

THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY

"Telegram for you, Mr. Bowles," he said. "Brig, stop at the ranch when you go by—I want to talk with you."

There was much more that might have been said, and Mrs. Lee smiled approvingly at Bowles, but the grays were within sight of the haystack and they cut the talk short with a bolt. Then Bowles glanced through the telegram and thrust it into his shirt.

"My aunt—" he began, and as the grin on Brig's face widened, he stopped short and fell into a sulk. "No use telling you anything, Brig," he said at last; "you can guess by the color of my eye."

"Sure!" said Brig, after a moment of baffled silence. "Yore aunt seems to think a whole lot of you. And, speakin' about women-folks, what's this comin' down off the hill?"

He nodded at the foothills to the west, and as Bowles gazed he saw Dixie Lee coming down the broad slope like an arrow. She was riding Wah-lote, too, and at sight of that noble charger the heart of Bat Wing Bowles became sad—or perhaps it was at sight of Dixie. However that may be, he continued on his way with melancholy resignation; while Brig viewed her coming with alarm.

"Here's where I ketch hell fer somethin'!" he