

"Hawker," I continued, "as the oldest white resident in this neighbourhood, I owed you a call. So you can take it from me that I've called, and that our exchange of courtesies need go no further. Most men would have killed you where you stand, and I could even have you reserved for a far greater punishment—the gallows. But I propose to let you go free, and, between man and man, I will expect you to walk straight. If you don't, or if you meditate further tricks, believe me, I'll know."

I never saw a man so utterly taken aback, and nonplussed, as when I handed him back his gun. I did not even take out the remaining cartridges in the magazine of his rifle. He tried to speak, but he could not. I suppose my action was something so contradictory to the line his intelligence would have dictated, that it practically left him incapable of entertaining even treachery for a moment.

"Both of us," I continued, "practically hold our lives in our hands in this country, so the least thing we can do is to leave the other to go his own way. I'm afraid we haven't much in common, so we'd better keep apart. Indeed, I'd strongly advise you to clear out of the neighbourhood. I'm not using threats—I'm leaving all that to your intelligence. Good-bye."

I motioned to the mouth of the valley, and waited for him to go.

He moved his lips as if to speak, but did not utter a word. For the first time he looked me in the eyes, and I will never forget as long as I live his look of solemn wonder. It was as if for a brief space some part of the man's brain or heart that had long lain