

The Prospector

A TALE OF THE CROW'S NEST PASS.

BY RALPH CONNOR

Author of "The Sky Pilot," "Black Rock," "The Man From Glengarry," "Glengarry School Days," Etc.

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

"What's the matter with you, anyway?" he asked himself impatiently. "I'm not afraid of them." And yet he had a suspicion that it was just this that troubled him. He was afraid. The feeling was not one with which he was unfamiliar. He had before a big crowd he had been shamefully conscious of this same nervous fear. He remembered how his heart had seemed to beat big for his body, till he felt it in his throat. But he remembered now, with no small comfort, that once the ball was kicked his heart had always gone back to its place and its work and gave him no further concern, and today he hoped this might be his experience again.

It was a great day at the Fort, nothing less than the spring meeting of the South Alberta Turf Association; and in that horse country, where men were known by their horses rather than by personal characteristics, the meeting of the Turf Association easily took precedence over all other events, social or political.

This spring, to the interest natural to centering in the races, there was added a special interest in that, behind the horses entered for the Association cup, there gathered intense local feeling. The three favorites were representative horses. The money of the police and all the Fort contingent in the community had been placed on the long, rangy thoroughbred Foxhall, an imported racer who had been fast enough to lose money in the great racing circuits of the East, but who was believed to be strong enough to win money here in the West.

The district about the fort town was divided into two sections, the east and the west. In the eastern section the farming industry was carried on to an almost equal extent with ranching. In the west, up among the hills, there was ranching pure and simple. Between the two sections a strong rivalry existed. In this contest the east had "banked" on Captain Hal Harkness, a rancher and gentleman farmer, and his black Demon. The western men, all ranchers, who despised and hated farmers and everything pertaining to them, were all ranged behind the Swallow, a dainty little bay mare, bred, owned and ridden by a young Englishman, Victor Stanley, who had come out to the Albertas, south and north, as "The Kid," or, affectionately, "The Kiddie," admiringly called by his reckless generosity, his cool courage, and loved for his gentle, generous heart.

Already two heats had been run, one going to the Demon and one to the Swallow, Foxhall sustaining his Eastern reputation as a money-loser. The excitement of the day had gradually grown in intensity, and now was concentrated in the final heat of the Association cup race.

All unconscious of this excitement and of the tremendous issues at stake, Shock sent his little cayuse peacefully trotting along the main street, lined on either side with men and horses. Something was evidently going on, but what Shock could not see. Perhaps you will allow me to be of some service to you, he said, turning to Shock.

"Thank you," said Shock simply. "I need a doctor first of all. The legs of my friends at Leon Lake are very ill. Is there a doctor in this town?" "There is," replied the old gentleman. "Dr. Burton. But I very much fear that he will hardly be fit for service to-day. Unfortunately, our doctor, though a remarkably clever practitioner, is not always well. He is quite frisky and is very frequently drunk. Get him sober and he will do you good service."

"How shall I accomplish that?" asked Shock, with a feeling of despair in his heart, thinking of the Old Prospector in his pain and of little Patsy lying in semi-unconsciousness in the back room of the Leon Creek Stables. "I must have a doctor. I cannot go back without one."

"Then," said the old gentleman, "you will need to kidnap him and wait till he is sober off."

"I shall try," said Shock quietly.

"The old gentleman started at the sound of his name. 'By Jove!' he said, 'I believe you mean to. And if you do, you'll succeed.'"

"Can you direct me to the house of Mr. Macfarren?" inquired Shock.

"Certainly. That is his house among the trees, pointing to a cottage with a veranda about which stood back some distance from the main street. 'But if you wish to see Mr. Macfarren, you will find him down at the other end of the street at the finishing post. He will be very busily engaged at the present, however, being one of the judges in this race, and it is not of immediate importance I would advise your waiting till the race is over. But stay, here he comes. The man in the center is Mr. Macfarren.'"

As he spoke he pointed to a tall man, with a long, grizzled beard, riding a pony, followed by two younger men splendidly mounted. The elder of these was a man strongly built, face open and honest, but showing signs of hard living. He rode a powerful black horse, whose temper showed in his fierce snatching at the bit. Just now the horse was covered with foam, red-

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As the three men rode up the rider of the black horse was heard to say, "That fellow that nearly spilled me. And if Demon hadn't been mighty quick in recovering, it would have been a blank many times over."

"I say," said Macfarren, in a loud, blustering tone, "don't you know enough to keep off a race course when a race is being run?"

Shock was much taken aback at this greeting.

"I beg your pardon, but I didn't know this was a race course, nor did I know that a race was on."

"The deuce you didn't! Hadn't your eyes to see?"

"To this Shock made no reply, but taking a letter from his pocket said quietly, 'You are Mr. Macfarren, I believe. I have a letter for you from Mr. Macfarren.'"

At this the other two rode away. Mr. Macfarren opened the letter with a scowl. As he read the flush on his face faded.

"What the deuce does this mean?" he burst out in an angry tone. "I wrote you a letter, and you have come to me with a letter from Mr. Macfarren?"

"I have a letter for you from Mr. Macfarren," said Shock, smiling a little. "He says he has a letter for you from Mr. Macfarren."

"What I beg to remark is," he continued, returning to the attack, "that he do it again? Does he have any fingers, or is he capable of that act?"

"The reserved his best English for serious occasions, and now, 'I will,' he should extemporize at it."

"Good man, Ike!" drawled the voice again from the crowd. "I'll back Ike to his last pants button, if he can't win."

Shock stood silent and smiling, while Ike stood facing him, more and more puzzled. Shock was an entirely new person to him, and he was not used to being called a "stranger."

"Now, Ike," he said, "it is time you were learning some manners. This gentleman is no pugilist. He has no need of a doctor first of all. The legs of my friends at Leon Lake are very ill. Is there a doctor in this town?"

"There is," replied the old gentleman. "Dr. Burton. But I very much fear that he will hardly be fit for service to-day. Unfortunately, our doctor, though a remarkably clever practitioner, is not always well. He is quite frisky and is very frequently drunk. Get him sober and he will do you good service."

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