

nervous little laugh. "I'll have to spoil it all myself, then."

The Irishman watched in silence while the other gulped down swallow after swallow. The hand of the drinker trembled uncontrollably, and a tiny red stream trickled down the unshaven chin to the starched linen beneath.

"If you'll take a word of advice," commented the spectator at last, "you'll cut that—for the time being at least." He hesitated; then went on reluctantly.

"I've been in your pay and I'll try to be square with you. If you've got an atom of presentiment you'll realise that this is no place for you to get into the shape you're getting." Again he halted, and again with an effort he gave the warning direct. "If I were you I wouldn't be at this ranch a second longer than it took me to leave; not as long as I had a broncho or a leg or a crutch to go on."

Slowly and more slowly came the words. Then followed silence, with the two men staring each other face to face. Breaking it, the overseer arose.

"I've said more than I intended already," he added, "and now I wash my hands of you. Do as you please. I'm going to bed."

Preventing, of a sudden sobered, Craig was likewise on his feet.

"In common decency, even if you're no friend of mine, don't go, O'Reilly," he pleaded. He had no thought of superiority now, no thought of malice; only of companionship and of protection. "I know