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# The Shepherd

Sammy on her tired pony, approach ed the Lookout on the shoulder of Dewey. As they drew near a figure rose quickly from its place on the rock, and running swiftly along the ledge, concealed itself in the clump of cedars above the trail on the southern the almost exhausted horse and his rider passed, and the figure, slipping from the ledge, followed them unobserved down the mountain.

Leaving the trembling Brownie in clump of bushes a little way from Lookout. Once the figure paused as by the government. if undecided which course to pursue Close by, two saddle horses that had carried their riders on many a long from the corner of the bank. Sammy her excitement she failed to notice

At first the girl saw no light. Could hat there was no one at the cabin after all? Then a little pencilled gleam set her heart throbbing wildly.

Cautiously she passed around the ng, through the crevice between the in

Slowly Jim swept the group of gainst it, and tried to stop you when scowling faces on the other side of you hung old man Lewis. I thought

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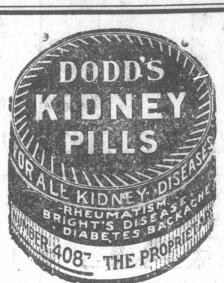
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share of the trade?

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man to join, 'fore we was busted, and he was the youngest member, too; beclearing, the girl went forward in only a boy, but big for his are on foot, and behind her still crept the You remember how he was taken in Sgure that had followed from the on account of his daddy bein' killed

> "Didn't ary one of us fellers tha started it ever think the Bald Knobbers would get to be what they did We begun it as a kind of pratection devilment, and things went on that way, 'cause nobody didn't dare say anything; for i f they did they was

"I ain't a sayin, boys, that I was I done the best I know.

Seated or lounging on chairs and | "After things quieted down, and I on the floor about the room were elev come back with my girl, Wash here en men; one, the man who had been got the old crowd, what was left of with Wash Gibbs at the mill, car- us together, and wanted to reorganried his arm in a sling. The girl out- ize again. I told you then that I'd of the flooring, drew out two heavy -that I went in because I knowed sacks. As he placed the bags on the what you'd do for me if I didn't. And "There it is just as you gave it to all alone then. I've attended every me," said Jim. "But before you go meetin', and done everything I agreed

shirt, where the button was missing The girl drew back from the win-

hat were tied near the barn. surrender—a woman's scream—and then, came to Sammy, blessed, kindly

CHAPTER XXV.

When Sammy opened her eyes, she was on the bed in her own room. In shone through the door.

At first the girl thought that she had awakened from a night's sleep, and that it was her father whom she neard, building the firt before calling er, as his custom was. But, no, he was not building the fire, he was scrubbing the floor. Then she discovered that she was fully dressed and that her clothing was wet, muddy and torn. And with this discovery every incident of the night came vividly be-

After a while, she tried to rise to her feet, but fell back weak and dizzy. The shepherd appeared in the doorway, and placing the lamp on a little stand, the old man drew a chair to the side of the bed, and laid his hand on her forehead, smoothing back the tangled hair. He spoke no word, but in his touch there was a world of tenderness.

Sammy looked at him in wonder. Where had he come from? Why was

"You must have something to drink, my child: I have been preparing it old man stepped into the other room, soon returning with a steaming cup. When she had finished the strengthening draught, Young Matt with his mother and father arrived. While helping the girl into clean dry clothing, Aunt Mollie spoke sooth ingly to her, as one would reassure a frightened child. But Sammy could hear only the three men moving about in the other room, doing something and talking in low tones. When the shepherd came, she met

spite work and not protection; and you know how I was against goin' for the shepherd, and you went when didn't know it. As fer this here eank business, I didn't even know of it. till you give me this stuff here for me to keep for you. I had to take i count of the oath. It's got to be just like it was beore. We come together first to keep each other posted, and save our selves if there was any call to, and little

by little you've been led into first one thing and then another, till you're every bit and grain as bad as the old rowd was, only there ain't so many of you, and you kept me in it because I dare not leave my girl." There was an ominous silence in the room. "But things have changed for me right smart since our last meetin' when you give me this stuff to hold. You boys all know how I've kept Wash Gibbs away from my girl, and there ain't one of you that don't know I'm right, knowin' him as we do. around, he insulted her, and would have done worse, if Young Matt had knowed that after what happened at the mill, Wash and Bill would be havin' a meetin' as soon as they could against Young Matt and his people. Wash Gibbs reached stealthily for

then, and I think yet, that it was

his weapon, but hesitated when he tried as traitors, and sentenced to the saw that the dark faced man noted Jim continued. "I ain't never been any better than lots of others, for I mealy-mouthed with no man, and I'm reckon I done my share. But when my too old to begin now. I know the law creeping up to the build- girl's mother died, away down there of the order, and I reckon Gibbs there ogs, gained a clear view of the in- daddy to my little one, and since then have got to say whether you'll stand by me or him. It looks like you was Sammy?" goin' to go with him all right. But "I will be brave and strong. But calling. Upon their answer whether you do or you don't, I don't first, please open the window, Dad." value said. "There is trou aim to stay with nobody that stands He threw up the sash. It was morn- Lane's. by such as Wash Gibbs. I'm gcin' to ing, and the mists were over the val quick." side with decent folks, who have stood ley, but the mountain tops were And then as they

side could distinctly hear every word go in with you and stand by the old by my girl, and you can do your bathed in light. here. And as for you, Wash Gibbs, if to a chair by the open window. Leck: "Never mind me. If you love you ever set foot on my place again, ing out upon the higher ground, she burry." At this they mounted if you ever cross my path after to- said softly "I will lift up mine eyes ridden as fast as possible night, I'll kill you like the measley unto the hills.' That's our word, now, The old man did not tel yeller hound you are." As he finished, isn't it Dad? I can share it with you, the see had found his sadd of the room, his hand inside of his Young Matt had been at the ranch the light his hands were red

score of dark forms crept swiftly, silently toward the cabin. At the Sammy was so dazed that for a mo-

ment she did not grasp the meaning figure riding one horse and leading another, dashek away from the barn and across a corner of the clearing. The silence was broken by a pistol shot in the cabin. Like an ccho came shot from the yard, and a voice rang out sharply, "Halt!" The figure ceeled in the saddle, as if to fall, but recovered, and disappeared in the timber. The same instant there was a

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