

NEUTRIA

eyes drew mine in spite of me, and when he backed off, I followed, though he exerted no pressure on the bit. There was nothing hard and there was nothing mean in those eyes; a devil lurked in Sloan's. Chappo's were clear and very good-natured, yet oddly compelling.

"That's all right," he said. "Now we know each other, me and you, Neutria."

He pulled my head around by the cheek of the bridle and next moment was atop. I remained motionless. The grip of his knees was curiously at variance with his bulk: somehow that grip raised a doubt in my mind that I could shed him.

Next second I was pitching, more from force of habit than from any wish to hurt this youth. What was the matter? No spurs gored my sides; I felt no sting of quirt. Instead, Chappo merely swayed in the saddle and he whooped me on to further effort, hitting my shoulders gleefully with his hat. This was too much—a wight of one hundred and twenty