
THE HOMESTEADERS

before he can throw us off the scent, and I will leave it to you, Mr. Arthurs, to organize the posse and scour the whole country until he is located."

At Grey's first words two men had rushed to the corral, and were already saddling horses. The first and fastest was placed at the command of the policeman, and in a minute he, too, was riding break-neck into the hills. But the delay was enough to give Gardiner almost a mile's lead, and the Government horse was a match for any on the ranch.

Grey knew that the main road, if followed far enough, dwindled into a pack trail, which in turn seemed to lose itself in the fastnesses of the mountains, but in reality opened into a pass leading through the range. He gave Gardiner credit for knowing as much, and concluded that the fugitive would make a bolt straight through the mountains. There was no time to watch for tracks; his chance to ride his man down depended entirely upon speed. If he miscalculated, and Gardiner, instead of making for the pass, sought refuge in the mountains, the posse would certainly locate him or starve him into surrender. So the officer urged his horse to the limit and galloped straight into the mountain battlements ahead of him.

An hour's hard riding brought him into a tremendously rough country, where the trail at times was nothing more than a narrow defile