

mal notice that he would want a sum of £50,000 in cash on the first of August. When Mr. Skinner arrived, the head clerk put the letter before him. He did not turn pale, nor did he nervously break the paper-knife he held in his hand. He only said, 'Good Lord!' and then he added, 'I suppose he must have it.'

It was in the second week in August that Mr. Hugh Balfour, M.P. for Ballinascreen, was married to Lady Sylvia Blythe, only daughter of the Earl of Willowby, of Willowby Hall, Surrey; and immediately after the marriage the happy pair started off to spend their honeymoon in Germany.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### FIVE-ACE JACK.

WE will now let Mr. Balfour and his young and charming bride go off together on their wedding trip—a trip that ought to give them some slight chance of becoming acquainted with each other, though a certain profound philosopher, resident in Surrey, would say that the glamour of impossible ideals was still veiling their eyes—and we will turn, if you please, to a very different sort of traveller, who just about the same time was riding along a cattle-trail on the high-lying and golden-yellow plains of Colorado. This was Buckskin Charlie, so named from the suit of gray buckskin which he wore, and which was liberally adorned with loose fringes cut from the leather. Indeed, there was a generally decorative air about this herdsman and his accoutrements, which gave him a half Mexican look, though the bright sun-tanned complexion, the long light brown hair, and the clear blue eyes were not at all Mexican. There was a brass tip to the high pommel in front of him, round which a lasso was coiled. He wore huge wooden stirrups, which looked like sabots with the heels cut out. The rowels of his spurs were an inch and a half in diameter. And the wiry little pony he rode had both mane and tail long and flowing.

It is a pleasant enough morning for a ride, for on these high-lying plains the air is cool and exhilarating even in the glare of the sunshine. The prospect around him is

pleasant too, though Buckskin Charlie probably does not mind that much. He has long ago got accustomed to the immeasurable breadth of billowy prairie land, the low yellow-brown waves of which stretch away out into the west until they meet with the range of the Rocky Mountains—a wall of ethereal blue standing all along the western horizon, here and there showing a patch of shining white. And he is familiar enough, too, with the only living objects visible—a herd of antelope quietly grazing in the shadow of some distant and low-lying bluffs; an occasional chicken-hawk that lifts its heavy and bespeckled wings and makes away for the water in the nearest gully; and everywhere the friendly little prairie-dog, standing upon his hillock, like a miniature kangaroo, and coolly staring at him as he passes. Buckskin Charlie is not hungry, and the fore takes no interest in natural history.

It is a long ride across the plains from Eagle Creek Ranch to New Minneapolis, but this important place is reached at last. It is a pretty little hamlet of wooden cottages, with a brick school-house, and a small church of the like material. It has a few cotton-wood trees about. It is irrigated by a narrow canal which connects with a tributary of the South Platte.

Buckskin Charlie rides up to the chief shop of this hamlet and dismounts, leaving his pony in charge of a lad. The shop is a sort of general store, kept by one Ephraim J. Greek, who is also, as a small sign indicates, a notary public, conveyancer, and real estate agent. When Buckskin Charlie enters the store, Mr. Greek—a short, red-faced, red-haired person, who is generally addressed as Judge by his neighbours—is in the act of weighing out some sugar for a small girl who is at the counter.

'Hello, Charlie!' says the Judge, carelessly, as he continues weighing out the sugar. 'How's things at the ranch? And how is your health?'

'I want you to come right along,' says Charlie without further ceremony. 'The boss is just real bad.'

'You don't say!'

Charlie looks for a second or two at the Judge getting the brown paper bag, and then he says impatiently.

'He wants you to come right away, and he won't stand no foolin'—you bet.'