

THE PROBATIONER

to buy you a string o' bells. You came round thet bluff slied as death."

A contemptuous grin wrinkled the settler's gnarled front. "Yer ears is long enough," he snarled. "Put the gal ahead nex' time, McCloud. She ain't deaf."

Flushing angrily, the young fellow made a sharp retort, which the settler answered. While they were exchanging personal opinions, the student took note of the girl. She was surveying his clerical garb with a half-curious, half-quizzical glance. At first he had taken her for a boy, for she rode astride, Western fashion, and her long hair was coiled beneath her cap; but the small waist, large eyes, and unmistakably feminine hips quickly undeceived him. Pretty, he thought, turning his eyes from her short riding-skirt, but—so bold! No women of his acquaintance ever rode that way.

"Wal," finished Mattheson, "I kain't stop to bandy words with no fool idgit. Git up, thar! Who is he?" Jake answered to his companion when the ponies were once more flying along the trail. "Ye'll find out soon enough. Him an' thet gal hev kept us out of a minister for more'n half a year. Her name's Walton, Ruth Walton, an' she's the derndest little minx west o' Winnipeg. Why," he