

Whispering Smith

a lizard from the saddle, and, darting with incredible swiftness from rock to rock, gained the water's edge.

From up the long shadows of the wash there came the wail of an owl. From it he knew that Wickwire had seen them and was warning him, but he had anticipated the warning and stood below where the hunted men must ride. He strained his eyes over the waste of rock above. For one half-hour of daylight he would have sold, in that moment, ten years of his life. What could he do if they should be able to secrete themselves until dark between him and Wickwire? Gliding under cover of huge rocks up the dry watercourse, he reached a spot where the floods had scooped a long, hollow curve out of a soft ledge in the bank, leaving a stretch of smooth sand on the bed of the stream. At the upper point great boulders pushed out in the river. He could not inspect the curve from the spot he had gained without reckless exposure, but he must force the little daylight left to him. Climbing completely over the lower point, he advanced cautiously, and from behind a sheltering spur stepped out upon an overhanging table of rock and looked across the river-bottom. Three men had halted on the sand within the curve. Two lay on their rifles under the upper point, a hundred and twenty paces from Whispering Smith.