

Besieged!

21

window, it was a big proposition to see to three places at once.

"Red!" he called out, and Mackintosh half turned towards him.

"What is it, Hal?" he asked.

"No good my standing here and——" he stopped, as the board over the nearest window splintered, and the axe edge gleamed in the light of the tallow-lamp. Hal's pistol went up, and he drew a bead on that window, ready for the next happening. Mackintosh, however, had grasped the youngster's meaning and beckoned to him. Loath now to leave his post, Hal, however, obeyed, and Red said when he reached his side:

"We'll stay here, Hal—we can pick off anyone who shoves through either of those windows, and they've got to put their heads in to get at us from there. Also we can guard the door."

It sounded as if the door needed guarding, for the blows were crashing on it, and although Hal had not thought it would happen so soon, the wood was cracking up.

"Stout axes, those, and sharp!" he muttered.

"And a sharp one is this!" said Mackintosh grimly, wielding his own up and down, as though weighing it for the blow that he realized would soon have to be given. Came then a thump, and Hal saw the wooden shield of one window had been knocked out, and now lay on the ground in pieces. A red hand was gripped on the window-ledge and, quick as lightning, Hal fired. The crack of the