Winning the Wilderness

(Continued from page 12.)

"Til show Darley Champers how well my left hand works. There'll be no telltale scar left on his face when I'm through, and he can tumble right straight down to the water from here and on to hell, and Wyker's joint may bear the blame. Damned old Dutch-man, to turn me out now. I set him up in business when I had money. Here comes Champers now."

The storm-cloud burst upon the hall at that moment. John Jacobs' norsa leaped forward on the steep slope, slid, and fell to its knees. As it sprang up again the two men could not see up again the two men could not see each other, for a flash of lightning blinded them and in the crash of thunder that burst at the same instant, filling the valley with deafening roar, the sharp report of a double pistol-shot was swallowed up.

An hour later Darley Champers. drenched with rain, stumbled down The cool air came fanning out of the west and a faint rift along the hori line gave promise of a glorious April

s Darley reached the twist in the tra I which John Jacobs always dread-ed, the place Thaine Aydelot and Leigh Shirley had invested with sweet memories, he suddenly drew his rein

Lying in the rift with his head toward the deep waters of Little Wolf Creek lay Thomas Smith, scowling unseeing eyes at the fast clearing sky. While on the farther side of the road lay the still form of John Jacobs, rain-beaten and smeared with mud, as if he hal struggled backward in his death-throes

As Champers bunt tenderly over him, the smile on big lips took away the awfulness of the sight, and the serenity of the rain-drencael face rested as visible token of an abundant entrance into eternal peace.
Grass River and Big Wolf settle-

Grass River and Big Wolf settle-ments had never before known a tragedy so appalling as the assassina-tion of John Jacobs at the hands of an "unknown" man. Hans Wyker had gone to Kansas City on the day before the event and Wykerton never saw his face again. Rosle Gimpke, who did not know the stranger's name, and Darley Champers, who thought he did, believed nothing could be gained by talking, so they held their peace. And Thomas Smith went "unknown" back to the dust of the prairie in the Grass River gravevard.

The coroner tried faithfully to locate the blame. But as Jacobs was anarmed and was shot from the front, and the stranger had only one bullet surprised whistle. in his revolver and was shot from behind, and as nobody lost nor gained by not untangling the mystery, the affair after a nine days' complete threshing, went into local history, the place of spulchre.

CHAPTER XXI.

Jane Aydelot's Will. Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act, And make her generous thought a fact

The secret of self-racrifice, I of heart sore-tried! thou hast the pike

That Heaven itself could give thee -rest.

-Snow Bound.

the creek, and the face of the man roomy backyard, which was Cham was not good to look the nor to pers' one domestic pleasure, sent in an odor of white like. By all the rules Champers should have pr eferred holly Champers should have preferred houy-hocks and red peonies, if he had cared for flowers at all. It was for the memory of the old mother, whom he would not turn adrikt to please a a frivolous wife, that he grew the white blossoms she had loved. But as he never spoke of her, nor seemed to see we the flowers probley notified the any other flowers, nobody noticed the

peculiarity. "I wonder how I missed that mail?" he mused, as he turned a foreign envelope in his hands. "I reckon the sight of that poor devil, Smith, drop-ping into town so suddenly five days ago upset me so I forgot my mail and went to see the Shirleys. And the hot afternoon and Smith's coming in here, and—" Darley leaned back in his chair and signed.

"Poor Jacobs! Why should he be taken? Smith was gunning for me and mistook his man. Lord knows I wasn't fit to go."

He leaned his elbow heavily on the table, resting his head on his hand. "If Jacobs went on in my place, sacrificed for my sins, so help me God, I'll carry on his work here. I'll fight the liquor business to the end of my days. There shan't no joint nor doggery never open a door on Big Wolf no more. I'll do a man's part for the world I've been doin' for my own profit most of my life."

His brow cleared, an da new exression came to the bluff countenance. The humaneness within him was doing its perfect work.

"But about this mail, now." He ok up the letter again. "Carey says took up the letter again. he ain't coming back. Him and young Aydelot's dead sure to go to China soon. An' I'm to handle his business as per previous directions. This is the first of it. Somebody puttin' on mournin' style, I reckon."

Champers took up a black-edged envelope, whose contents told him as Dr. Horace Carey's representative that Miss Jean Aydelot of Cloverdale was no longer living and much more as unnecessary to the business of the moment as a black-bordered envel is unnecessary to the business of life Then he opened a drawer in his small office safe and took out a bundle of letters

"Here's a copy of her will. That's to go to Miss Shirley to read. An' a copy of old Francis Aydelot's will. What's the value of that, reckon? Also to be showed to Miss Leigh Shirley. An' here's-what?"

Darley Champers opened the last envelope and began to read. He stopped suddenly and gave a long

Beautiful as the morning was, the man laid down the papers, carefully locked both doors and drew down the front blinds. He took up the envelope and read its contents. He read them a second time. Then he put down the neatly written pages and sat staring at nothing for a long time. them up at length for a third reading "Everything comes out at last," he

murmured. "Oh, Lord, I'm glad Doc Carey got hold of me when he did." Slowly be ran his eyes down the Keeping with many a light disguise lines as he read in a half whisper:

I was walking down the National pike road toward Cloverdale with little Leigh in the twilight. Where the railroad crosses Clover Creek on Cloverdale with the high fill we saw Tank Shirley and the young cashier, Terrence Smalley, who had disappeared after the bank warley Champers sat in his little failure. It seems Tank had promised office absorbed in business. The May to pay Smalley to stay away and to morning was ideal. Through the find Jim and get his property away front door the sounds of the street from him. Evidently Tank had not dritted in. Through the rear door the kept his word, for they were quarrel.

ing and came to blows until the cashier's face was cut and bleeding above the eye. There was a struggle, and pushed the other over the bank into the deep water there. Leigh was, she knew one of the men was her father, and we thought he had pushed Smalley into the creek had a sort of paralyzed arm and could not swim. I tried to make her forget all about it. I promised her home and farm some day if she would never tell what she had seen She shut her lips, but if she forgot, I cannot tell.

That night I went alone to the fill and found Terrence Smalley with cut face and a twisted shoulder lying above the place where Tank went down. I helped him to my home and dressed his wounds. I may have done wrong not to deliver him to the authorities, but he had a bad story to tell of Tank's bank record that would have disgraced the Shirley family in Ohio, so we made an agreement. would never make himself known Leigh, nor in any way disturb her life reveal anything of her father's life to disgrace her name, if I let him And I agreed not to report what had seen, nor to tell what I knew to his hurt. He promised me also never to show his face in Cloverdale again. again. He was a selfish, dishonest man, who used Tank Shirley's hatred of his brother and his other sins to hide his own wrongdoing. But I tried to do my duty by the innocent ones who must suffer, when I turned him losse with his conscience. I do not know what has become of him, but, so far as I do know, he has kept the secret of Tank Shirley's crooked dealing with the Cloverdale bank, and he has never annoyed Leigh, nor brought any disgrace to her name. This statement duly witnessed, etc.

Slowly Darley Champers Then, laying down the pages, he said as slowly: "'Unknown' in the Grass River graveyard. 'Unknown' to Jim Shirley and Asher Aydelot, whose eyes he'd never let see him. I understand now, why. Known to me as Thomas Smith, an escaped defaultin' bank cashier who didn't commit suicide. Known to the late Miss Aydelot as Tank Shirley's murderer. If the devil knows where to git on the track of that scoundrel an' locate him properly in hell, he'll do it without my help. By the Lerd Almighty, I'll never tell what I know. An' this paper goes to ashes here. Oh, Caesar! If I could only burn up the recollec-tion that I was ever low-down an' oney-grubin' enough to collute with such as him for business. I'm danged glad I had that quarter kep' in Leigh's name 'stead of Jim's. That's why Thomas Smith threatened and didn't He didn't dare to go against Leigh as long as Jane Aydelot was

He stuck a blazing match to the letter and watched it crumple to ashes on the rusty stove-hearth. Then he carefully swept the ashes on a newspaper, and, opening his doors again, he scattered them in the dusty main street of Wykerton.

That afternoon Champers went again to the Cloverdale Ranch, Leigh was alone, busy with her brushes and paintb ard in the seat on the lawn where Thaine Aydelot had found her on the summer day painting sunflow-ers. The first little sunflower was blooming now by the meadow fence.

"Don't git up, Miss Shirley. Keep your seat, mom. I dropped in on a little business. I'm glad to set out

Champers took off his hat and fanned his red face as he sat on the ground and looked out at the winding river bordered by alfalfa fields.

(To be Continued.)



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