
THE HOMESTEADERS

Sergeant Grey conducted a swift examination, not of Gardiner's room, but of the one in which Allan was lying. He was rewarded by finding the little slip of paper, with a few crystals of powder still clinging to it. The coroner examined the crystals through his magnifying-glass; then, somewhat dubiously, raised them on a moistened finger to his tongue, and after a moment's hesitation swallowed in an impressive, scholarly fashion.

"*Saccharum album!*" he exclaimed. "Common white sugar! Most extraordinary!"

But Sergeant Grey was at the open window. It was only an eight-foot drop to the soft earth, and to the policeman there was no longer any mystery in Gardiner's disappearance. The mock suicide was a carefully-planned ruse to be employed by Gardiner if the worst came to the worst.

At that moment the sound of horse's hoofs was heard on the gravelly road, and three hundred yards away Gardiner dashed through a gap in the trees that skirted the base of the hills. He was on the policeman's horse, and riding like wild fire.

"I want all of you men, and a horse for each," said Grey, quickly, turning upon them like a general marshalling his officers. "There are a dozen different trails he may follow, and we must put a man on each. I will give immediate pursuit, in the hope of riding him down