a mile start on them.

It was quite easy to understand how they had managed to get away when we state that the scoundrel called Mark had not been tied as tightly as he should have been by the broncho busters in their hurry.

He had found that he could loosen the bonds about his wrists shortly after they started from the gulch.

But he was crafty enough not to let on about it.

Another thing the men overlooked was the knife he had in a sheath that was fastened to his belt.

They had taken his revolvers, but the knife they had left there.

The instant the broncho busters left them and moved up close to the house in their eagerness to learn what had happened, Mark slipped his hands from the bonds and got his knife.

Then he reached over and cut his companion free.

As the horses of the men were moving toward the barn it was quite easy for them to let theirs go that way, too.

Then, as soon as they got one of the buildings between them and the ranch-house, they made off across a field for the road that led to the Mexican's ranch.

The villains felt that they were riding for their lives, and they certainly put their steeds to their level best.

When they found that they were a mile away before pursuit was given they felt quite easy.

But twenty miles is a long run for even a couple of tough bronchos that were pretty tired when Farrel's Ranch was reached.

While the little beasts are capable of keeping it up all day long, they have got to have an occasional rest.

Young Wild West could easily overtake them before the twenty miles was covered, for his handsome sorrel was almost tireless.

But Wild did not know where the two men were heading for.

He thought they would take to the foothills and try to throw them off the trail.

That made him anxious to overtake them as soon as possible.

As the broncho Wild had tamed had run away, Dave Rattler had been compelled to get another horse.

That put him somewhat behind his sweetheart and our hero.

But he soon overtook the rest of the broncho busters, who were riding hard to catch the two leaders, but not gaining an inch.

The road was such a crooked one that Wild could not get sight of the two escaping men, so it was simply a case of following the trail and trusting to luck, in a great measure.

When five miles were covered nothing had been seen of the villains.

Young Wild West began to grow uneasy.

But he still was of the opinion that they had done right in following the escaping men.

He was firmly of the opinion that they knew something about the kidnapping of the girls.

They rode on for another five miles, Wild and Cayuse Kitty now over a mile in the lead.

The broncho the girl rode was holding out wonderfully.

The sun was getting low in the west now, and our hero was more anxious than ever.

A minute or two later they reached a straight piece of road. Then they suddenly caught sight of the fleeing villains less than a half mile ahead.

A thrill of joy shot through the frame of Young Wild West.

"Come on!" he cried to his fair companion. "We will make a spurt."

He urged Spitfire forward at a faster gait, and in spite of the fact that the girl's broncho did its level best to keep up with him, the sorrel was too much for it.

"Go on!" said the girl. "I will git there as quickly as I kin."

Their horses were so tired that it was with difficulty that they kept on their feet.

Our hero knew it was but the question of a very few minutes now.

He thought it would be a good idea to send a bullet whistling over their heads, so he brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

The men did not offer to put up a fight, but remained standing in the middle of the road when Wild dashed up. "We'll surrender!" called out one of them. "It ain't no use fur us to fight ag'in you, an' we know it."

"That's right!" exclaimed the other. "We'll do anything you say if you'll let us go."

"You are talking rather sensible, I must say," answered Wild, as Cayuse Kitty rode up and halted near the two men. "In the first place, just tell us how you got away."

Mark promptly did so.

"I guess you are telling the truth," observed Wild. "Now, I want to ask you something else, and if you fail to answer truthfully I'll have you shot."

"We'll tell you ther truth, if you'll only let us go afterwards," retorted Joe.

"Well, then, why did you catch Dave Rattler and take him to the gulch to torture him?"

The two looked at each other hesitatingly.

Then Mark answered:

"We was hired to do it."

"Ah! Who hired you to do it?"

"Our boss?"

"Who is your boss?"

"Senor Ramones."

"Is that so? Well, what did he want Dave Rattler taken to the gulch and killed for?"

"So's ther rest of you would start out an' look fur him."

"And what then?"

"Oh, we might as well tell you all, I reckon. Senor Ramones wanted to git ther young ladies to his house, an' he wanted to git you, so he could torture you to death. There! you know ther whole thing now! I'm awful sorry I ever had anything to do with it, I am."

"An' so am I!" declared the other. "Won't you let us go now?"

"How far is your ranch from here?" Wild asked, without noticing the man's pica.

"Eight or nine miles, I reckon. We was tryin' to git there ahead of you, 'cause we thought we might stand a show if we once got inside of ther Mexican's house. But it's all up now, an' if you'll only promise not to have us hung or shot, we'll be glad to help you all we kin. Did the senor git ther gals?"

"You heard what ther man told us when we turned down ther lane fur ther house, didn't you, you sneakin' scoundrel?" spoke up Cayuse Kitty, with flashing eyes. "You don't want to be hanged or shot, hey? Well, I don't know of any two fellers livin' who needs to dance on air any more than you two do!"

"Don't talk that way, miss!" pleaded Joe. "Men kin reform, can't they?"

"Sometimes, but not very often."

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart put in appearance at that juncture, and then came the rest of the party.

Wild quickly told them what he had learned from the two villains.

"Then ther Mexican has got ther gals at his ranch?" remarked Cheyenne Charlie.

"I suppose that must be so," answered our hero.

"Well, I reckon we'd better git there as soon as we kin, then."

"That's right!" exclaimed Jim Dart.

"Well, you fellows just put these men on their bronchos again and fetch them along as fast as you can. Don't hurt them, and see to it that they don't get away this time," said Wild, as he started along the road with Cayuse Kitty at his side.

CHAPTER XI.

CAYUSE KITTY'S IDEA AND HOW IT WORKED.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart followed Young Wild West and the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters, and soon the four were well in the lead of the rest.

They were now a great deal more hopeful than they were when they started out from the ranch.

"I reckon we'll git there by dark," remarked the scout, as he looked at the sun, which was now pretty close to the horizon.

"I reckon so," answered Cayuse Kitty. "But it gits dark putty quick when ther sun once gits under."

"Well, if that soundel of a Mexican has not harmed the girls it won't matter," said Jim Dart.

They rode along at a good gait, and the miles were soon covered.

Just as twilight set in they came in sight of the buildings which Cayuse Kitty said belonged to the sheep ranch.

"That's ther place that ther sneakin' greaser is s'posed to have bought," she said. "Now, what are you goin' to do first, Young Wild West?"

"I haven't exactly made up my mind," replied the hero. "But I suppose it would be better to try and find out something about the place before we advance upon the house."

"We want to use a little strategy, I reckon," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

Wild nodded in the affirmative.

When they were about a quarter of a mile from the house they halted at the roadside and sat in the saddle with a clump of trees between them and the house.

They had not been here more than two minutes when they heard the sounds made by horses' hoofs off to the right.

They looked through the gathering darkness and saw two horsemen riding across the field straight for the ranch-house.

One of them had a heavy object on the horse with him, and when our hero saw it he gave a nod of satisfaction.

"They belong to the gang," he said. "They have got the fellow I was compelled to shoot in the gulch. They have brought him in to bury him, I suppose."

"It's a carcass, sure's your horn!" declared the scout.

They watched the two men and saw them ride right up to the door of the house.

But it was so dark now that they could not see what they did after that.

The four remained where they were until they heard the broncho busters approaching.

Then Cayuse Kitty turned to Young Wild West and said:

"I've got a brilliant idea, I think."

"What is it, Miss Farrel?"

"Botheration with Miss Farrel! I've got tired of hearin' you call me that. Call me Kitty, or Kit."

"Do you think you could make them two fellers we've got prisoners do what we want 'em to do?"

"Pretty near to it, I should say."

Wild looked at the girl interestedly.

He wondered what she was driving at.

"Well, s'pose you make 'em take you an' me right to ther house an' make out that they've got us prisoners? Then ther rest of ther crew kin be all around ther house an' when you give ther word, they kin rush in an' take ther Mexican an' his gang by surprise. I think it would be jest awful good to make him think that he'd get things his own way, an' then make a fool out of him. By enterin' we can reach the girls easier."

"I think so, too," spoke up Jim Dart.

"Jest ther thing!" chimed in Cheyenne Charlie.

Wild thought a moment.

"I guess that can be arranged all right. Well, here come our friends. We may as well let Dave Rattler figure as a prisoner, too."

"That's right!" exclaimed the girl, showing the pleasure she felt at having her lover take part in the scheme.

When the broncho busters had come to a halt our hero promptly told them of the plan suggested by Cayuse Kitty.

Such admirers of the girl were they that they would have agreed to any proposition she made.

The villains, Joe and Mark, appeared to be rather nervous when they heard the plan.

It looked to them as though they were going to get the worst of the bargain.

But Young Wild West soon eased their minds.

"See here, you two rascals," he said. "Now, if you do just as you are told and carry out your part well, I will see to it that you have your liberty and are given a chance to strike out for some other place as soon as the young ladies are found. If you try to play us false you will both die in your tracks! Do you understand what I say?"

"Yes!" they answered in a breath.

"Well, are you willing to do it, then?"

"Yes."

"Come on, then!"

Dave Rattler cut the bonds of the prisoners and they got down off their horses.

Then Wild turned to the broncho busters and said:

You fellows will please make it a point to get right up to that house without being seen by anyone in it. Start right out now. Ride over behind the clump of trees over there, and then go the balance of the way on foot. When you get there the rest of us will ride over."

The men seemed glad to go, and in a few minutes they reached the clump of trees and dismounted.

Then, one at a time, they crept up alongside the house and lay in wait.

Five minutes later five horses made their way slowly toward the house.

On their backs were Young Wild West, Cayuse Kitty, Dave Rattler and the two men who had agreed to make out that they had brought them in as prisoners.

The hands of the three were behind their backs, apparently tied, but each had a revolver handy.

That they were heard approaching from the inside of the house was evident, for just as they came to a door it opened and the half-bred hag thrust her head out.

"Who there?" she demanded.

"It's us!" answered Joe. "Tell ther captain that we've got them he sent us after."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the door was flung wide open and Senor Ramones sprang out.

"What's that I heard you say, Joe?" he cried. "Who have you got?"

"Young Wild West, Cayuse Kitty an' ther big broncho buster they call Dave Rattler," replied Joe, carrying out his part to perfection.

The villainous Mexican could scarcely believe his senses.

"How did you manage to get them?" he queried, rubbing his hands and stepping up so he could see the supposed captives.

"I'll tell you all about it as soon as we git 'em inside," was the reply. "We had quite a time of it an' poor Pete went under from a bullet fired by Young Wild West."

"That's too bad. But Young Wild West will suffer to pay for it, never fear! I will fix it so he will die a death of agony. Are they tied good and tight?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Sht up, you sneakin' greaser!" cried Cayuse Kitty. "Unable to hold her tongue any longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Mexican. "So the pretty Girl Queen still persists in calling me names, does she? Well, she will be sorry for it later on. Can you get them off the horses alone, senors?"

"Oh, yes!" and then the three were on the ground before the villain really saw how it was accomplished so quickly.

"Take 'em right inside!" exclaimed the senor. "The girl goes in with the others. I will attend to her. The men you can take in the little dark room on the left-hand side of the hall."

"All right, boss," answered Joe, and then they all walked in, Wild and Dave Rattler acting as though they were reluctant and Cayuse Kitty with a step that was quite sprightly for one supposed to be going to a prison.

"Be careful what you do, now," whispered Wild into the ear of Joe. "If you show the least sign of treachery you will be the first one to die!"

"Don't you worry," was the reply. "I know which side is ther best to be on."

It was quite dark in the hallway of the house, the only light coming through an open door on their right.

As they passed this Wild saw half a dozen ugly faces peering at them.

The Mexican took Cayuse Kitty by the arm, and as he did so our hero gird to her:

"Keep up a good heart. If you see the rest of the girls tell them not to worry, for I am not dead yet. Everything will turn out all right yet!"

"You are not dead yet," sneered the senor. "But if you only new what is coming to you you might well wish you were."

"I have been in much tighter places than this, Senor Ramones, and I have always got out of them, too."

"This is going to be the exception, Young Wild West."

"Wait and see."

"I will wait. I have always been known for my patience. This is why I do not shoot you dead right now. I hate you, but my revenge will be all the sweeter for waiting."

Wild said no more.

He thought that would do for the present, as he did not want to enrage the scoundrel and thus start the ball rolling too soon.

Ramones pushed Cayuse Kitty through a doorway, after he had unlocked the door, with the remark:

"The ladies inside will untie you, I guess."

Then Wild and Dave Rattler were conducted along the hall till the small, dark room the Mexican had spoken of was reached.

Joe opened the door, and then all four of them made a scuffling noise and the door was slammed and locked.

But no one went inside!

Leaving Wild and his companion crouching in the hall close to the wall, the two men walked toward the front door.

"They are all right, boss," Mark said. "We put 'em in there an' locked ther door. I reckon they don't stand ther least chance of gettin' out, 'cause their hands are tied."

"Good! Now tell me how you managed it."

"Well, you see, it was this way: Young Wild West an' Cayuse Kitty come along in time to catch me an' Pete the hangin' broncho buster," said Mark. "Joe was with 'em, an' he couldn't git away from 'em in time. Young Wild West shot poor Pete, an' then Joe turned on him an' knocked him down with ther butt of his revolver. Then I catched ther girl afore she knew what was ther matter, an', as Dave Rattler were already tied, it was quite easy. Then we had to git somewhere an' hide, 'cause a whole gang was comin'. We had to keep in hidin' fur a long time, an' that's why we jes' got here."

"Good! You shall each receive another hundred dollars apiece. You have done nobly, senors."

"I guess we'd better go out an' put our horses away now," suggested Joe.

"Yes, an' we'll take ther horses of ther ones we brought here an' put 'em in ther stable along with ours," spoke up Mark.

"No!" said the Mexican. "That won't do! You must take their horses and send them along the road in the direction of the town. It may be that some of the people from Farrel's Ranch might come here, you know. Be sure and send the horses away."

"All right, then. You know best."

The two men who had turned traitors on their villainous boss breathed easier when they got outside the house.

They were the sort of men who would have gone back on their word if they thought they had a chance of gaining anything by it.

But they could not see it that they had just then, for the broncho busters outside outnumbered the villains in the house, and a pitched battle could only result one way.

As the two men went out, Senor Ramones went into the room where his men were.

He rubbed his hands and looked very much elated as he faced them.

He congratulated them, speaking in the Mexican tongue, and then produced a demijohn of liquor and treated them. "We will drink to the death of Young Wild West," he said. "I have gained my point, and I have only lost one man in doing it. I am sorry for that part of it, but it can't be helped."

One of the greasers, who was particularly cruel and brutal, asked him how he was going to put an end to Young Wild West, meaning the manner that his death would take place in.

"I shall have him hanged by his ankles to the ceiling, and then I will call on you all to throw knives at him until he no longer breathes," was the reply. "Then I will be satisfied, and not till then."

"How shall we men with him?" was asked.

"He shall die, but he need not be tortured so, unless you men have the mind."

"And the girls?"

"I will let you know about that part of the programme later."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Senor Ramones had scarcely entered the room where the greasers were when Wild and the broncho buster tiptoed their way to the door of the room Cayuse Kitty had been placed in. Wild found the key was in the lock, and he quickly turned it and entered.

Arietta gave a muffled shriek of joy when she saw him and threw herself in his arms.

"It is all right, little one," he said. "Cayuse Kitty suggested this part of the programme, and I, for one, am enjoying it."

"An' maybe I ain't!" exclaimed the Girl Queen of the Broncho Busters. "This is what I call great! Won't that sneakin' greaser feel astonished by an' by! Well, I jest guess!"

The faces of both Anna and Eloise were radiant with hope, for Kitty had told them all about it the minute she came in the room.

To carry out the deception, Wild and Dave talked in very low tones to the ladies.

When they had been there about ten minutes they suddenly heard someone approaching the door from the hall.

There happened to be some barrels in a corner of the room, and, catching his companion by the arm, our hero dragged him behind them with him.

They were not an instant too soon, either, for the door opened and in came Señor Ramones.

"Good evening, my beauties!" he exclaimed, smiling and rubbing his hands. "If you had only known that I neglected to lock the door a few minutes ago you might have all got out and given me a lot of trouble. I am glad you did not know it, I assure you."

Cayuse Kitty burst into a laugh and Arietta joined in, much to the señor's surprise.

"You seem to be in a very jolly mood," he said.

"When are you goin' to marry ther one what's lucky enough to git you, Mr. Greaser?" asked Kitty.

"Some time to-morrow, I presume," was the reply. "You see, after what has happened, I will have to leave here and let my ranch and everything else go. I never thought about that when I started in to do what I have done. But now I can easily see that I would be sure to get into trouble if I remained here."

"Oh!" and the reckless ranch girl looked disappointed. "I thought maybe you was goin' to marry one of us to-night."

Señor Ramones scratched his head in a puzzled way.

"I haven't made up my mind as to that," replied the scoundrel.

"Well, come! I'm anxious to know which of us you're goin' to take," spoke up Cayuse Kitty, impatiently.

"Suppose I kiss you both first?" suggested the Mexican, wondering if he was really awake or whether it was all only a dream.

"That will be a good way," said Anna.

"Suppose you shut your eyes while we change places, and then, after you turn around twice, open your eyes and kiss the first one you see?" suggested Arietta.

"That's it!" cried the Girl Queen. "I'll take my chances on that!"

"Very well," said the señor, with a smile.

Then he closed his eyes and turned around twice.

While he was doing this the two girls pulled out their revolvers and stepped close to him.

When the scoundrel opened his eyes he found the muzzles of both weapons right under his nose!

The surprised señor uttered a frightful invective in his own language and made a move to retreat.

"His pleasant dream was o'er!"

"Be careful," he said. "If you kill me you will lose all chance of ever seeing Young Wild West or Dave Rattler alive again!"

"I don't know about that!" exclaimed Wild, rising from behind the barrels and stepping into view.

"So I should reckon," added the broncho buster, also stepping out.

The Mexican's face turned livid.

"I guess you have got about to the end of your rope," said Young Wild West. "Señor, you are what I call a poor, miserable scoundrel, who has forgotten that there are others in the world beside yourself. You planned well, but just when you thought your success had come you find yourself at the bottom again—a black-hearted scoundrel, who will die inside of twenty-four hours with a rope about your neck!"

"Never!" shrieked the man, lifting both his hands and knocking the revolvers of the two girls away from his face.

Then he seized Arietta about the waist, and, holding her before him to shield himself, reached the door.

How he ever opened it so quickly even Wild could not tell, but he did it, and, dropping the girl, ran out into the hall like a flash.

Wild and Dave started after him, but the noise of the footstep in the hall brought the greasers out to see what it all meant.

The light from the open door fell full upon them, and, recognizing them to be the prisoners, one of the men fired at them.

Luckily the shot went over their heads, and, then they drew back and opened fire on the villains.

Two seconds later a volley was fired through the window from the broncho busters outside.

The men from Farrel's Ranch were very much angered at what had happened, and they took care not to miss when they fired.

Wild rushed outside to get his horse and try to catch the Mexican.

But, much to his dismay, he found the sorrel was not there!

Then it flashed upon him what had happened.

Señor Ramones had taken the first steed he had come to, and that one had chance to be Spitfire.

But Young Wild West did not lose his presence of mind, for all that.

He was upon the back of Cheyenne Charlie's horse in a twinkling.

"I am going to catch him, boys!" he called out.

"An' I'm goin' to be in at ther death, if I kin, Young Wild West!" shouted Cayuse Kitty.

The girl was on the back of her broncho and off before the rest had made a move to do anything.

Dave Rattler alone started to follow Wild and the girl.

"He wants to be on hand to make sure that his gal don't git hurt, I reckon," the scout said, as he embraced his wife. "Well, s'pose we take a look around here an' see if there's any more measly coyotes in the house!"

This plan was acted upon, and all they found was the old hag.

They learned from her that there were more men around somewhere, but just where she did not know.

"We'll let it go at that, then," the scout declared. "I wonder where ther two fellers are that helped us out in this thing to-night?"

A diligent search was made for Joe and Mark, but they could not be found.

The two rascals had taken French leave, evidently thinking it was the best thing they could do.

Ten minutes later all hands mounted, including Arietta, Anna and Eloise—for horses were found to accommodate them—and then they started on the trail of Young Wild West and Cayuse Kitty.

They had not covered more than a mile when they heard the sound of hoofs.

"Here they come!" cried Charlie. "I reckon it's all over, boys!"

The next minute four horses came in view.

One of them was without a rider.

"Young Wild West caught him putty quick!" cried Cayuse Kitty, dashing up and swinging around. "I was just in time to see the sneaking greaser go under. He died sorter game, too."

"Whoopie!" shouted Dave Rattler. "What do you think, ladies an' gentlemen? Kitty has promised not to wait a year to become the wife of ther boss broncho buster of Arizona—barrin' Young Wild West, of course—an' she says ther weddin' kin take place this week, if ther old man an' her mother are willin'. Whewee! She don't care if Young Wild West did beat me! An' I don't care either! I'm ther happiest man what ever straddled a broncho!"

Then the big fellows fell over and broke into a cheer, which Young Wild West and his friends joined in.

It was rather a jolly ride back to Farrel's Ranch, and when the old folks learned what had happened, and the arrangements Dave and Kitty had made, they promptly gave in.

Young Wild West and his friends remained long enough at Farrel's Ranch to see Dave Rattler and Cayuse Kitty happily married, and when they left the place they were united in declaring that they had experienced a very good time while among the broncho busters.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S STEADY HAND; OR, THE SHOT THAT MADE A MILLION."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE

CURRENT NEWS

Charles Snyder went fishing near Columbus, Ind., and was sitting on the river bank watching the line when he felt something tickling his legs. He paid no attention to it for a little while and then remarked about the tickling sensation to his wife, who was near. Finally he decided to move and when he did so he saw a snake about five feet long that had crawled under his legs and coiled up there, evidently preparatory to taking a nap.

More than 1,000 rats are being used in the Agricultural Chemistry Department of the University of Wisconsin in an effort on the part of Prof. E. V. McCollum to discover the ideal food that will make people live the most efficient lives and grow at the best practical rate. Although the experiments are being made upon rats, the results are known to be the same as if they were made upon human beings. Professor McCollum has already been at work for seven years on this problem.

A noise at her bedroom window early in the morning aroused Mrs. William Lustig, of Aurora, Ill., recently. As she looked timorously in the direction of the window she saw a negro crawling into the room. She screamed and fled clad only in her night-gown. Her husband jumped out of bed when he heard his wife's shriek. He bumped into the negro and was so frightened that he, too, ran out of the house. In their panic Lustig and his wife forgot their one-year-old baby daughter, who slept in a cradle. Of a sudden Mrs. Lustig heard the baby cry. Policemen who were summoned found the negro seated in a chair rocking the baby.

Isaiah Axe, of Boise, Idaho, is the owner of a relic of unusual interest to all who have seen it. It is a laurelwood pipe that Mr. Axe, then a Union soldier serving in an Indiana regiment, picked up on the battlefield at Culpepper in 1862. It is hand carved with a silver mounting. Around the upper edge of the bowl is engraved "Yorktown, '76." Below is the American eagle with the banner on its breast, and under the curve of the pipe a skull and cross bones. Mr. Axe has had engraved "1862" in the banner to denote the year he found it. If the pipe was carved as denoted by the original inscription, it is 140 years old.

Meerschaum, out of which pipes, cigars and cigarette holders are cut, is a mineral found in irregularly rounded lumps scattered through drift material washed down from mountains. The largest deposit of it is in the plains of Eskishehr, Asia Minor. The *Scientific American* says it is a hydrous silicate

of magnesia. Meerschaum is prized for the rich brown color it takes after being smoked a while. This color is caused by the mixture of the nicotine (or oil of tobacco?) from the tobacco with the wax used in polishing the pipe, permeating through the material. The color deepens as long as there is wax in the meerschaum. When a pipe has become dark enough it is customary to fix the color by "boiling." This is a secret process, the general principle of which is removal of the wax and boiling in linseed oil.

The city of Nice, France, has a remarkably simple and effective automatic public telephone service, which has been in use for two years and a half and has now 3,000 subscribers. The subscriber wanted is called up by the sender of the message without the intervention of any person at a central office. This is done by means of a small circular disc with numbered holes around its circumference attached to the front of the ordinary telephone box. The sender who wishes to ring up, say, No. 2547, on taking down his receiver is automatically connected to a selector at the central office. On inserting his finger in the hole numbered 2 of his disc, and rotating it to the stop at zero, two short currents are sent out, which move the arm of the selector to the second group of a thousand subscribers. A repetition of the rotation with the finger in the hole 5 moves the arm of a second selected to the fifth hundred, and so on until the actual subscriber is reached. When the receiver is hung up the sender's connection is broken.

"Wars of the future will be won by the industrial forces back of the armies and navies," declared Howard E. Coffin, of the Naval Consulting Board, in the course of a speech delivered in New York City on May 23. "The fundamental principle of industrial preparedness," he said, "is to bring the industries into play without delay in an emergency." As an instance of industrial unpreparedness the speaker cited England, where, he declared, "there are millions of men who are drilling with dummy guns, not one man in ten of the reserve force have an up-to-date rifle, because American manufacturers are behind in supplying orders." Machine guns alone, he said, could not be made in less than a year from the date of order, and in order to manufacture 60,000 machine guns, such as those of which Germany had 50,000 at the beginning of the war, not less than five years would be required, according to the present facilities. Legislation is now being introduced, he said, to put into practice the lessons being learned from the data collected by the Naval Consulting Board.

Two Boys From Toughtown

OR

BOUND TO WORK THEIR CLAIM

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XI (continued.)

"I don't hold you responsible for the doings of your father. As for yourself, I've no doubt you had some good reason for leaving us the way you did, just as you wrote in your letter; and I believe truthfully in you, Hallie, to feel sure that you have good reason for coming suddenly upon me this way to-night."

"That's well said," replied the girl. "I knew you would take it so, or I never should have come. Can you guess why I came?"

"To warn us?"

"To post you. To let you know your danger. You saved my life, Tom Graniss. Not only will I never forgot it, but nothing will induce me to stand by and see you wronged."

Tom was much moved.

How beautiful Hallie looked standing there in the moonlight!

As he gazed at her, Tom did not wonder that Joe felt deeply interested in the girl.

"Speak right out and let me know the worst," he said. "You will find that I shan't forget any help you may give me."

"Oh, I'm not doing it for myself," said Hallie, "but because it is right to do it, and it ought to be done. You see those lights down there on your claim? You were watching them, I think."

"Yes, I see them. Who are those people?"

"Bill Bannister, Scheister, the lawyer, and others; the same bunch you and Joe turned down this morning."

"And what are they doing?"

"Trying to find out what you have been doing."

"Yes, yes! Your father is with them?"

"He is not. He is here on this mountain, within a hundred yards of where we are standing now."

"Hallie!"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid. He's dead drunk and sound asleep. Nixy, the Navajo, who was with him has gone down to the camp to report you here to those below."

"Then we have been watched?"

"Yes, ever since you left the ravine. Father, Nixy—that's the Indian you saw prowling about the camp—have been right on your trail ever since you left the camp. I was with them. I wonder you didn't see us. You are a splendid fellow to defend yourself in a fight, Tom Graniss, but you want to sharpen up your wits a bit or you will never be able to work your claim."

"It would seem that you were dead right, Hallie; but sit down here and tell me all about it."

"No; I'll stand here. I must get right back. Now listen. The secret of all this is, that Bill Bannister and my father, who, of course, you understand by this time, are working together, have reason to believe that somewhere in the valley below us an old Jesuit mine is located."

"Ah!"

"You have heard of this?"

"Go on, Hallie."

"I see you don't trust me; but never mind. I shall trust you, just the same. Father went away for reasons of his own, which even I don't understand, leaving me to play the spy on you, which I declined to do. By another road further down the creek he cut through the mountains to Big Boom City and reported to Bannister that you had taken hold. What Bill did then was to get an order from a judge to stop you from working the Lucky Strike, but they meant to hold it back until they see if you really know the secret, and can find the location of the Jesuit mine."

"I see, Hallie, this is serious. I am greatly obliged."

"Wait a minute and you will be obliged for more. May as well make one job of it, you know. What you did yesterday, they don't know. I deserted so that I could not watch you, and I have had to take my punishment for it and expect more. What you did to-day is all known. Colonel Jones is one of the fellows down there. They are trying to find out what you have been doing. Scheister went back to Big Boom City and got another injunction. They meant to serve it on you to-morrow night, if they could get near enough, and this time my father was intrusted with the job. Here's the paper, Tom. I took it from his pocket while he slept. No, don't touch it, then you will not have been served. I am going to destroy it, as I did the other, unless you object."

"Object! Hallie, you have proved yourself a true friend."

"I want to be. Shall I tear it up, Tom?"

"Do it, and tell me what I had better do. I do trust you. I am willing to tell you—"

"Tell me nothing, Tom!" cried the girl, as she tore the paper into little bits and scattered the pieces around among the rocks; "but I'll tell you what to do. Get out of this at once, now, to-night. See Judge Jaggers, down at Big Boom. He can be bought. Buy him. Get your own injunction, come up and serve it, and mind you, come with men enough to make it possible to hold your own, if you ever expect to work your claim in peace."

CHAPTER XII

TURNING HORSE-THIEVES.

"But, Hallie, how are we going to get out of here without running up against those fellows?" asked Tom, in reply to the girl's earnestly put question. "We can't return to the mine to-night. We have no horses, and it would take us three days to walk down to Big Boom. I don't see how it is to be done."

"And that is because you don't know the mountains the way I do," replied Hallie. "Father worked a claim up here in the Ravadillas for several years, and so it happens that I know this region well. I will guide you down into the canyon by a way you know nothing about. There you will find Bill Bannister and two others in camp. They brought up three spare horses besides the ones you killed, and they are probably there now. You'll have to turn horse-thief, Tom."

"I can do that, but it may mean another fight."

"Are you afraid of a fight?"

"Hallie, you know I am not."

"Certainly I do. Well, you need not fear it. You wounded Bill Bannister slightly in the fight in the morning, and when father and I left the camp he was turning down the whisky at a great rate. There is little doubt that he is drunk there now, and the fellows with him are probably in the same condition. It's up to you, Tom."

"But it must be three or four miles, Hallie."

"It isn't half that distance."

"How can we ever hope to find the way in the dark?"

"Any more objections? Tom, we are losing time. This is an important matter for you boys. You don't have to tell me, you do know something about this Jesuit mine business, and that you have made some kind of a discovery. Get a move on, boy! Jump in and win. I'll help you! When you saved my life you made a friend who never forgets."

Now, as a matter of fact, Tom had not the least idea of holding back.

It was more because he was thoroughly enjoying that moonlight talk with Hallie that he prolonged it.

The time for action had now come, and he hurried to the tent, woke up Joe and hastily told him what had occurred.

Hallie was on hand to meet Joe when he came out of the tent, and, cutting short his talk, she urged the boys to make all possible haste.

"I'll get back to where father is and watch out in case he should awake," she said. "When you are all ready one whistle will be enough to bring me down."

They watched her as she descended the rocks on the other side of the ravine and disappeared.

"You are not afraid to trust her, Tom?" Joe asked.

"No, I am not," replied Tom. "I believe that girl is as straight as a string and our friend clear through. But pack 'em up now, boys, and let us get things ready just as soon as we can."

And indeed it was the quickest packing Tom ever did.

When all was finished, they walked out on the ridge, and Tom gave a sharp whistle.

Hallie immediately appeared and came climbing over the rocks to where they stood.

"Father is sound asleep and good for the rest of the night," she said. "That's the way whisky upsets everybody's plans, boys. Look out it never spoils yours."

"How long had your father been playing the spy on us?" asked Joe, as they walked after Hallie along the ridge.

"We got here a very short time after you did," replied Hallie. "We were watching you ever since." "Strange we never tumbled."

"Not at all. When it comes to crooked work like this, my father knows his business. Haven't you got a lantern?"

"Yes," replied Tom. "There's one in the bag, but will it be safe to light it here?"

"In a minute. You see those trees ahead? That's where we shall need it. As soon as we reach that pinon grove we shall be near a place where there is a trail leading right down into the canyon. Very few know of its existence. It's rough enough. I wish we could get along without the light, but we never can there."

And it all turned out just as Hallie said.

Tom lit the lantern as soon as they entered the clump of pinons, and about a hundred yards further on they came to a place where it was possible to descend the cliffs.

Hallie now took the lantern and went ahead.

It was the roughest down-climbing the boys had ever done, and their traps, including the bag of ore specimens, made it all the harder.

At last they came out upon a narrow shelf of rock and, looking down, they perceived below them in a niche in that great wall of rock a tent, with the remains of a fire in front and two horses hobbled near by.

"That's Bill Bannister's camp," said Hallie, "and now, boys, I have done all I can do for you to-night."

"And you have done a lot," said Tom. "How can we ever thank you?"

"By never trying," replied Hallie. "Lose no time. Every moment is precious. Go right ahead."

"One of us better go down and see how the land lies," said Joe. "These traps of ours put us at a terrible disadvantage."

"I'd offer to go for you," said Hallie, "but if I am seen, then I can never help you again."

"I won't have you do it," said Tom. "I think we had better both go together and take our chances. Good-bye, Hallie."

"Good-bye, Tom, and good luck, and the same to you, Joe. I shall stay here and watch. If it comes to a fight, I've got my revolver, and if a shot from above is needed to save the life of either one of you, that shot goes!"

She stood at the edge of the shelf watching as the boys went as noiselessly as possible down the steep descent.

"Make direct for the horses," whispered Tom. "We don't want anything to do with the tent, unless we are forced into it. Here we are!"

Tom dropped his load and began rubbing the nose of the nearest horse, then trying the same trick with the other one.

In this way he soon had them where there was less likelihood of trouble.

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

CAUGHT GOLDEN EAGLE IN TRAP.

D. M. Letson, of Hayward, Wis., has a golden eagle which he caught in a trap on the Brunet River. The big bird had for more than a month been robbing the traps of bait, and the trapper set about to catch the eagle. There are not many golden eagles left in the country, and it is only occasionally that one is seen in Wisconsin. This is one of very few ever caught in a steel trap. With its wings outstretched the bird measured eight feet. The head is covered with a cluster of beautiful golden colored feathers.

FINDER OF MONEY IS KEEPER.

A decision has been rendered by the Common Pleas Court of Stark County, Ohio, that the finder of money is the keeper, providing the loser is never discovered. The decree was made in the case of G. W. Hupp, of Alliance, a former railway checker. About a year ago Hupp found thirteen \$10 bills in a freight car. He gave the money to the company with the understanding that he was to be the keeper if the owner was not found. Recently Hupp brought suit to get the money. The company asked the court to decide who should have the money. Hupp won.

FOREST FIRES OF A YEAR.

The United States Government forest service, in a report just issued, says that 300,000 acres of the national forests were destroyed by fire in the year 1915. The timber loss was 156,000,000 board feet, valued at \$190,000. In addition to this loss, young tree growth of an estimated value of \$160,000 was destroyed.

The fire losses mentioned in this report cover only those which occurred in the national forests and which, of course, represent only a small percentage of the forests of the United States. Moreover, the Government's forested land is guarded and the damage is kept at a minimum. During 1915 the rainfall was materially less than the average of the preceding five years. The damage by fire to the trees, however, was less than the average, a fact which proves that there is an improvement in the fire-control service.

The carelessness of campers caused 18 per cent. of the Government's losses by fire in its national forests last year. Lightning, as always, is the chief cause of forest fires, but next to the lightning the camper is the chief criminal in the case.

NEW YORK STATE HAS 3,000,000 ALIENS.

Of 326,700 immigrants admitted into the United States for the year ended September 30 last 95,028 indicated New York State as their intended resi-

dence. The alien population of the State is estimated at 3,000,000 persons.

These aliens are under the supervision of the bureau of industries and immigration of the State Industrial Commission, and Mrs. Marian K. Clark, its chief investigator, has just made her annual report. Mrs. Clark and her nine assistants altogether speak eighteen languages. During the year they have investigated 7,528 individual cases of aliens, 2,537 of which involved violation of the law.

In view of the rapid increase in the number of alien insane and criminal State dependents the bureau recommends that steps be taken to effect an arrangement whereby the Federal Government shall reimburse the State for its expenditures to maintain such dependents, as the Federal authorities have exclusive jurisdiction over the admission of immigrants.

Recommendation is also made that a clearing house be established on each steamship pier in New York City to have full jurisdiction over all immigrants booked for New York State points.

BOY RETURNS \$100.

If Diogenes should happen to call on William Bellom, a fifteen-year-old messenger boy, employed by the Packard Motor Company, he could put out his lantern. His quest for an honest man would be over.

The other day William found a \$100 bill on the sidewalk in front of the Corn Exchange Bank, Fifty-seventh street and Eighth avenue, New York. The lad carried it home to his mother, at No. 431 Pleasant avenue.

Mrs. Bellom was in desperate financial straits and in deep sorrow too. Two of her eight children had been sent to the Harlem Hospital with typhoid-pneumonia.

"Go right now and take the money to Miss Mary Wadley, at Bellevue Hospital," Mrs. Bellom urged, when the boy told his story.

Miss Wadley, who is in charge of the Social Service Bureau of Bellevue, has known the Bellom family for years. Several of the eight children have been treated from time to time at the clinic. Miss Wadley was very busy when William reached the hospital with the \$100 bill, and told him to return Monday.

William went a second time to the hospital and gave Miss Wadley the money, telling his story. Miss Wadley telephoned to the Corn Exchange Bank and asked if any of the depositors had lost money. The cashier said T. H. Duffy, manager of the Silver Motor Company, had dropped a \$100 bill.

William then returned the money to Mr. Duffy and received a reward of \$10. He gave all but one dollar to his mother.

TAKING HIS CHANCES

OR

THE BOY WHO GOT ON

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XVIII. (continued.)

"Well, if the bottom happens to fall out of this boom, and the town gets on its uppers, and your town lots and such ain't worth shucks, you'll think of us, I suppose?"

"Certainly," laughed Jack. "But the boom isn't going to burst. Do you see this street? Good half a mile long, isn't it? Well, three weeks ago Bob went through it with a lantern, and had to dodge rocks and underbrush and all sorts of things."

"Well, if I get up a benefit for myself on Sunday night, and offer extra attractions, would you do your disappearing turn?"

"I'll think about it," laughed Jack; "but I've done so many disappearing acts lately that Bob might not like it. If you need help to carry you out of town, however, I'll volunteer at your benefit."

"Huh! and me making money hand over fist," laughed the showman. "That's one on me for saying that the bottom of your boom might fall out, I suppose?"

"Well, if you ever really need me I'll help you out," said Jack.

Bob had not heard from the Greenville bank, and he began to think that he never would, and that the directors did not think his letter of sufficient importance to answer, and in the course of a fortnight he had very nearly forgotten it himself.

One day, however, when he and Jack were passing the post-office, Hi Peters, who was now a greater magnate than ever, came out and said:

"Say, Mr. Bob, what do I do when folks don't come for their letters? I've got a stack of 'em here, an' I dunno what to do with 'em."

"Make out a list of unclaimed letters and hang it up in the office. People who see their names on it will then call for the letters."

"Waal, that's 'bout what they do now. Folks I know I just let 'em run over the pile and take what belongs to 'em. But for all that I've got a stack of 'em, an' I don't know what to do with 'em."

"Sort them out and return those with the senders' addresses on them if they have been in the office more than the requisite time allowed. If they have no other address, and the parties don't ask for them, send them to Washington to the dead letter office."

"Huh! that's a lot of red tape. Here, suppose you look 'em over, and see what wants ter go back and what don't."

Bob and Jack went into the post-office behind the stamp window, and Hi gave the former a pile of letters to look over.

The boy laid aside several which had the sender's

address on them, and had been in the office at least a week, threw out a number that were purely only advertising matter, and put out several with blind addresses, presently coming to one addressed to himself and having the name of the Greenville bank on the envelope.

"Why, Hi, here is one for me that has been here nearly two weeks," he exclaimed. "Why didn't you give it to me. Is that the way you run the post office?"

"One for you, Mr. Bob? That's funny."

"I should say it was. I should have had this letter two weeks ago."

"I'm durned if I c'n understand it. Has it been here all that time?"

"Certainly it has. Here's the Greenville postmark and here's your stamp showing when it was received, and that's nearly two weeks ago. I've asked for letters in that time, and you've always said there were none."

"Waal, I'm durned. Let's see it, Mr. Bob. I can't make it out at all."

Bob handed the letter to Hi, who looked at it steadily for some moments, and then said:

"That there letter ain't never for you, Mr. Bob."

"What's the reason it isn't?" the boy asked. "There's my name, Mr. Robert S. Little, written on it as plain as anything. Of course, it's for me. Who else would get it if I didn't?"

"But, gosh, Mr. Bob, this here is fur Robert Little, and that ain't you at all."

"I always thought it was," laughed Bob. "I've been known as Robert Little as long as I can remember anything. Bob is just the short of it, that's all."

"Then this here letter belongs to you all right?"

"To be sure it does," and Bob took it, cut open the envelope, and drew out a half sheet of note paper.

The reply of the cashier was brief, but to the point.

The numbers of the stolen notes, inclusive, were given, and in the series was the note which Bob had seen Arthur Warburton put on the roulette table.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GRAVE ACCUSATION.

The Rocky Mountain Sporting Parlor, in Guzler's Gulch, was bright with lights and noisy with voices of the many players at its tables.

Lamps were placed all around the walls and suspended from the ceiling, stands holding a dozen candles each were placed on the tables, and numerous mirrors reflected these lights.

Vases of artificial flowers, flags of all countries, the rattle of dice, the whirl of the wheel and the wide strips of variously colored bunting added color to the scene which was as animated as one could wish.

Cowboys, miners and Mexican greasers, all in characteristic dress, a few soldiers from nearby army posts, an Indian or two, a sprinkling of Chinamen, negroes and half-breeds, and the usual types of Europeans and Americans added variety to the assemblage which seemed to have been gathered from all parts of the globe.

There were tables where select parties of two, three or four were playing, and there were long tables where the crowds gathered, but whether playing or merely looking on, all present seemed to be moved by but one idea, the love of play.

Play had been going on for hours, but at midnight it seemed to receive a new impetus.

People from the theatres and music halls entered, the performances having ended, and new faces appeared at the tables.

Arthur Warburton was playing roulette, and seemed to have been having more than usually good luck, from the stacks of coin and the piles of bills on the table in front of him, when a showily-dressed man and a boy, in a neat dark blue suit, entered and took seats opposite.

Warburton glared at the boy, whom he recognized as Jack Long, Bob's friend, but the man was a stranger.

Somebody addressed him as Mr. Winchester, and asked him how business was, and then he began playing, putting down a small sum.

Warburton played against him, putting down twice the amount, and lost.

Jack noted on a card the sums lost by the other players and put these in a separate pile from that lost by Warburton.

There were other plays, the majority of which Warburton lost, and Jack's method of procedure was the same in all.

At every fresh lay Winchester put on his own money instead of taking from his winnings, which remained in the two piles first made.

Now and then Jack would supply Winchester with money taken from a little bag he held in his lap, noting the sums on his card, together with his other memoranda.

Now and then Winchester would lose, but Warburton seemed to do so steadily, and the more he lost the more excited he became.

He put the larger sums on the table, but whichever way he made his bets he lost, while Winchester nearly always won.

The manager now and then took money from his own pile, but never from the other two, but as a usual thing Jack supplied him.

Presently a man arose, having lost all he had, and staggered from the table, one hand to his head and the other on his hip pocket.

Jack whistled to an attendant and quietly told him to call the unfortunate player to him.

"You have lost three hundred dollars. Here it is. Take it and go home and be wiser next time."

The boy counted out the money, gave it to the player and drew his pencil through a line on his card.

"I don't understand," muttered the man, pocketing the money, "but your advice is good."

Then he went away as another man left the table, having lost all that he cared to lose.

Jack called him over, made a quick calculation, counted out a hundred dollars and handed it to him, saying:

"Take it. We were not playing against you."

"That makes no difference. Take it and ask no questions."

"Well, that's a queer way to gamble," said the man, taking the money and then standing not far away and watching the play.

One man who stopped playing refused to take the money Jack offered him. The boy put it in another bag and said:

"That'll go to the poor, then. You've no objection to that, I suppose?"

"No," laughed the other, "but I'll never call for it."

"You may be glad to if you come back here too often," said Jack.

Warburton's pile had greatly diminished, and now he pushed his balance forward and said to Winchester, with a scowl.

"Now then, come on. I see what you want. You think you can clean me out. Well, I'll be the banker, and we'll see if you will or not."

"Very well," said Jack. "Make your bet, Mr. Winchester."

"Are you backing the gentleman, or is there somebody back of you?" snarled Warburton.

"It doesn't matter at present," answered Jack. "Are you ready?"

Winchester seemed to be a man of judgment, and now that he was about the only player, his winnings increased and every play he made more.

When others lost Jack handed an equal sum to them, and presently, having no real incentive to play when there was no chance of losing, they stopped, and Warburton was pitted against Jack alone, for he did not recognize the manager at all, although the latter made all the hazards.

The young man's pile was swept away but he did not stop the game.

"You think you've broken me, do you?" he growled, taking out a thick pocketbook. "Well, you haven't. I'll smash you yet. What's your play?"

Winchester thought a moment and put down five hundred dollars to back up his bet.

He won, and Warburton pushed over the money with a snarl.

"I'll be banker if you like," said the manager.

"No, go ahead. I'll catch you before long."

He paid over all the money he had taken from his pocketbook and then, with a livid face and wild eyes, he took a number of clean bills from an inner pocket.

At that moment Bob came and stood behind the manager.

Warburton looked up with an evil glance, and hissed:

"Oh, it's you, is it. Bob Little, Dad Smith's boy, eh? I'll strip you of the money you've made in gold mining. Go ahead, play all you've got. I'll cover the whoi of it."

(To be continued.)

TIMELY TOPICS

Gov. Goethels has advised the War Department that, although the slide has been removed sufficiently to permit the passage of vessels drawing twenty feet, he has decided to postpone the formal opening until thirty-foot vessels can be passed.

The day of the humble, benagged scrub-woman is swiftly passing, as shown by the startling announcement that the Scrubwomen's Union of Marshfield, Wis., is now a reality. No longer will the wielder of that trusty brush ply her trade at the rate of 10 or 15 cents an hour. The rate in the future is to be 20 cents, and no exceptions made. The women of the city threaten to boycott the union, but the threat is not taken seriously by the union.

Derailment of a train by an alligator lying across the tracks near Tela, Honduras, caused the death of Henry Kinard Smith, civil engineer, son of the late Bishop Coke Smith of the Southern Methodist Church, according to information received lately by Mr. Smith's relatives in Richmond, Va., from Robert Lansing, Secretary of State. The accident occurred March 25. As a precaution against bubonic plague, the body cannot be removed from Honduras until after the lapse of four years.

Charles Short, a sailor for twenty years, who had been mourned as dead all that time, was found at Pratt, Kan., by his mother, Mrs. M. A. Annett, of St. Joseph, Mo. Short left home twenty years ago and entered the service as a seaman. His boat was reported lost and his name did not appear in the list of survivors. His mother mourned him as dead until recently, when a letter to a cousin in Nebraska told of his whereabouts. Short will go home to his mother.

Food faddists, hygienic lecturers, temperance workers and anti-smokers were presented with a problem when, during the celebration at Evansville, Ind., of the Indiana centennial, Mrs. Anna McKinney, colored, aged 100, died. She was an inveterate pipe smoker, used snuff freely, was fond of gin, ate what she pleased and always slept with her windows closed. Her health always was good. Her daughter is eighty years old.

The Digest of Opinions of 1912 states that a chief musician is an enlisted man, but not a non-commissioned officer. He is enlisted, not to perform the duties of a soldier, but expressly as instructor of music, and it is held that he cannot legally be reduced to the ranks, either by sentence or an order. This is now considered erroneous by the Judge Advocate General, who holds that a chief musician may be

reduced to the ranks. The Judge Advocate General claims that a commander having authority to appoint such non-commissioned officers may order a chief musician to the ranks by sentence of court-martial.

Nine persons were killed and thirty-eight injured and Kemp City, Okla., eight miles east of Denison, was virtually destroyed the other night by a tornado which cut a path three-quarters of a mile wide and five miles long in the Kemp City section. Only three small dwellings remain standing in Kemp City. Twelve business houses, a two-story hotel and sixty residences were demolished. This is the second time in recent years that the little town of 30 inhabitants has been visited by a tornado. Merchants said that the town probably would be rebuilt. Eight persons were killed in the town, while the other victim, a child, perished in the collapse of its father's home, just across the Red River in Texas.

American residents of the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, have assured General Pershing that the American troops have restored respect on the part of the natives for United States soldiers to a degree not existing for five years. For some time Mexicans had sneered at the fighting ability of the Americans, some of them believing that the United States soldiers were afraid to engage any Mexican command. After the Ojo Tzules fight, however, signs of the growing respect on the part of the natives became more manifest. American non-combatants living in the vicinity were treated with a courtesy which astonished them and the like of which they had not experienced for years.

To take care of the increase in the number of cadets at West Point, Col. Clarence P. Townsley, Superintendent of the U. S. Military Academy, thinks that \$3,800,000 should be spent on the West Point plant. In his testimony before the House Committee on Military Affairs Colonel Townsley went into details of the plans that have been prepared for the improvements and showed the necessity for the enlargement of the facilities of the Academy. He declared that in order to take care of the additional cadets the Academy should have a new mess hall, a new stable and new barracks. He also asked that the gymnasium be enlarged and overhauled. Colonel Townsley suggested that some plan for the enlargement of the campus be included. In order that the buildings may be ready for the cadets when they are appointed, Colonel Townsley declared that the Military Academy bill should carry at this session \$2,000,000 for the enlargement of the plant, which would be sufficient for the present.

WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, JULY 7, 1916.

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Good Current News Articles

A crow, alighting on an iron crossarm carrying high-tension wires, created a short-circuit that delayed trolley traffic on the suburban lines of Reading, Pa., fifteen minutes. A few feathers were all that was left of the bird.

Puerto Rican sugar producers are making unexpectedly large profits, owing to the condition of the crops and the prices obtained in consequence of the European war. One of the large companies will give 15,000 employees a bonus of ten per cent.

W. H. Parkins, a druggist at Milton, Ind., was handling a setting of eggs in an incubator at his store some time ago and accidentally cracked one. Mr. Parkins closed the broken shell with a piece of adhesive plaster and replaced the egg in the incubator. The egg hatched, the chicken being the first of the brood to come forth.

Residents of Oakdale, Pa., are alarmed because of the numerous robberies in the borough within the last few months. The borough has no police force. The drug store of W. J. McGill, Jr., was entered for the fourth time within three months. After the third robbery, McGill, feeling that the cost of buying and placing new windows in place of old ones broken by the burglars has been too great, placed a placard on his window reading: "Please do not enter through windows; the door is unlocked."

Fulfilling his vow of early in the winter that he would spend the money received from the sale of sides of cattle that died on his ranch for whisky, a big ranchman living near Keystone, Kan., recently ordered a barrel of the joy producer. The cowboys on the ranch and the ranchman had a glorious celebration. Indeed, they had plenty in the fund, when it is considered that fifty cattle were lost on the ranch and hides are worth about \$8 each. A United States revenue collector figured it out that a whole barrel of whisky was worth tracing, and the antics of the celebrations became so conspicuous that the peace-loving people of the vicinity protested to District Judge Ruppenthal and the ban was placed on any more liquor shipments.

The Village of Clyde, fourteen miles southwest of Sandusky, Ohio, was the home not only of the highest ranking officer killed during the Civil War, but also of the first American killed in the Spanish-American War. It has the distinction also of being the nucleus of what is now the Women's Relief Corps. Gen. J. E. McPherson, killed at Atlanta, in the Civil War, and George B. Mack, the first American killed in the Spanish-American War, are both buried there. President Garfield was to have been the principal orator at the unveiling of the McPherson monument when, on Saturday, July 2, 1881, he left the White House to go to the seaside to spend Sunday with his family before proceeding to Ohio, and was shot while waiting for his train.

Grins and Chuckles

Tired Tatters—Dis paper tells erbout a feller wot died from onni. Weary Walker—Wot's dat? Tired Tatters—It's de feelin' wot comes to a man when he gits lazy dat leafin's hard work.

Mrs. Flatbush—I'm sorry our children are all grown up. Mr. Flatbush—What a funny idea! "Well, you know, I saw baby carriages to-day marked down from \$5 to \$1.91!"

"Where's that hotel that used to advertise, 'All the Comforts of Home for One Dollar?'" "Busted up. The hotel opposite put up a sign: 'None of the Discomforts of Home for Two Dollars.'"

"So yo' am goin' to be mah son-in-law, am you?" inquired old Brother Euckale. "Yessah, dat's what it 'mounts to," said the colored swain. "But dat ain't what Ah'm a-marryin' Louella Maud foh. Yo' am purely incidental to de emergency, sah, purely incidental."

"Madam," shouted the angry neighbor, "your little Cosmo has just thrown a brick through our window!" "And would you bring me the brick?" beamed Cosmo's mother. "We are keeping all the little mementos of his youthful pranks."

"I understand her husband is a baseball umpire." "Yes. And it's great for her people." "I suppose they get passes to all the games?" "No. It isn't that. But every time they haven't anything else to do one of her relatives says, 'Let's go out to the ball park this afternoon and roast Kitty's husband.'"

An Irishman tried to shoot a sparrow with a very old musket. He fired. The bird, with a chirp or two, flew away unconcerned, and Pat was swiftly thrown on his back. Picking himself up and shaking his fist at the bird, he exclaimed: "Bejabers, ye wouldn't 'a' chirruped if ye'd been at this end of the gun!"

The small boy had quarreled violently with his little neighbor across the street. His aunt told him that he must go to his little friend's house, kiss him and say that he was sorry. The youthful belligerent demurred. "You go kiss him, auntie," he said; "I might bite him."

THE MOUNTAIN MANIAC

By Paul Braddon.

Not many weeks ago business called me to West Virginia, and one afternoon, quite late, I stepped from on board the cars and found myself in the little village of—well, we will call it Bluebell.

I had never been there before, and as a stranger always does, I looked about me to see in which direction to go to most quickly find a hotel, for I never ask any favors in the way of directions if I can avoid so doing.

I had gone but a block or two, when I saw the hotel some distance ahead, and before it a crowd of men and boys, all appearing to be greatly excited, and crowding around some object lying on the ground.

Reaching the spot I elbowed my way through the crowd until I caught a glimpse of this object; it was the dead body of a man, curled up, his knees almost touching his forehead, as if he had doubled himself up in a spasm and thus died.

The next great object of attraction was a fine-looking, well-made man, with a frank, open face, sunny, but stern-looking blue eyes, and a wealth of tawny beard, but which was now torn and dirty; his hair also was considerably mussed, and one cheek looked as if it had been clawed by some wild animal, while across his scalp was an ugly looking gash.

"Fight?" I inquired.

"No, sir," replied an urchin. "Though it was a fight, too—a regular out and outer. You see this chap curled up here is the Mountain Maniac, and tother un tracked him to the mountain and kerfumixed him."

I turned away after another glance at the dead body of which I took a mental photograph. A short, thick-set body, a lengthened, cadaverous, beardless face, immensely long and singularly muscular arms, and a hunched back; his legs were encased in a pair of top boots such as are used by cavalry officers, and about his waist was a broad leathern strap, by which he was accustomed to support his pants.

Entering the hotel, I ordered some supper, and while it was being prepared, sat down and penned the following:

"HARVEY DUBARRY, Esq.—Although not personally acquainted with you, the name of Goble may strike you as familiar, inasmuch as I have heard my father frequently mention your name as being an old schoolmate and chum. It would give me great pleasure to meet my father's old friend, and as a younger scion of the Goble race, renew the intimacy of yore.

Yours sincerely,
"ORRIN GOBLE."

I found a boy who agreed to deliver the note and bring me an answer, which proved to be a very cordial invitation to come and remain with him during my stay in Bluebell; the whole tenor of the note was so cordial that after supper I sent my luggage ahead,

and shortly afterward rang the doorbell of Dubarry's house.

In answer to my ring, the door was opened by the bruised and torn man I have described as the second object of attraction.

"You're a genuine Goble and no mistake," he said, after a single glance at me. "Come in—come in—welcome here."

Shaking hands with me first, he led the way into what was evidently the parlor or best room of the house; not a "parlor," to look at and admire, but a parlor for use, a cozy, comfortable room where one could enjoy a cigar and a quiet chat.

We found there Mrs. Dubarry and several little Dubarrys, among them a little girl, looking very pale, and propped up by pillows in a chair.

"Is she ill?" I inquired.

"No," replied my host. "But she has been away from home for a couple of days, and got badly frightened. I'll tell you about it after a while."

"Has it anything to do with the Mountain Maniac?" I inquired.

He nodded his head.

Well, at last Mrs. Dubarry hustled the children off to bed, then came back and took Gracie from among the pillows, and carried her to her father for his affectionate good-night kiss, after which he followed her with his eyes until she disappeared, then exclaimed with a sigh:

"Thank heavens!" then turning to me, remarked: "That was more than I could say this time last night."

"Tell me about it," I suggested.

"Well, I will," said he, clearing his throat.

"Two years ago, my friend, this little village was thrown into a state of the wildest excitement by the sudden disappearance of a little boy.

"He had gone to visit an uncle, who has a farm several miles away. His father learned afterward that the little fellow had left his uncle's shortly before sundown, calculating that by brisk walking he would arrive at home by tea-time, or before they would have finished the meal.

"They thought nothing strange of it when Charlie failed to reach home that night, thinking he had remained at his uncle's, but the uncle chancing to come to the village the next day, exploded his fond parents' belief in his safety.

"Instantly a searching party was organized, and I was one of the number. For three days our search was unavailing, and then—"

I saw Dubarry shudder at the recollections crowding in upon him.

"—we finally came upon a spot in the woods where there had been a campfire; beside it were some bones, a few fragments of flesh which had evidently been wasted, and—little Charlie's clothing.

"We scoured the woods thoroughly for many days, but could find no trace of the wretch who had perpetrated such an awful deed, and at length we all began to imagine that it had been done by some

strolling tramp who was miles away from the scene before we found the ghostly remains of little Charlie.

"We were lulled into a sense of security as regarded our little ones, and once again began to permit them to run around as they had been accustomed to, but, ah! how soon was that sense of security shaken! A little toddling girl, carried by an elder sister to the woods, was left alone for a few minutes.

"When the elder child returned her little sister was missing!

"She rushed hither and thither, madly calling for Bessie. She heard Bessie's voice shrieking with terror, and it was followed by a screech, which made her blood curdle! But love for her little sister overcame her fear, and dashing in the direction of the voice she caught a glimpse of Bessie in the arms of the Mountain Maniac, just before he disappeared from sight in a clump of bushes.

"We could not find the maniac, but we found the remains of a fire, a dress and a tiny pair of shoes and a few bones. These told the sad tale.

"A month later another child disappeared, and men armed themselves and patrolled the mountains for weeks, but without ever even catching a glimpse of the cannibalistic maniac.

"We heard nothing of him during the winter, but before the succeeding summer's course was run, nearly half a score of children had disappeared—roasted like young pigs—in his maw.

"Traps were set for the maniac; every man carried firearms, prepared to meet him, but he shrewdly kept out of their way; once, indeed, a party of four men caught a glimpse of him, but he was gone before they could draw a bead on him.

"So time rolled on, and the present season opened.

"Last night little Gracie started just about dusk to return home from the house of a little friend with whom she had spent the afternoon. Her nearest way home was through a cross street at the outskirts of the village, the road being at the edge of a low bit of ground thickly covered with brush.

"While passing along, she was suddenly pounced upon by the Mountain Maniac, who had lain concealed in the brush, and dragged into the swamp out of sight of any passer-by.

"Silencing her by fearful threats, he shouldered my child and started for the mountain.

"They passed near the house where Grace had spent the afternoon, and she shrieked out the name of her little playmate.

"Her voice was recognized, and filled with dread they hurried here and told me.

"In less than thirty seconds from the time when the first word fell on my ear, I was dashing along that road yonder in pursuit of the demon.

"I shortly reached the mountain and entered a forest.

"I was rambling hither and thither, now pausing,

now dashing frantically here and there, when daylight broke, and then—

"Oh! horrible—most horrible—I discovered—blood!

"I nearly fainted beneath the shock. Blood! My little Gracie's blood.

"But I nerved myself to go onward. The trail might lead me to him, and I would avenge my little Gracie's untimely death—I might even rescue her body un mutilated and give it other burial than the stomach of that cannibal fiend.

"The trail was plain enough; it could not be lost. It led me higher and higher up the mountain until it suddenly ended—or a narrow ledge—an abyss before me, a wall of rock behind me.

"And then—" he was now as pale as death—"I heard a low moan—a smothered cry of childish fear. It was Gracie's voice, not far distant, seemingly behind some boulders near at hand.

"I dashed towards them, saw an opening, and knew that I was before a cave, the lair of the mountain monster.

"I dashed in, snatching out my revolver as I went, and saw—the maniac was about to cut the child's throat.

"He heard me—glanced up—uttered a wild yell—and quicker than a tiger was upon me, and beneath the fierce assault I was forced to retreat.

"My revolver would not shoot, something was wrong with it, and I could only use it as a club against his murderous knife.

"Furiously he forced the fight, and with a spring had me by the throat even as I emerged on the ledge; the knife was raised to pierce my heart, and I saved my life only by a swift blow with the revolver; I knocked the knife from his hand, but lost my weapon at the same time, and then it became a hand-to-hand struggle.

"My! what a terrific struggle that was; to my dying day its memory will haunt me.

"Writhing, twisting, squirming, biting, scratching, clawing—this is a specimen of the latter," pointing to the badly scraped cheek I have mentioned, "it was terrible—terrible.

"At last I got the best of him, and forced him backward to the ledge; he knew it, and grasping my shirt with one hand and my beard with the other, he showed a determination to drag me over with him.

"Back—back—until one leg hung over the chasm—back—back—a very slight move would hurl him into eternity—and me, too.

"Raising my knee suddenly, I forcibly planted it in his stomach; the pain caused him to relax his grasp a little. I broke loose, and then—he struck the rocks a hundred feet below.

"I rushed in, and brought my child home in my arms; then I conducted others back to the spot, and they brought the body into town, arriving here but a few minutes before you saw us.

"And that is the story you wanted to hear; so now—it's bedtime—good-night."

NEWS OF THE DAY

Lai Hipp, running for St. Mary's College of Dayton, Ohio, at a dual meet with Denison University, at Granville, O., did the hundred in ten seconds, and won high-score honors for his college with three firsts and one second. Brock striped Ohio college records for the broad jump by doing 21 feet 1 inch.

Australia will assist in organizing an expedition for the relief of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the British antarctic explorer, by supplying officers and twenty-six men, who will be provisioned for eighteen months. This announcement was made recently by George Foster Pearce, Minister for Defense, in reply to a cabled inquiry from the British Government.

To devote all his time to raising hogs and the production of a national pig of red, white and blue, George C. Griffith, Harvard graduate, has given up the practice of law in Boston. He will spend all his time at his farm in Peabody. The blue hog is his latest successful experiment. August Belmont named the breed the Sapphire Swine.

Extensive real estate holdings in the vicinity of Munich, Bavaria, have been secured by the Krupp works, presumably with the intention of building branch factories there. The Krupp works at Essen are already more than 150 acres in extent and employ 50,000 hands. The Germania shipyards at Kiel, which also belong to the Krupp works, employ probably 5,000 men.

Why should a man without a left eye be barred from the military service? That is what Fred Kuemmling of Joplin, Mo., wanted to know when he was rejected for enlistment in the United States Marine Corps at its Kansas City recruiting station. "I don't see why you won't take me," said Kuemmling. "Don't you have to squint or close the left one when you shoot? I wouldn't have to waste my motion doing that, because I haven't got any. You need modern efficiency methods in your service, I can see that."

Road work affords a means of making the family deserter support his wife and children. California, by statute, provides that deserters and other misdemeanants shall be worked by the counties upon the roads and a sum not exceeding \$1.50 per day be paid to their dependants for the work. Miss Beatrice McCall, of the Woman's Protective Bureau of Oakland, has reported to the National Committee on Prisons that Los Angeles and Sacramento counties are enforcing this provision and employing their prisoners for road work.

In hundreds of theaters throughout the country National Motion Picture Tribute Day was observed, and a percentage of the receipts was set aside for the Actors' Fund. It will be several days before the returns are in, but Samuel L. Goldfish, chairman of

the committee in charge of the campaign to raise \$500,000 for the charity within the motion-picture industry, said that he believed the results had equaled expectations. In New York there were special features in some of the theaters. Screen stars appeared in person in the larger houses, going from one theater to another.

Numerous have been the methods employed by the soldiers in the French trenches to kill the rats which constitute a veritable plague in the Western war zone; but perhaps none has been so interesting—and so effective—as the electrical method. A trough is excavated along a rat-run adjoining parallel to each other. A constant supply of current is maintained in the wires, which are spaced only a few inches apart. The rats in crossing the trough come in contact with the wires, resulting in immediate death. It is reported that hundreds of rats are killed each week by this method.

A small but extremely lively frog was extracted from the stomach of John Arnold by physicians at the Kansas City, Kan., Emergency Hospital. The animal, according to Arnold's story, was swallowed when he tried to drink from the surface of a spring near the outskirts of the city. He immediately became ill and hospital authorities were notified. A stomach pump was used without avail by the physicians in the belief that Arnold had tried to commit suicide. Finally a powerful emetic was administered. The result was a tiny frog, half an inch in diameter, which hopped none the worse for wear.

Little steel forks have been found recently in a shipment of oats for use by the allied armies. It is supposed that German agents contrived to sprinkle them in the oats in order to kill the horses for which these were destined. One of these swallowed by a horse would almost certainly penetrate the skin at some point in the animal's digestive tract, where it would cause a sore that would rapidly develop into blood-poisoning and the horse would die in excruciating agony. The little instruments are stamped out of sheet metal and pressed by machinery into a cunningly devised shape that makes them almost sure to kill.

The sneeze-wood tree is a native of Natal and other parts of South Africa. Its odd name was given to it because one cannot saw it without sneezing violently, says London Tit-Bits. The dust of its wood has just the same effect as the strongest snuff, and is so irritating to the nose that workmen are obliged to sneeze even when they are planing it. If a piece of wood of this tree is put in the mouth, it is found to have a very bitter taste, and no doubt it is this bitterness which prevents insects of any kind from attacking the timber of the sneeze-wood tree. The fact that insects find it so disagreeable makes its wood very valuable for work that is required to last a long time.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

SALT FISH PETRIFIED.

A petrified fish, presumably a sheepshead, dug from the limestone quarry at Glennon, Ala., has been exhibited in Mobile, Ala. The rock containing the fish was found following a blast. As the sheepshead is a salt water fish fishermen are wondering how this one happened to be so far from salt water—about sixty miles.

LAYS EGG IN COURT.

Maude, a white leghorn hen, was in District Judge Bell's court, Portland, Ore., the other day as Exhibit A in a suit over her ownership and that of two other biddies and a cockerel. Suddenly there smote the air a shrill "cut-a-cut." It was Maude cackling, and she kept it up. "Bailiff, kindly remove the exhibit," ordered the Judge. The bailiff approached Maude's coop. "Your Honor," he shouted, "look!" and held up a snowy white egg. "Maude has laid it."

Both litigants agreed that the Judge should receive the egg. Justice Bell had it for breakfast next day.

SNAKE WINS FIGHT.

A young man engaged in a fight with a big snake near Penbrook, Pa. In the end the serpent was victorious, getting off without any harm, while the man was severely bitten. The loser in the fight, Albert Miller, nineteen years old, of Penbrook, went to the Harrisburg Hospital, where efforts were made to prevent blood poisoning.

When Miller was walking through the Penbrook Cemetery recently, passing a large tree he saw a snake, about four or five feet in length, with its fangs protruding and evidently ready to make an attack on him.

The youth did not wait for the reptile to act, but instead picked up a club and made for it. He dealt it a blow, but that only had the effect of inciting the snake, and it leaped for him.

Then came the battle. Lunging its fangs to their full extent, the serpent tried time and time again to sink them into the young man's body, but for a time the youth managed to get away. Miller, however, kept wielding the club, and while so doing the snake shot its poisoned prongs into the youth's hand.

The snake seemed eager to continue the battle, but Miller started running away. The snake followed for a short distance and then gave up the chase.

Miller went to his home and applied antidotes to his hand, but these had no effect in stopping the intense pain which he suffered. Later he called upon a physician and the latter treated the injured member.

In the course of time the hand and arm began

swelling, and when they became almost twice their normal size, Miller decided to come to Harrisburg to the hospital. The doctors hope to get the poison out of his system.

INSTRUMENTS USED BY ANCIENT INHABITANTS.

That the ancient inhabitants of the southern California coast and not the Japanese, as claimed, were the first dentists, is the assertion of De Moss Bowers, an archaeologist of Santa Monica, who has discovered a set of primitive dental tools in the beach sand there.

Following the discovery of many bones of a skeleton in an excavation being made by workmen for Col. Thomas W. Prior at the entrance to the Fraser pier, Ocean Park, Mr. Bowers asked permission of Col. Prior and the local police to dig deeper in the sand and continue an investigation that has led him to dig up over 7,000 skulls along Santa Monica Bay and on the Santa Barbara Islands.

Mr. Bowers' discovery of bone instruments which he declares were used by the natives not only in extracting teeth but also in filling them bears out, he says, his contention that the inhabitants of this coast were the first to practice dentistry in a primitive way.

Here are some of the peculiar discoveries made by Mr. Bowers as the result of his latest find of bones:

That teeth were artificially extracted from the skull he found, and not removed by any natural cause.

That several of the teeth had "fillings" of what he calls pulverized stone and asphalt.

That the early inhabitants of this coast used dental tools made of stone, bone and shells.

Mr. Bowers declares that at only one other place have dental tools of such an early period been found. The other find was at Babylon, but the tools were of metal.

Less is known of the early people of the Pacific coast, according to Mr. Bowers, than of any of the ancients, largely because they kept no records that were intelligible to later inhabitants. The only records made, he says, were crude rock drawings of such things as pine trees, scorpions, centipedes and the like.

He says the place where the dental tools were found was the probable location of an Indian burial ground. He says that on Hill street, between Trolleyway and the Ocean Front, Santa Monica, was once the centre of an Indian village, while there was another at Centre street, Venice, and another near Playa del Rey.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

NEW RUSSIAN PORT.

The Port of Nikolaevsk, at the mouth of the Amur River in Siberia, will be opened for shipping on June 14, according to advices received by the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce in New York, thus furnishing a new way of placing goods on the Russian market. American exporters may avoid the congestion and delay incident to shipment via Vladivostok by having goods consigned to the new port.

From Nikolaevsk, goods will be sent up the Amur to Stretyinsk, which is reached by a branch line of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

TO WAR ON CROWS AND CATS.

Too many cats and crows infest Flushing, N. Y., according to A. U. Whitson, of the Flushing Association, and cat lovers were busy making a census of their home pets. No one has yet appeared to defend the crows, although it is said that Dan Beard, the artist and boy scout promoter, has for years allowed an ancient pair of crows to nest on his grounds in Flushing.

It is charged that the crows kill the small insect destroying birds. The same charge might also be made against the pet cats. For some reason the cat and crow question was referred to the Committee on Trees, and it is probable that some action will be taken to round up the cat population and also limit the flocks of crows.

20,000,000 UNDER ARMS.

A. P. Conger, American representative in Russia of a tractor company of Racine, Wis., arrived the other day by the Scandinavian-American liner Frederik VIII., said that he had ample opportunity in his two years in Russia to study military and commercial conditions. He believes that the Russians have nearly 20,000,000 men under arms. Half of this number, he said, was on the various battle fronts; the rest were in reserve, some undergoing training and some ready to go to whatever point at which they might be needed.

Notwithstanding the vast number in the army, there seemed to be no scarcity of men in factories and in the fields. There had been no urgent call for women in the industries. The end of the war would see, Mr. Conger believes, a bigger Russia, agriculturally and industrially. The people expect to grow more wheat than ever before. This wheat will be harvested by American machinery made in American factories that will be built in Russia.

The Russian troops recently landed in France, Mr. Conger said, had gone thither by way of Vladivostok, and all were equipped with uniforms made in America.

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NEW DESIGNS FOR SILVER COINS.

Dimes, quarters and half dollars of new design will be minted after July 1, Secretary McAdoo announced recently. For the first time since 1891 a change will be effected in these pieces. The announcement disclosed that the half dollar has fallen practically into disuse. The new design was selected with the hope of restoring it to more general circulation.

Under the new coinage each piece will be of different design. The half dollar and dime models were made by Adolph A. Weinman, and the quarter dollar by Hermon A. MacNeil. Both are sculptors of note.

The face of the new half dollar bears a full length of Liberty with a background of the American flag flying to the breeze. The Goddess is striding toward the dawn of a new day, carrying laurel and oak branches, symbolic of civil and military glory.

The design of the twenty-five-cent piece is intended to typify the awakening of the country to its own protection, Secretary McAdoo's announcement stated. Liberty, a full length figure, is shown stepping toward the country's gateway, bearing upraised a shield, from which the covering is being drawn. The right hand bears an olive branch of peace. Above the head is the word "Liberty," and below the feet "1916." The reserve bears the inscription "United States of America and E Pluribus Unum." Both the half dollar and the quarter bear the phrase "In God We Trust."

The design of the dime is simple. Liberty with a winged cap is shown on the fore side, and on the reverse is a design of a bundle of rods, and a battle axe, symbolic of Unity, "wherein lies the nation's strength."

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