

on her arms, she undoubtedly filled the part. "Cards?" she asked, with a smile.

Bonanza looked at Lepine, but Lepine was speechless.

"No," Bonanza answered for him.

"Palm?"

"No." Questions. Ready?"

Carlotta put aside the pack of cards and the palm chart, and took up the crystal ball, into which she gazed intently. "Ready," she breathed, softly.

"Dig in," Bonanza urged Lepine. "You have twelve questions. Ask. She'll answer."

Lepine was not equal to the occasion. Between amazed embarrassment and a secret confused delight he remained unable to frame questions. "You—you ask," he implored Bonanza.

Bonanza leaned over the table. "Will it make any difference, madam," he inquired, blandly, "to the—hem—meedjum if I asks this man's questions?"

"Not at all," replied Carlotta, flashing her dark eyes a second and then letting them drop dreamily to the crystal ball.

"Well, here goes. Question first: Should Lepine go on working that there bench on Moose?"

"No," Carlotta answered, promptly.

Bonanza nodded knowingly at Lepine. "Told you so," he muttered.

"Question two: Does he make his stake this year?"

There was a loud laugh from the whole assembly gathered round. They had left the flowing fountain, the gaming table, and the dancing floor, to see the phenomenon of a sixth-or-seventh-breed having his fortune told.

Bonanza glowered on the interrupters and gravely repeated his question. "Does he make his stake this year?"

"Yes," came the prompt reply again.

Lepine jumped. Bonanza jumped. The whole

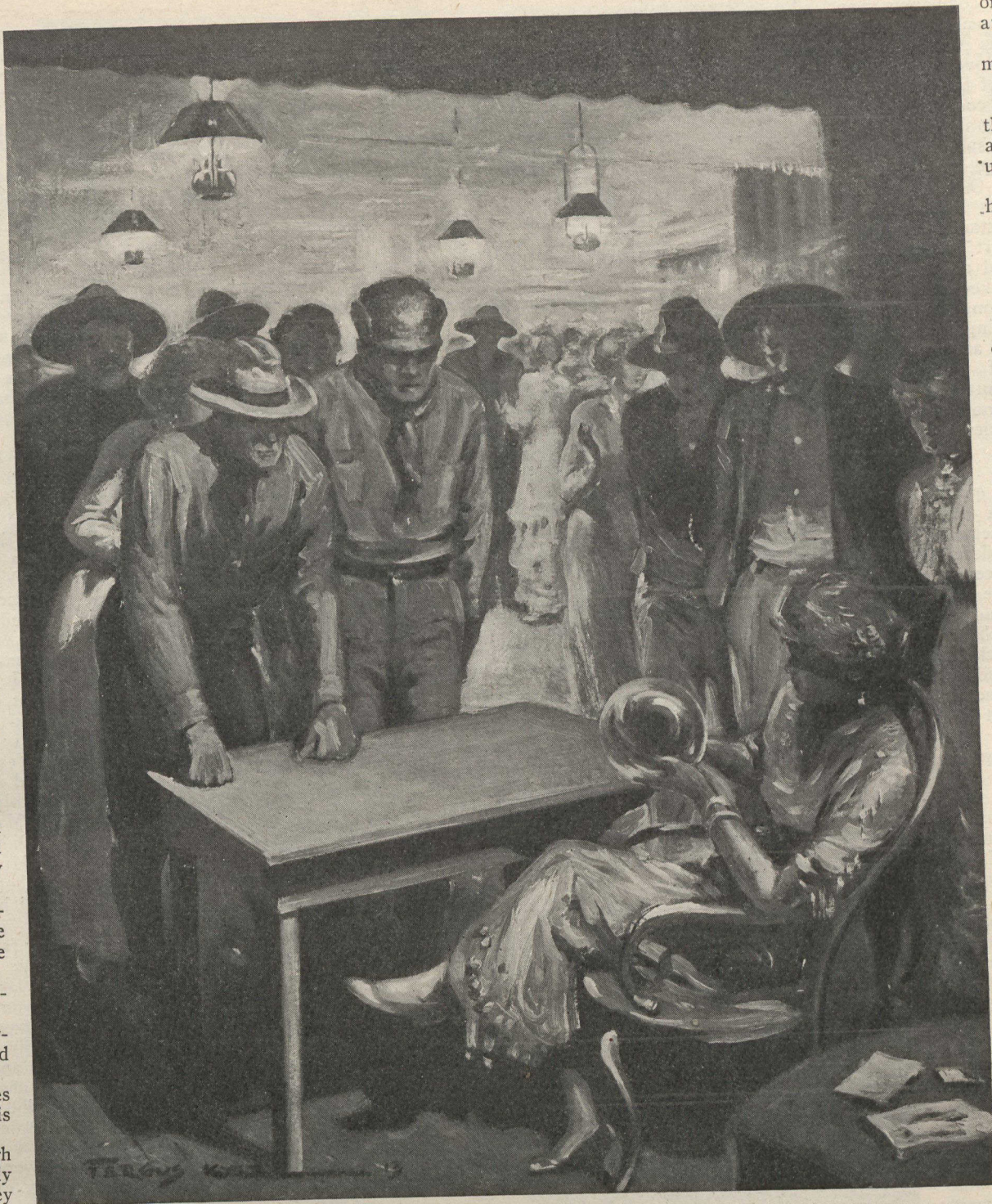
crowd jumped, and then a derisive yell burst from it.

"Shut up," Bonanza warned, shaking his fist. "We're paying for these questions. You got to give us a run for our money."

"That's right, Bonanza," his intimate friends applauded. "Go on and run. You've got the jinx

peared in Carlotta's eyes again. "Rye!" echoed Bonanza, blankly. "He can't farm them river bluffs. What you stringing us for? He ain't a miller, either. And he can't run a hotel there. You sure got us going now, madam. Will Lepine go out this fall with this farm or this mill

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"Carlotta put aside the pack of cards and took up the crystal ball into which she gazed intently."

on the move. We ain't afraid for you."

"Is it a big stake?" demanded Bonanza.

"Yes."

Again the start, again the shuffle and jeer, and again Jones' hand went up.

"A big stake, eh? Hem, hem—what creek?"

"The Yukon."

"Whereabouts?"

"The bluffs."

"What bluffs?"

"Across the river."

The crowd buzzed with excitement now. Bonanza was all worked up. He leaned hands on the table, bending forward with Lepine's face staring sphinx-like over his shoulder, and popped his questions out faster than repeating rifle fire.

"Creek gold?"

"No."

"Placer?"

"No."

"Quartz?"

"No."

"For heaven's sake! What new kind of gold, then?"

"No kind of gold."

"What!" shouted Bonanza, wrathfully. "You said it'd be big. Now what in tarnation—"

"Mebbe it's something else, Bonanza," broke in one of his admirers. "Coal. Iron. Furs. Timber. Moosemeat. Lots of things a body can make a stake out of!"

"Oh!" Bonanza grunted, somewhat relieved. "I was sure forgetting that. Question eleven. Ain't it? Yes. I'll give it to you straight, madam. What'll he make it out of?"

A silence fell in the Tivoli. Every man and woman there was more interested than he or she would have admitted.

"Rye." The flashing, semi-humorous gleam ap-

# THE CHANGED LETTERS

Concerning the Predicament Which Befel Swift-foot Hydo in the Role of Mail-Carrier

By H. A. CODY

Author of "The Frontiersman," "The Long Patrol," etc.  
Illustration by Arthur Heming

**B**LEAKNESS, bleakness everywhere, on land, river, and lake. The great northern Mackenzie River was bridged with icy bands, over which swept the piercing wind in its cruel, onward course. The banks, piled with drifts of snow, appeared like huge breakers rolling in on some surf-beaten shore. The stunted trees, which were hardy enough to endure such a climate, trembled as the gusts of wind howled through their branches. Nowhere does Nature seem so dominant as in some wind-swept region in the northland.

But Swift-foot Hydo did not seem to mind the wind and the cold as he sped on his way the day before Christmas. The short winter day was shutting down, and darkness would soon be upon the land. But that was nothing to him. For years he had followed the same trail, carrying the mail from one trading post to another, and no danger or difficulty had ever stopped this intrepid native. Swift as the deer, strong as the moose, he laughed the driving wind to scorn, and with a whoop to his faithful huskies sped on his way. The dogs well knew that their long journey was almost over, and in a few hours Fort-O-Rest would be reached, and

then plenty of food would be theirs. How they did bound over the snow, their leader, faithful animal that he was, setting the pace.

But just when visions of food and rest were brightest to master and dogs a circumstance occurred which banished them in an instant. Crossing the mouth of a stream which flowed into the larger one, the ice suddenly gave way, and man and several of the dogs were plunged into the cold water. The leader, however, and three of his companions were on firm ice, and realizing the danger, exerted all their strength, and as the rest of the dogs scrambled out one by one they were able to drag out the sled and their drenched master.

This unlooked for mishap changed the order of events, and with a grunt of disgust Swift-foot Hydo headed his team for the shore. It did not take him long to start a good fire, for his matches, kept in a case made of two cartridge shells which fitted closely together, were perfectly dry. As the dogs

huddled around the cheerful blaze Hydo slowly dried his wet garments.

Then he thought of the mail. The letters, kept in a strong box, were thoroughly soaked, and as he gazed upon them a puzzled expression spread over his dusky face. Then a light came into his eyes which was not caused by the fire. A thought had taken possession of him, and with Hydo to think was to act. He noticed that the water had caused the envelopes to become unsealed. Drawing forth the drenched letters he laid them against a stick placed a short distance from the fire, so the heat would dry but not burn them.

**W**ITH a smile of satisfaction at his own clever plan the Indian continued the work of drying his clothes. When this was finished, the letters were dry as well, so gathering them together he began to put them back into the envelopes. But alas! though Swift-foot Hydo was well versed in woodland lore he had never acquired the gentle art of reading, and to him the envelopes were all the same. So the tender sighings of some fair maiden to her northern lover found shelter in an envelope