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off" shotgun. He scorned the pretense of masking, and Scotty nearly leaped from his seat as he saw the purple seam over the bulging cheek-bone.

"Keep yer dew-claws nailed to the roof of that wagon if you don't want to git loaded with buckshot," ordered the bandit.

"I'm doing the best I can, pardner," protested Scotty, who was showing obedience to the limit of his arms. "Seems like we've met before. Yer voice is familiar, but I can't call yer name."

"We can talk about that later. All you got to do is to keep yer mouth shut an' yer hands in the air." The bandit advanced to the side of the wagon with the cocked gun ranged at Scotty's chest. "Wharabouts is the dust?"

"I don't ketch yer law," faltered Scotty.

"You'll ketch it right in the stummick--both bar's--if you don't talk up some. Tell me whar the money is."

"I didn't get it," blurted Scotty, the blank look on his face clearing. "I couldn't make no deal with Sam. The blame' polecat went back on me. But who told you-----"

"Who's talking about Sam?" bellowed the road-agent. "I mean Uncle Sam. I'm after the dough fer his little boys in blue. You thought you could fool me by not sendin' a guard along, but if you don't fork it over in the next-----"

The bandit's jaw hung as if it had been stricken with paralysis. The muzzle of the gun dropped limply. Scotty followed his eyes, and looked back for an instant. In that glimpse he beheld eight troopers coming over the brow of the hill, followed by the army pay-wagon. Then it all raced through his bewildered brain--Scar-Faced George--five thousand dollars, dead or alive--four thousand dollars to develop the claims. "It beats hell out o' suicide," was his thought.

But before he was conscious of having formulated it, he had launched himself against Scar-Faced George, crushing him to the earth. The gun was discharged, but it merely shattered a spoke in the front wheel. When the troopers galloped up they saw a tangle of legs, squirming bodies, and flying fists. The man on top gave a tug at the belt of his antagonist, jerked out a six-shooter, and dealt a thumping blow on the head. Then things were less exciting.

"Gents," began Scotty, with a stertorous chirp, "allow me to introduce Scar-Faced George. But before you shake hands I advise you to tie both o' his'n with the halter on that 'nigh' wheeler. Hees made a leetle mistake to-day, an' he's liable to feel sore when he comes to. Besides, that reward will come in mighty handy jest now."

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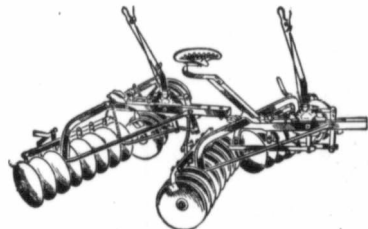
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