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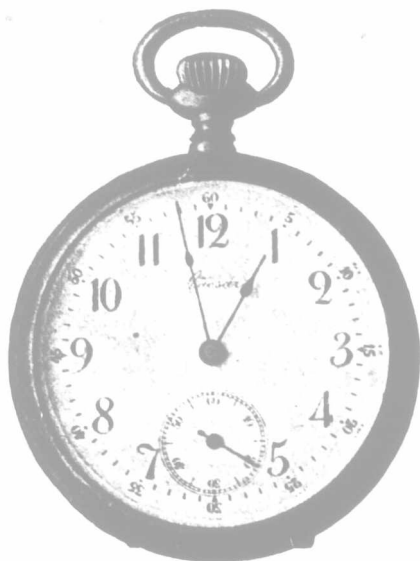
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him ter heaven for good—we'd miss him too keen," objected Kennedy with a grin.

Long River Tom turned his eyes pensively. "Take him out an' dump him in Salt Crick, an' tell him he's too fresh."

"Easy, easy, thar now, boys," remonstrated Shady Bill. "Don't be so radical. Le's jest give him a hint, like. He ain't a bad feller—he's jest got too many dumfool b'iled shirt notions. Take him out on the range an' lose him somewhere for a day or two, so'st he kin get up an appetite."

The idea was a good one, and the boys arranged then and there for a fake round-up in which all hands, even to the cook, would take part. Of course Peters wouldn't stay behind, and Shady Bill, with Harry Jacobs, was elected as Chief Boss-Loser. The two were to take Peters up into Devils' Coulee, which was a second Hole-in-the-Wall, and leave him there. It had but one entrance, and no one but an expert could possibly find his way in or out. It was a large place, some two miles long, and nearly as wide, tangled with brush and trees, and might have been a little Garden of Eden in that treeless waste, had there not been too much spear grass and too many rattlesnakes. Also the flies in the early summer months were beyond description. Altogether, the boys had chosen a nice place for their boss' vacation.

Fifteen minutes after breakfast next morning, everybody was in the saddle,

Coulee, and without a word the men set out for that quarter, saying nothing and looking at each other as little as possible.

The boss was lost, that was sure. He had probably fallen, which would account for the horse's injuries, and he might be lying anywhere with a broken arm or leg or neck.

We rode and looked and shook every bush in the Coulee for about an hour, and at last I heard a faint halloo to my right. Riding in that direction I soon met Shady Bill, and presently found Grant, Long River Tom, and the other boys standing beside the stretched-out form of William H. Peters.

Dead? Oh no! After a little persuasion he sat up and then stood up. Hurt? Somewhat. Right side had sustained several bruises, and his hand pained him slightly. Fell? Came a beastly cropper. Here Shady Bill smiled. Could he ride back to the house? With care, yes.

He seemed to have no suspicion of the trick played him, and was so grateful for our finding him that we felt ashamed of ourselves, after a somewhat painful ride back to the shanty, we laid him out on his cot and dressed his scratched side as well as we could.

"Sure ye ain't jammed up somewhere else?" asked Shady Bill at last.

"My hand pains me," answered Peters, smiling lop-sidedly. "Could-I have gotten blood-poisoning?"

Shady Bill examined the hand.



HOME BUILT BY L. KROUSE, NEAR BLACKFALDS, ALTA., AFTER ONE YEAR FROM MISSOURI.

cook as well as the rest. Some rode this way and some that. The cook rode around the stable, off-saddled, and went back to his kitchen. Peters, Shady Bill and Harry went off in a roundabout way towards the Coulee.

Peters being a tenderfoot, Shady Bill instructed him tenderly about the direction in which he was to ride, and branching out, the two boys left him in Devil's Coulee. They took a circle and met again at the opening, from where they rode back to camp. Most of the boys were waiting for news, with eager faces, and seemed disappointed that things had gone off so easily.

The day passed on like a Sunday. The boys lay around smoking and playing cards. Long River Tom and Sandy Grant had a little row with a bad horse or two. Halleluiah Sands invented an entirely new story about his ranching experience in Arizona, and everybody turned in early.

Next morning half a dozen of the boys hit out for Devil's Coulee after breakfast, while the rest of the camp stayed near enough to be handy when the boss was found.

But finding the boss wasn't such an easy proposition after all, an hour's hunt the boys gave up and started out to beat the Coulee. As hours later they met back at camp, Peters' mount had been found, and he and the animal were both safe and sound.

"Aw, that ain't anything," he pronounced, and sauntered out of the room, giving us the wink to follow him. But when he was once outside his face changed.

"Boys," said he very gravely, "there's a little hole in that feller's palm, and its beginnin' to swell up. By Gad, boys, as sure as a heifer ain't a stud horse, that feller's been hit by a rattler."

A rattler! We looked at each other. And we were responsible.

"It ain't so bad ter see a feller die with an ounce o' lead in him, but ter see a cuss go off all on account of a damned old rattler, an' 'us guys responsible—say, what the devil are we to do?" asked Bill, thoroughly upset.

Nobody cared to answer the question. Everybody was thinking.

Tobacco juice was good to draw out poison. Whiskey was the best thing to drink. Presently Mr. William H. Peters had one and one-half bottles of Scotch in him, and a wad of tobacco as big as a baseball on the puncture. Harry was gone on the best horse to fetch the doctor who lived at One-Eye, fifteen miles away, and the boys sat around asking each other how they thought Peters was now at five minutes intervals.

I looked in after awhile. Peters lay on the cot, deep in dreamland, breathing heavily and smelling like a distillery. Shady Bill and Rattlesnake Joe were