

He did not hit any one, so far as he could see, but he saw them duck and run close to the tree trunks, which gave him some satisfaction. Moreover, they were afoot. Not a single horse remained within sight or hearing of that camp.

Johnny did not go back for another try at them, though he was tempted to land and fight it out with them. There was Mary V to think of, and there were the horses. They went on, shying off from the fleeing animals lest they drive them back instead of forward. Bland spiraled upward, waiting to see what Johnny wanted next. Whatever it might be, Bland would do it — with two guns and a headstrong young man just behind him.

The thrum of the motor stuttered a little on the last upward turn. Bland straightened out the plane, fussed with the spark and the gas, banked cautiously around and headed for home. Like a heart that skips a beat now and then, an odd little pause, scarcely to be distinguished except when the ear has become accustomed to the rhythm of perfect firing, manifested itself. Bland turned his head sidewise, listening. The pause became more marked. The steady, forward thrust slackened a little. Johnny was aware that the monotonous waste below did not slip behind them quite so fast; not quite.

Bland was nursing the motor along, Johnny could