

just as happy as if I was playin' all the time."

"Show him the rope," growled some one in the Major's ear—"that'll bring out the truth if he's tryin' to gum us."

"The evidence is all against you, prisoner," said the Major, sternly, "and there's only one punishment. Say your prayers. Men, do your duty."

The guards lifted the prisoner upon the horse, still unsaddled; the prisoner was humming a tune softly, when his eye caught sight of a rope which was thrown across the bow of the tree. He stared and stopped humming; he looked about him with a start, as if awaking from a sleep, and screamed:

"Mother!"

Half-a-dozen double whistles shrilly uttered, pierced the air. Every one started and into the midst of the crowd burst the doctor.

"Excuse me, gentlemen—I'm Doctor Beers—next county. Lem—Lem, you poor old fellow, what does all this mean?"

Lem did not answer; he had already fallen from the horse. The doctor was by his side in an instant, and had his finger on Lem's pulse.

"Show light here a moment!" asked the doctor. Both men with lights approached the doctor, and so did every one else. The doctor looked into Lem's half-opened eyes, observed his face closely, and finally exclaimed:

"I know this man well, gentlemen, and I don't believe there's a more harmless person in the world. The trouble with him now is that he is almost dead. He has a severe malarial fever, and is delirious under its influence, and this shock will probably take him off. I do wish I'd come out of that tree in time to prevent it, but I had no idea who your prisoner was, and I didn't wish to intrude."

"That's all very well, doctor," said the Major, "but what we want to know is, how did he get Garman's horse?"

"Wait until he gets well," said the doctor, "and you can probably find out—you certainly can't while he's in this condition. I know his constitution, gentlemen. Weeks ago I warned his employer that he would die soon if he wasn't better cared for. He may die now, within ten minutes—in fact, it'll be strange if he don't."

"And not confess or tell who else is in his gang?" exclaimed the Major. "Thunder! try the whiskey on him again, boys—that'll bring him to long enough to own, up or explain."

The man with the whiskey-bottle approached; the doctor snatched the bottle and threw it away. An angry murmur ran through the crowd; and several sets of earn-

est arguments began at once, when suddenly every sound was hushed by a deep voice which exclaimed:

"What are you doing to that man?"

Everybody looked in the direction from which the voice came, and they beheld a large man on a large horse. The man seemed to be a stranger, for no one greeted him by name; every one seemed to be busy wondering how he had approached without being heard.

"What are you doing to that man?" the stranger repeated.

The Major threw up his hat-brim a little way, folded his arms, and said:

"I don't know as it's any of your business, but we like to be accommodating. We are about to hang him for stealing Garman's horse, but he seems to have fainted. We thought we'd like to find out first, though, how he came by the animal."

"Well, I can tell you that," said the stranger. "He was turned off by Sam Reeves a couple of days ago for being used up, an' not fit to lead horses, an' he was tryin' to walk back to Mount Zion, where he had friends. I met him on the road, an' he was the most pitiful sight I ever *did* see, all burnin' up with fever. I hadn't any time to lose, but every once in a while he'd quip whatever he was sayin' an' cry out 'Mother!' in a way that went right through me. I've got a mother myself, an' his hollerin' was too much for me, so I got off my hoss, an' helped him onto him, an' told him to ride to Mount Zion as fast as the Lord would let him."

"And where did you get Garman's horse, may I enquire?" said the Major.

The stranger gathered his bridle-reins tightly, turned his horse's head a trifle, shouted "Stole him!" and galloped off.

Every one stared except the Major; but that gentleman snatched a pistol from one of the guards and fired; the horse-thief groaned and fell from his horse. The Regulators abandoned Lem, and the doctor followed them, thinking, perhaps, that an ever-kind Providence was about to compensate him for that disappointment about examining bullet-wounds and dissecting horse thieves.

"I'm a goner!" gasped the thief; but 'taint as bad as it might have been, if I hadn't saved that poor little cus."

The doctor examined the man's wounds, but the Major scrutinized the backs of the desperado's hands, and then removed his hat and looked curiously at his left temple.

"It's Bill Hixton, boys!" he exclaimed. "Every mark's accordin' to description. I guess we haven't made such a bad night's work, after all."

An hour later Bill Hixton, who the doctor