

other line of business," said my first assailant.

"Just as though you didn't nearly kill him yourself. You're getting squeamish, Mark," growled Bill.

"No I ain't. I just gave him an easy one so's he'd stand out of the way until I could shut the door."

By this time all save Mark had drawn rifles or long muzzle-loading pistols and were either covering me or with gleaming eyes peering through chinks among the logs for a sign of the police who were supposed to be with me. But by this time I found tongue.

"Look here fellows," I said, "what in creation do you mean knocking a man down when he calls on you and putting guns in his nose and carrying on like a lot of infernal scoundrels. I am alone. I know nothing about police. I am out shooting and just ran plump against your house and thought I would call for a pull of brandy or something."

Mark turned on me with fierce eyes. "I think you are one of them suckers who are out hunting for us. There's a lot of them out on all sides and they meet every night to tell if they find any traces. Now if you are hunting us, you've found us, see, and so had better arrest us and march us off and get the reward. What do you think, Bill?"

"I think as you do, Mark. That reward hain't to be despised, mister. Why its \$200, and I guess they'd make it \$300 when they see a lame man among the prisoners," said Bill, aiming his pistol at my face and moving it about as though undecided whether to shoot me in the right eye or the left.

"Keep your tongue off me and leave my secrets alone till I tell 'em," said a lame man with black whiskers, who kept watching through the logs with a gun so calmly ready that I knew that there sat one who would fight against a hundred. They wouldn't find "a lame man among the prisoners."

My position was desperate and so I took a desperate chance. With a lightning movement I drew my own pistol from beneath my jacket and got it on a level with the muzzle of Bill's. I accomplished this without getting a bullet in either my right or left eye, which I half expected.

"Confound it, now," said I, "drop your guns you fellows and talk business. What have I done? What do you want? All I want is to get my gun and my hat and away I go. If you don't let me do it and start shooting, by ginger, I'll send one of you at least, ahead of me out of the world. Don't wiggle your finger like that again, Bill, for mine is a patent pistol that goes off mighty easy."

"He's game, anyhow," applauded Mark. "Stranger, did you come out alone?"

"Yes!"

"Not a soul with you, and you wasn't hunting us?"

"No, I never heard of you or thought of you. I am a lawyer and am out for a week's shooting. My name is Wilson—Henry L. Wilson—I didn't count on shooting any men during this trip but I guess I'll have to drop one—don't do that again Bill, or, heaven help me, I'll shoot."

"Don't be so cocky," answered Bill. "Don't waste your breath bluffing me, for in a few minutes you'd give a good deal for the wind you're wasting."

Mark now called the lame man away from his post by the corner of the shanty, ordered Bill and me to put away our pistols, but on my refusing he bade Bill take care of me while he asked some more questions. He wanted to know where I had been stopping when I started out that morning, and if I could find my way back if they let me go without a guide. To these I answered promptly.

"You dont want a guide, eh? So I guess if you found your way out you could find your way back again, say to-morrow, with about twenty friends."