

Baptiste made no movement. His relentless expression remained unchanged. The wretched man turned away to the rest of the Breeds.

A pistol was levelled at his head and he turned back to Baptiste. The only comfort he obtained was a monosyllabic command.

"Choose!"

"God, man, I can't." Lablache gasped out the words which seemed literally to be wrung from him.

"Choose!" The inexorable tone sent a shudder over the distraught man. Even in the starlight the expression of the villain's face was hideous to behold.

Baptiste's voice again rang out on the still night air.

"Move him!"

A pistol was pushed behind his ear.

"Do y' hear?"

"Mercy—mercy!" cried the distraught man. But he made no move.

There was an instant's pause. Then the loud report of the threatening pistol rang out. It had been fired through the lobe of his ear.

"Oh, God!"

The exclamation was forced from Jacky. The torture—the horror nearly drove her wild. She lifted her reins as though to ride to the villain's aid. Then something—some cruel recollection—stayed her. She remembered her uncle and her heart hardened.

The merciless torture of the Breed was allowed to pass.

To the wretched victim it seemed that his ear-drum must be split for the shot had left him almost stone deaf. The blood trickled from the wound. He almost leapt forward. Then he stood all of a tremble as he felt the ground shake beneath him. A cold sweat poured down his great face.

"Choose!" Baptiste followed the terror-stricken man up.