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The Fighting Ranger

BY F. J. McCONNELL and GEORGE W. PYPER.

CHAPTER XXV.—(Cont'd.)

"We nearly there," said Komi. Mary glanced back and perceived the group of rustlers in the distance, dashing furiously towards them. She emitted a nervous cry. "Look, we're being followed!"

All turned and saw, then spurred their horses on to greater efforts. Komi pointed ahead. "See, there it is," he cried. They saw his hut, an old tumble-down rickety affair, on the edge of Sierra Diablo, high above the gorge. It protruded over the edge of the precipitous mountainside, its bottom supported by two wooden supports, not very staunch looking.

"That's a great perch for a hut," said Bud. But they spurred their horses on. On behind them and seeming to gain at every step, came the pursuers. At last they pulled up at the door of the hut. They found Terence already there, standing in front waiting for them.

"Hurry, hurry," he cried, seeing the rustlers pressing forward in hot pursuit. He helped Mary from her horse, and they all rushed into the hut. Terence last, just as the enemy drew up. He had only time to slam the door in their faces and lock it.

"D'ya see that," cried Buck to his fellows, as they dismounted in front of the tumble-down structure. "That was Idaho Bill with them—the damn double crosser. Well, we've got 'em trapped now. This is their last stand." From crevices between the boards of the hut, pistols and rifle barrels began to protrude, spitting bullets at the rustlers.

The rustlers retreated a short ways, and took cover. "So that's their game, is it?" said Buck. "We'll give 'em all they're looking for."

He gave orders to his men to deploy themselves, taking advantageous positions under cover, at various angles from the hut, and keep a steady fire on it. The siege was soon raging. They rained bullets down upon the fragile structure. Buck himself took careful aim at the weak, rotting wooden supports underneath the hut. He chuckled as he saw the wood of one of them splintered by his bullet. He fired at it again. It cracked and sagged. The hut staggered, as if about to fall, but hung on precariously.

CHAPTER XXVI.

INSIDE THE HUT.

Poor Miguel shrieked, clutched wildly at his breast, swayed, and dropped to the floor. One of the enemies' bullets, piercing the wooden walls of the hut, had caught him. Mary and Terence rushed to his side. Horror spread over their faces.

"What is it—what is it?" cried Bud Hughes his nerves on edge, as he bent over his faithful little side-kick. "Dead—dead!"

Komi remained at his post shooting his rifle through a crack in the wall. There was a creaking cracking sound—the hut rocked backwards. "The supports are giving way—they're shooting at the supports," said Bud hoarsely.

Komi suddenly stopped firing, threw his rifle on the floor despairingly, and motioned that he was out of ammunition. "We can't resist much longer," said Mary. "Look, all my cartridges are used up too."

Terence and Bud each had a couple left. The house was swaying perilously, as its rotten supports gave way more. They exchanged tense glances. Desperately, Terence and Bud fired their last bullets, vainly hoping to get one of the enemy with each. But it was impossible to take careful aim through the cracks. "We're at the end of the rope."

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"So they're all dead. We've won the game."

He paused, thinking, planning his next moves, then snapped out orders. "Rush word across the border to the boys to bring the steers back to the Marshall ranch—Then you, Buck, take some of the men and beat it back to the wrecked hut. Search the premises—everything—for that Yaqui map of Diablo. You may find it on Komi's body. And don't forget to search O'Rourke's body—you remember the piece of map he had, that you once got, but that he retrieved from you—Hurry back to the Bar M with what you find. You, Stella, dash back to the Bar M now, and keep a sharp eye on everything. I'm going to Pico, to see Banker Dawson. By having Dawson get judgment on those bank notes against Marshall the Bar M can be seized legally. I'll join you at the ranch later. Old Marshall is helpless, in his cell, and soon will swing. We'll have it all sewed up from every angle."

They separated, departing on their respective missions. After a laborious climb back up the mountain, Mary, Terence and Bud found their horses where they had been abandoned on the trail beside the spot where the Indian hut had stood. As they mounted, Terence said, "Mary, we now have both halves of the map. If we can find that topaz, we can locate the treasure, and your troubles will be ended—the ranch saved. But how to find the topaz?"

"Do you remember Komi's last words?" said Mary. "Just before he died he said, ask my father, he knows who—and then death cut him off." "Right," exclaimed Terence. "Come—we'll ride to Pico at once and see your father."

They went direct to the jail at Pico and gained admittance to old Marshall's cell. They found him, hopeless and grieving, awaiting the end. After Mary had cheered him a bit, Terence spoke:

"We have a matter of extreme importance, Mr. Marshall. Your ranch, everything, depends upon it." He showed Marshall the two fragments of the map, and recounted the details of Komi's death. Marshall started at sight of the map—he knew what it was.

"This fragment was left me by my father," Terence went on. "The other was given to Mary for you by Komi, who said, 'The secret is in the topaz—John Marshall knows who—' but died before he could finish."

Marshall pondered deeply a moment, and said: "Yes, yes—I remember now. Your father, O'Rourke, could read the signs. He figured out the location of the treasure—but his partner killed him to gain possession of a weirdly-cut topaz, before he reached the spot. And the one and only man who can now tell you the secret of the topaz, and the name of your father's slayer, is Buck McLeod, the outlaw, the leader of that gang of cattle rustlers who have been preying upon us."

"Well, dear, we're a little bit warmer," said Terence as he and Mary left the cell and rejoined Bud, who was waiting outside with the horses. "But we must get the secret of the topaz—I must run down this Buck."

"Let's go back to the ranch, and lay our plans there, and have a little rest," suggested Mary. "I'm worn out."

"I should think you would be, dear girl, after this day."

They mounted and started for the Bar M.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WOLF UNMASKED.

The first to arrive back at the Bar M ranch was Stella Montrose. Worn after the strenuous day, she climbed the stairs of the ranch house, threw herself on a bed, and was soon fast asleep.

Mary, Terence and Bud arrived a short time later. They laid the two sections of the old map out on the living-room table and studied it. "So near and yet so far," said Mary. "It is useless without the secret of the topaz."

"Never mind, dear, we will be rewarded with success in the end," replied Terence. "I shall get that map, Buck, and wrest from him the secret of the topaz if it's the last thing I do."

He looked at the map thoughtfully. "The first thing we ought to do is make a copy of it, in better shape," Terence remarked. "It will be too inconvenient to be fumbling with two pieces."

Mary brought him a pencil and paper. He pieced the two fragments together, traced the lines and figures of the map. "There," he said, when he had finished, scanning his copy to see that it was correct in all its details. "That will be much handier to work with."

He taped the copy up and placed it in his pocket, leaving the two old fragments lying on the table. "Now the next thing to do is to figure out how to trail this man Buck, and get the secret of the topaz. Then all will be clear sailing."

He pondered and said: "Mary, you rest here to-night—but I am going to take the trail of Buck—this very night!"

He emphasized his intention by pounding the table with his fist, with such force that a vase, which they had placed on the edge of the table, to clear the centre for the map, toppled off and with a loud crash broke to bits on the floor.

(To be continued.)

India Careful of Its Food. Natives of India will not eat canned fish from the western world because good Hindus do not eat food prepared by anyone but the women of their household or servants of their own caste; they fear it may be polluted by contact with persons below their caste, or adulterated with ingredients forbidden by their religion.

When hoarse use Minard's Liniment.

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in affiliation with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' course of training to young women, having the highest academic and physical qualifications. This Hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The pupils receive salaries of the same monthly allowances and traveling expenses to and from New York. Full particulars apply to the Superintendent.

A Type.

The flatterer is the sort of person who as he walks by your side will say: "Do you realize how people turn their eyes towards you? This happens to no one in Athens except you. They were singing your praises yesterday in the Arcade. There were more than thirty of us sitting there, when the question was started: Who is our most worthy citizen? Everyone began with you, Sir, and ended, Sir, by coming back to your name." While he is talking like this, he will pick a morsel of fluff from his companion's cloak; and if the wind has blown a piece of chaff on to the other's hair, he will remove it, adding with a smile: "Do you see? Just because I have not met you for two days, your beard is full of white hairs; although no one has darker hair for his age than you." While his patron is speaking he will bid the company be silent, and will praise him in his hearing, and when he pauses, act as flegmatic with a "Bravo!" If he makes a frigid joke, he will burst out laughing, and stuff his cloak into his mouth, as though otherwise unable to restrain his mirth. To people whom he meets he will call out: "Hail, until the great man has passed by." He will buy apples and pears for the children and bring them to the house and give them in the father's presence, saying, with a kiss, "Chicks of a noble sire." When he goes with his patron to the sheep-market to buy a pair of slippers, he will declare that the foot is more graceful than the shoe; and if he is visiting a friend he will hurry ahead and say, "He is coming to see you," and then, turning back, "I have announced your approach." At the theatre he will take the cushions from the slave and put them in a place with his own hands. He will say that his patron's house is the perfection of architecture, and his farm is a model of cultivation, and that his portrait is an exact likeness.—Theophrastus.

1066

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I Remember Old Things Lovingly. I remember old things lovingly—My old sweet garden lying in the sun, Where larkspurs smiled, and when the day was done Frail lilies closed their petals tenderly And slept—their cradle song a dove's low plea. Where star-eyed daisies nodded high; each one A loved friend, through swift-kown days, joy-spun.

How white the snows, how good it was to see The fairies dance and rosy shadows start Within, great wood-fires burning. I recall The sweetness of these things, now never known. My old home life enshrined within my heart, And o'er it still pale locust blossoms fall From olden trees, tall, twisted and storm-blown.

—Elizabeth K. McGowen.

Hospital Gardens. Whoever has to lie in bed, While days slip countless o'er his head Will watch the little square of sky Where tireless clouds go crowding by. Since all outdoors must be for him Surrounded by the window's rim Blue lakes for him must happy lie In the deep azure of the sky. Green pastures linger there at dawn, An eye white peaks the sun shines on; Perhaps when skies are plain and gray An errant bird will fly that way, And in the still night-time hours The strange, black sky is full of flowers.

—Carol Rylie Brink.

Never use soda for washing enamel pans. A little salt applied with a soft cloth will remove all stains, and the pan should be rinsed afterwards with warm water.

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THE FLAVOR LASTS

A Make-Believe Gentleman. Little Edna was watching with tremendous interest the comeliness of the wrapping mother's new evening dress. Finally its shimmering glories were all revealed free from its wrappings.

"Oh, mama, how lovely!" "Will you wear it to-night?" "No, not to-night, dear. The when ladies and gentlemen dinner."

Little Edna was clearly displeased, but she quickly brightened up, for once that papa's gentleman.

Danger. They were climbing a lofty peak of the Alps, and she was standing a foot above him. She turned round and gazed in wonderment. "What," she gasped, "what do you see?"

"Far, far below," she said, "a long white sheet stretches across the paper ribbon about the hotel."

"Ha, ha!" he ejaculated, "the hotel bill overtaking you." Minard's Liniment Why They Use It The reason some people are on is because they won't get it.

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Our city has quite a floating population. Where do you live, at the seashore or where there are no prohibition agents? Must Go. A clergyman asked his Sunday-school: "With what remarkable weapon did Simon at one time slay a number of Philistines?"

For a while there was no answer, and the clergyman, to assist the children a little, commenced tapping his jaw with the tip of his finger, at the same time saying: "What's this?"

Quick as thought, a little fellow innocently replied: "The jaw-bone of an ass, sir."

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