

I tried to make him talk once. I demanded an explanation of why he had 'sacked' one of the men the other day. I thought he couldn't get out of a long explanation. All he said was, 'He's punk.' And with that I had to be satisfied."

"I really don't think he could talk if he wanted to," said Jocelyn seriously.

"I'm sure he couldn't. But what that fellow thinks—ye gods!"

Jocelyn looked round the table to be sure she had set it properly.

"And Shaggy Steele?" she inquired.

"Still the father of fifteen—or is it sixteen," Dick laughed. "The domestic peace of his establishment is still doubtful. Tite is still gathering information. Poor little Tite."

"Poor Mrs. Steele," added Jocelyn. "And the boys?" Dick shook his head.

"I don't know. I hear Moe's bar still flourishes, so——"

"Yes—I suppose they won't alter."

"'Dyke Hole' Bill and Bob Gauvin have declared a truce since they have been made Joe's deputies. They ride rough-shod over their old pals. Joe says they're the men for the work."

"They were the best of the bunch," Jocelyn declared. "I'm glad they've taken a step up. Hark! That's a horse outside. Joe!"

Dick ran to the door and flung it open. The rush of cold air set them shivering. Jocelyn, looking out into the darkness over his shoulder, just made out a dim figure dismounting from a horse. The next moment the tall form of Joe loomed up, and his harsh voice broke the silence.

"Howdy, folks," he cried.

Jocelyn seized his hand and wrung it.

"What an awful night, Joe. Frozen?" she inquired.

"Nope, little gal, thankee. Hollo, Dick, boy. Where's Kate?"

"In the kitchen. I'll fetch her, Joe," Jocelyn declared.

"And I'll go and fix your horse," added Dick.

Joe found himself alone. He strode over to the stove, his quick eyes noting what he considered the elegant preparations for supper. He removed his fur mitts and wiped