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### THE SWEETENING OF EZRA SANKIE'S POT

(Continued from page 8.) over his lean old snoulder, waggin' his head from side to side, and frownin' his disapproval at what he sees is a sure enough pastime o' Satan. Then Creepin' Kolker opens up for a packpot, and the game gets some warm, and the dust piles up in some warm, and the dust piles up in the centre, and the sky-pilot stops waggin' his head, and watches, all eyes, wheelin' his chair round so 's to git a better view o' proceedin's. And they hear him give a little gasp as Captain Jade rakes in the pile. And they can see him strugglin' with hisself, and tryin' to keep away, but he keeps workin' up to em', foot by foot, only fallin' back, kind o' gun-shy, now and then, when Tune-Up or Captain Jade or the old judge lets out Captain Jade or the old judge lets out a cuss or two.

a cuss or two. "Then he gets so he watches the game fair and open, and even allows there is something mysterious and fascinatin' in seein' the Goddess o' Chance handin' out destiny that a-way. And he spends a hour or two lookin' at the pictures on the face-cards; and uset b'fore crub time seein' him cutjust b'fore grub-time, seein' him cut-tin' for an ace, absent-minded, Tune-up Tidmarsh stops the game to go over and show him just how to lay over and show him just how to lay out the cards for a quiet and gentle game o' 'Frisco solitaire. Which same, he says, aint in no way sinful, seein' as a man can't bet with his-self, and is a uncommon nice and soothin' pastime if you ain't a-keyed up for high-priced trouble. And the sky-pilot plays a game with hisself, kind o' frightened and solemn, and then gets on to the hang o' shufflin' and layin' out the cards, so that Bill has to give him the grub-call for the third time b'fore he sees it's fodder-hour.

third time b'fore he sees it's ioduer-hour. "But when he gets up in his own room that night his spirit kind o' re-volts, thinkin' things over, and he sure has a bad hour of it. Which same the four old growlers overhear, while he gits down on his knees, and, some hot and fierce, implores the Lord to keep his feet in the path o' right-eousness, seein' as He had set before him such examples o' what a man might fall to, when once he was a-followin' the wrong trail. And he prays for hisself ag'in, and for the four errin' ones whose souls and lives were bein' frittered away in the idle pursoots o' card-playin' and gamblin', and he ends up by recitin' to hisself a little pome about Vice bein' a mon-ster o' such low-down Injun aspect that first round you hates him, and that first round you hates him, and then you kind o' endoores him, and then first thing you know you've given him the squaw-hitch and are stickin' to him like a flea to a Black-foot Injun

stickin' to him like a hea to a the foot Injun. "But as I laid out to you some time ago, this here mountain health-point o' Montana Bill's was an uncommon quiet and lonesome locality. Bill had a doctor ride up from Red-Tail Cross-in' twice a week, to take temper'tures and stampede around about so much liquor-drinkin' and cigar smokin' among them one-lungers o' his. Then once a month the mail 'd come once a month the mail 'd come through, and kind o' brighten things once a month the mail 'd come through, and kind o' brighten things up. But when the papers got so wore out you couldn't read 'em, you had your choice o' doin' two things, a-sit-tin' and gazin' at seven miles o' rock and jackpine, or joinin' in them idle pursoots o' gamblin' and card-playin' ag'in which this here sky-pilot was prayin' every night, so loud and vig-orous. And while he was a-prayin', them sun-baked old sinners said nothin', but just listened and waited, for they could tell by the tenor o' these here supplications o' his that he was sure weakenin', day by day, and gittin' a more and more consum-in' hunger to join in that all-fired divertin' game o' theirs. "Which same he does, when Creep-in' Kolker finally lays the proposal out to him, the gang havin' agreed the time was ripe for the enticin' o' nervous and bashful, but he sticks her out, acknowledgin' it was sure wonderful how such a run o' luck as he was havin' seemed to contradict what he calls the law of averages-



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