

The man stepped out to the road, and in a moment returned, followed by three men on horseback, riding abreast; the man in the centre had his feet tied together under his saddle, and his hands tied behind him. The men beside him held, each one, a horse-pistol.

"Order in court!" proclaimed the Major. "Show the prisoner and the evidence."

Two men stuck balls of candle-wick upon sharp sticks, poured turpentine upon them, and lighted them; one then stood in front of the prisoner's horse and the other behind him. The other men crowded close, and looked curiously at the horse.

"Show light both sides!" exclaimed the Major, upon which the men with lights changed their position so that light fell upon both sides of the horse. Suddenly one man detached himself from the crowd and whispered to the Major. That functionary coughed, and exclaimed:

"Wait a minute gentlemen—I forgot something. Take off your hats—hold up your right hands. You do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, to try this case without fear or favour, and strictly in accordance with the evidence. Now."

The men replaced their hats, and again examined the horse.

"It's Garman's horse," said one man, "I know him by the way the white works up in front of that off forefoot."

"An' I know it," said another man, looking at one of the horse's shoulders, "by that double collar-gall. It's the only double collar-gall I ever saw—Garman *ought* to lose a horse for usin' such infernally rough collars."

"Anything else?" asked the Major.

One man smoothed one of the horse's hind feet, and exclaimed:

"See how he gives a little lift an' shake of his foot every time I do that? Garman showed me how he did just that same thing, an' asked me what I s'posed was the matter with him to make him do it."

"It's the hoss," said one man, dropping back with every outward sign of satisfactory assurance; several others nodded and fell back.

"Let's see his eyes," said another; "Garman's was wall-eyed—yes, so is this one."

"Did Garman's have any saddle-chafes?" asked the Major.

"No," said the man who had expressed his mind about Garman's horse-collars; "his collars ain't fit for a dog, but his saddle fits like a blanket."

"Take off the saddle and the prisoner, and let's see," said the Major.

The prisoner was untied and lifted off. He

fell instantly upon the ground, while the guards covered him with their pistols. The saddle was removed and the men again crowded near.

"There's no chafe yet," said a man, who felt the skin over the horse's back-bone just behind the shoulder, "but there will be soon; *this* saddle must be hollowed out of a log."

"Has anybody any doubts about the horse?" asked the Major.

No one replied.

"Now show up the prisoner, then," said the Major. (The order of proceedings had been in strict accordance with the ways of new Western counties, for in any one of them a horse is held in far higher regard than a man.)

"Stand up," said one of the guards, shaking the prisoner's shoulder. "Confound it," growled the guard, "that's just the way he's acted ever since we got him."

"Didn't I tell you he was looney?" asked Blizzer.

"Pour a little whiskey in his mouth, somebody," suggested the Major. "Perhaps he's tuckered out; even horse-thieves get that way sometimes, I s'pose."

The whiskey was administered; some of it found its way into the prisoner's nostrils, and made him cough violently. The disturbance seemed to revive him somewhat, and he was able to remain on his feet after being assisted to rise.

"Any one ever seen him before?" asked the Major.

"No," said some one, after a moment's silence, "an' I don't want to again. He's more fit for a graveyard openin' than for any thing else, even hoss-stealin'."

He *was* a miserable, insignificant-looking object. Small, thin, flat-chested and stoop-shouldered, yet his eyes were very bright.

"Prisoner," said the Major, "you are charged with stealing a horse from a man named Garman, living in this county. The horse is found in your possession. What have you got to say for yourself?"

The prisoner opened his eyes and mouth, and drawled out, as if soliloquizing:

"Just a floatin' along lovely, as if there wasn't ever any such thing as trouble in the world. I wish everybody I knowed could be so happy."

"What did I tell you?" said Blizzer, spinning about on his heels and appealing to every one.

"Playin' crazy is a losin' game here, prisoner," said the Major. "We've seen it played before."

"Play?" exclaimed the prisoner. "Oh, it's just like as if I was a little boy again, fore I ever knowed what trouble was. I feel