

beatin' along the open railway track, for dry walkin', and he spotted a covey o' quail, he started pointin', stock-still, and kept pointin'—kept pointin' till the pilot-wheels o' the Western Express ground his blind and unreasonin' dog's soul out.

"Well, there I am wanderin' from the trail again! But, as I was about to say, after we'd watched that fool dog for the third day, the Inspector called us all together, and we had a pow-wow as to the meanin' o' things. The outcome was, we spread out fan-wise, shook out our shootin'-irons, breathed uncommon light, and crept up on Bill's position. We hugged every pebble the size of a goose-egg, sure expectin' a fusillade from our secretive friend, but nothin' broke that all-fired, harassin' silence. When we got to the cave behind the shelf, where Bill was cornered, the Inspector edged in, with his Colt in his hand. I was at his heels, with a carbine ready, kind o' feelin' that it was like old times. We circled in, slow and cautious; then we stood and looked at one another. That cave was as empty as a three-year-old bird's nest.

"We crept out, uncommon dazed and foolish. Then we looked at the dog. He was still there, pointin' over that ledge o' rock. His shank bones were stickin' out through his hide some pitiful, and his ribs had fallen in, but there he was, blinkin' out and pointin' the way Hunker Bill had given him the order to point, a-waitin' for his master to come and say the word that would allow him to move again. Then, step by step, I roped in the whole situation. Hunker Bill, I allow, had liked that mongrel o' his. But Bill had loved his life more'n he loved that dog. So he'd give him the word to down-charge out there, for a blind, and under cover o' the night in some way or other he'd snaked out right b'tween our legs, and got a good three days' start into the unmapped wilderness of Alaska, which shows some plain there ain't no way o' stakin' out the sentiments of a frontier bad-man, for he's goin' to fool you, every time, like one o' these here foothill rivers, by roundin' on himself. And that dog o' Hunker Bill's seemed to know the game was up, for when we circled round him, quiet and respectful, he dragged hisself up on his four feet, shakin', and pointed his nose up towards the sky, and gave one long and quiet howl, that sent the shivers down the back of every cuss who listened to it. Then he crumpled in on hisself and died there, just where he laid, with his nose pointin' out over the valley.

"Well, when the Inspector was walkin' off his ire, over losin' his man that fool way, we took that dog o' Hunker Bill's and gave it decent burial, as we all allowed it ought to have. We planted him good and deep, in an open bit o' lowland, with a wooden cross over the grave, tellin' his name and the date. And old Alkali Ericson said the funeral orat'ion, while we stood with heads uncovered. I recollect that oration some plain, bein' the only one I ever heard delivered over a mongrel, and, as I take it, it ran something like this: 'I allow, good Lord, I ain't much of a hand at this style o' speakin', and I allow we are all men who have to do with hard characters, trailin' through hard places doin' hard work. And I also allow that the carcass we are now commendin' into Thy hands, O Gawd, is only the remains of a low-down and no-account dawg, mebbe unworthy o' Thy notice. But this yere mongrel critter, good Lord, has done the decent thing by the man who wasn't big enough to be his master. He didn't do no heap o' weighin' and studyin' over what he was gittin' out o' the deal. If he stoop between Thy purpose and a low-down and errin' bad-man bein' yanked to the dizzy brink o' justice, O Gawd, forgive him. He was a fool dawg, we all allow, but he was faithful unto the end, and knowin' only his dooty, he done it, and died for it! Amen!' And then, we filled in that uncommon queer grave, up among them bald and lonely hills—and I reckon not ten white men have clapped eyes on it to this day!—and then we fired a salute from our



# Pen-Angle

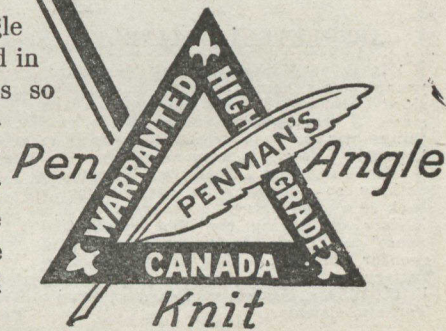
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