

## MY FRIEND MARK!

BY JOE T. CLARK.

### CHAPTER I.

In the course of a long life, first as a lawyer and later as a circuit judge in Ontario, I have been thrown in contact with as great a variety of men as anyone could possibly meet, and moreover I am credited with possessing a pretty keen eye for the character of men who pass through my hands. In fact, if one may be permitted to misapprehend his own language, and make a joke on himself, I have been known to strip men of their last shred of character, when I cross-examined them as a lawyer or sentenced them as a judge. But after this mild poke at myself I will proceed to say that I can—or believe I can, which amounts to the same thing—read a man's character and fathom a rascal, penetrate a hypocrite or detect a fraudulent person with the best of them. The best of them and the best of us, however, occasionally meet with a person whom we misjudge. Now I conceived an affection for one of the most bloodthirsty scoundrels that ever lived in this province and to this day I cannot admit any feeling of shame in recalling my connection with him. It all happened when I was a lawyer years ago.

The illicit manufacture of whiskey was carried on at that time more vigorously than it is now, because the profits were quicker and the risk of detection less. In almost every country one or more private stills were known to exist, and at night, somehow, whether through the connivance of the whole countryside or not cannot be said, wagons would go abroad and supply farmhouses and hotels with barrels and kegs of peculiarly strong whis-

key. An attempt was made by the Legislature to stop this and after two years of effort, of arrests, seizures and often fights in which both sides lost blood, the illicit trade began to droop.

About this time I went out one fall on a deer-hunting trip to a part of the province where deer are now as great a rarity as kangaroo, and had some success. One day having travelled into the woods a great length I suddenly came upon a log house, not seeing it until within twenty yards of it. Walking around I found the door standing wide open and inside four men busily at work and saying nothing. They were strong fellows in long boots, and wore smocks, and I watched them for a minute or two. Whiskey making not entering my mind it did not occur to me that this was certainly the private still for which such active search was being made in the locality, but smelling spirits and feeling tired it did occur to me that a drink would be bracing.

"Good day, everybody. Would you give me a mouthful of that," said I, stepping inside and addressing a man who was filling a large jug.

Three of the men jumped as if shot and swore tremendous oaths, but the fourth, nearer the door, with one motion rose from his task and struck me on the head with a great fist so that I fell in a heap, my gun flying several feet distant. Then he slammed the door, fastened it with a bar, and turned in time to jerk my gun from the hands of another who was about to empty its contents into me as I arose.

"You mullet-headed fool, Bill! don't shoot him. What's the good of shooting him. If the police are outside it won't mend matters to add murder to our