

the water hole by that time and we'll fix

the horse we there he pre supper, all and discussing which I was supper and up, I was man of wide greenably and subject uninterested me be sorry that and made up till morning a pleasant drifted round in a hunters' scussing the kes of rifles, revolvers, he

you fellows weapon. but this—Hands make a move your upper d." produced from one of those pistols which erator either e trigger is f the whole out one sec- any hands gazing into Now, maybe a like expe- in a hurry e wearing e tell such so sharply dred would that is to

continued: for a few ead to you world now

for about forty years, always until now on a straight trail, and, even now, I haven't been allowed to get very far along the crooked trail, for I haven't enough beaver experience to be able to catch any yet, and I want to tell you that I don't propose to be marched off to the pen by a mere boy, or by anybody, under such circumstances; so now stand up. Whoa, there, keep your hands up, now turn your back and remember that I have you covered all the time."

So saying he stepped up behind me and took my revolver out of its scabbard.

"Now," he said, "you may turn round and put that on." Here he threw me my coat, and in like manner my cap and overshoes, etc., until I was dressed for outdoors just as I had arrived, he keeping me so closely covered all the time that I had not the slightest chance to close with him, and could not seem to see much except the business end of that blessed automatic. But what I did see was the change that had come over my host, which was now so great that I could not have believed it possible to a man of his seeming open-hearted nature. His face seemed to be immovable and had turned a dead white, and although I fancied I could sometimes see a gleam of compassion in his eyes, there was no wavering of the hand that held the pistol, and I was wondering what was coming next when he kicked a chair over to me and said, "Sit down with your back this way, and don't turn your head." He then apparently took a few steps backward to the wall of the shack and took something off a nail, and before I realized what was happening, he had dropped a noose over my head and shoulders, took a few quick turns, and I was pinioned to the back of the chair before I had time to move. He then walked round beside me, and keeping me covered with one hand and saying, "don't move," he tipped the chair down on its back with his other hand and took a few turns round my legs and the legs

of the chair, not till then laying aside his wicked looking persuader. He then set the chair upright and proceeded to make my temporary lashings secure, and when he had finished he stuck my revolver back in its holster and said: "Now, my boy, you're ready for your journey," and while I was wondering what kind of a journey I could make when the only part of me which I could move was my head, he continued:

"Boy, if it had been one of the older hands, who know me, instead of you, I might have been able to have patched this thing up; but you are new to this district, and I have you sized up as a lad who'll do his duty as he sees it and turn in a full report. So it seems the only course for me is to make it impossible for that report ever to reach headquarters. Of course, I have the alternative of cutting out of the country, but I have already spent all I had trying to make it stick here, and was getting along all right until that rip-snorter of a winter came along and just about cleaned me up. So I turned in and tried the beaver trapping along with the other kinds of fur to tide me over till better times; but the only result seems to be that one of us has got to quit and I can't seem to figure it that that one'll be me. So, though I hate to send you before the Supreme Judge before you've had time to be proven, as it were, still you'll have to go down the water-hole, and it is a very simple job to saddle your horse, take him down to the water-hole, throw him at the edge, hog-tie him, and dump him after you. Then, when the ice goes out in the spring and your bodies are found away down the river, it will naturally be inferred that you fell through an air hole somewhere between here and your last stopping place. I'm going out to saddle your horse now, and if, when I come back, you think we can make some kind of terms, just say so, and we'll try and patch up some kind of a compromise, but if you think you can't, why, you'll have to go down stream."

While he was gone I got to sizing up the situation and came to the conclusion that he had no intention of carrying out his scheme, but was only trying to scare me into keeping silent about what I had seen; so I resolved to show him that I wouldn't be bluffed. Therefore, when he came in I said nothing, and neither did he, but busied himself about the shack for a few minutes, then stopped in front of me and looked at me in such a curious compassionate sort of way that I began to have my doubts as to whether he really was bluffing. Then, in spite of his small stature he picked me up, chair and all, and carried me down the river bank to the water hole, at the edge of which he set me down and said:

"Kid, this is your last chance. Do you still think you can't forget about having seen those traps?"

And I, like a fool, thinking I had seen signs of weakening in him, and taking no account of what even a gentle nature is capable of when driven into a corner, said, "No good," and the next moment my head was under the black, swift water, he holding the chair inverted, with my knees on the ice. During the few moments of suffocation I thought of many things, but chiefly that this was no bluff after all, and my last regret before drifting into unconsciousness was that I had not agreed to compromise.

The next thing I knew, I opened my eyes in the shack to find my would-be murderer vigorously drying my head, and on trying to move found that my wrists were tied behind me and that my ankles were also bound with something soft and woollen, and that I was lying on the bed. When he saw my eyes open he stepped over to the stove, and came back with a cup in his hand, and raising me to a sitting position and holding the cup to my lips, said, "Here, sonny, drink this," which I did, and found it to be sweetened warm water and ginger, which soon warmed me up. He then laid me down in the bed, and throwing the covers over me, said:

"I guess I'll have to quit the country after all, and we both have to thank your mother: you that you are still here, and I, that I am not a murderer. When you were almost all in, I had a vision of your mother getting news of her boy at last, after many weary months of waiting, and such news, and I'm almighty glad now that after that I hadn't the guts to finish the dirty job. So I yanked your head back out of the hole and brought you up here, and worked like blazes over you until you showed signs of coming to. Then I fixed you up as you are now, and proceeded to dry and warm your head."

"Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go by those beaver houses and send someone to you in the morning; it won't be long now, and if by chance you should make up your mind to keep 'mum,' you can find those beaver houses over again in the morning and there will be no traps there. By the way, I saw you find them the first time and was waiting for you."

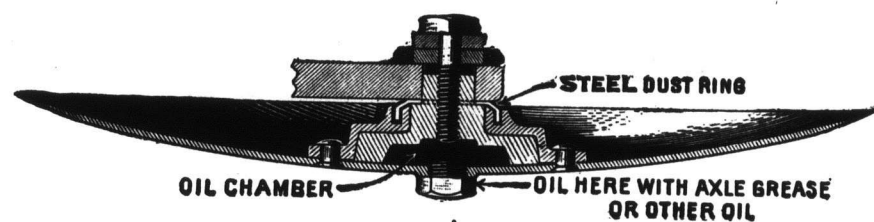
While he was talking he had put more wood in the stove, donned his outdoor garments, and was gone before I could gather my wits together.

After he had gone, I lay thinking it all over, and finally decided that I would re-discover the beaver houses in the morning and report accordingly. I had been seriously thinking of quitting the police service anyway as soon as my term was up (which was in a few months), as I disliked the strict discipline of barrack life, and after this last experience, I decided that neither the pay nor the glory was adequate compensation for the risks one ran; having reached which conclusion, I dosed off to sleep, only to be awakened late next morning by the expected "someone" coming into the shack, who, on seeing me awake, inquired in a cheery voice: "Well, how's the feet this morning?" to which I replied, although not seeing the drift of the question, "My feet are all right except for the fact that, like my hands, they are tied together," at



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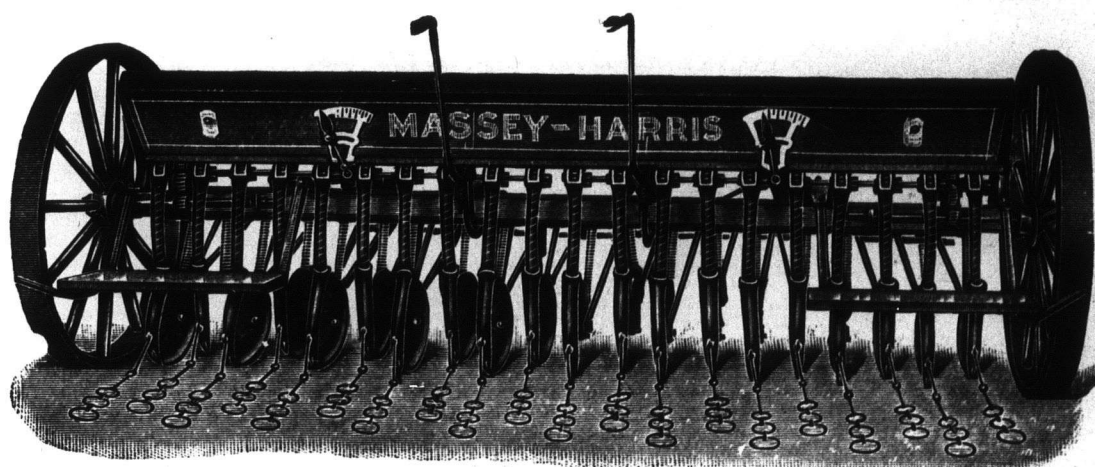
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