

and, to Lawrence's amaze, her riding-whip comes viciously down upon her courser's flank and her little hands give rein. Away she flies, out to the front, leaving her lord and master and his friend, her escort the colonel, thundering bulkily in her track, but losing ground with every stride. Delighted to have so light a rider, the colonel's second horse makes play for the very leaders. Here, close behind the master of the hounds, all eyes fixed on that bounding tuft of gray and white a few score yards ahead, bending over their horses' necks and keeping just enough pressure on the bit to prevent over-riding the huntsman, ride Parke and Graham, two "light-weights," who have coursed many a mile of prairie. Just behind them, a little to their right, rides Mrs. Belknap, her veil fluttering straight out behind, her glorious eyes flashing, her dark skin flushed with triumph and the exhilaration of the dashing pace, her little hands wound about in the reins she holds so firmly. Splendidly she sits her fleet racer, and Dana has to urge and spur his clumsier troop-horse to keep in close attendance. These four are well in advance of all the others. Back of them, gallantly urging on her steady sorrel, comes Mrs. Sprague, with Stryker riding warily alongside and watching her "going" before he will satisfy himself that it is safe to trust her to her own guiding. Level as the prairie is here, he knows that a mile or so ahead there are "breaks" leading down into the valley of one of the innumerable tributaries of the Washita. Then the story may be different. He looks up in surprise at the thunder of hoofs close alongside and Mrs. Lawrence, with excitement in her eyes, overtakes, then passes them on her way to the front. "See!" he points to his partner,—"see that dark shadow across the prairie out there. We cannot ride at this pace when we pass that hollow: the breaks set in still farther." He glances over his shoulder and signals to the nearest officer to follow Mrs. Lawrence and look out for her, and the gallant does his best, but all are at top speed; the colonel and the heavy weights—infantry and cavalry—are beginning to lose ground, and still that gray "puff-ball" far to the front seems inch by inch to be slipping away from his pursuers; still the long lean greyhounds, looking almost flat against the sward in their wonderful strides, speed on in relentless chase, eager muzzles outstretched, eager eyes glaring on the bounding quarry, gleaming muscles working in the sunshine like the steel rods of the drivers of the "lightning express." A dozen of them are lunched in the track of the chase; others are farther out to right and left. Not an inch do the pursuers seem to have gained: straight as an arrow has been the flight so far, but now the "breaks" are just ahead, little ravines cut in here and there across the level. Will he keep his determined course, up hill and down, straight away to the east, or will he lose heart, tack, veer, double and twist? If he swerve he is a lost rabbit!

Far to the rear, yelping, panting, distracted by this time, the terriers and mongrels, the original leaders, have fallen. The field too, is strung out nearly a mile deep at the end of the first six minutes' run, for some of the laggards have given up and are disposed to wait for the coming of the buggies and buck-boards. Here at the front all is intense excitement. All eyes are on the rabbit, for now or never will the crisis come. The horses are breathing heavily, but with no thought of slackening speed. "Watch him now as he sights that *arroyo*!" shouts Graham to Parke, for far out to the right front a ravine bursts off to the southeast, and one of its shallow contributors stretches obliquely across the rabbit's frenzied vision. "Veer that way; he'll take it, sure!" shouts the huntsman; and, sure enough, no sooner does he reach it than the gray victim darts down the winding shelter, as though hopeful that his sudden twist would throw his pursuers off the sight; scent the greyhound has none. The move is disastrous; "Hi!" shout the leading riders, waving the pursuit to the right front, and, obedient to signal, the foremost hounds sweep in long curve into the *coulée*, striking it many a yard farther down than where the harned chase first dived into its treacherous shadows. And now those hounds who were out on the right flank are up in line with the very leaders, and bounding along the level at the side of the ravine, yet keeping wary eye upon the chase. So, too, the horsemen. Making a deep curve in the ravine five hundred yards ahead, and confident that Bunny will blindly rush along his winding track, they strike out across the prairie, gaining twenty horselengths by the move; and now, with two or three of the oldest hounds, Parke, Dana, and Mrs. Belknap are darting on abreast of the chase. "Keep out there to the left, some of you!" shouts Dana. "He'll spring up the other side quick as he sees us. Drive him back." And, obedient to the signal of his raised hand, two of the leading troops breast the slopes to the east, calling hal! a dozen hounds with them. Darting around a bend, Bunny's agonized eyes catch sight of the hounds and horses on the right bank, and like a flash he whirls, scampers up the opposite slope, and shoots out on the prairie again just in time to meet the hounds and troopers who have anticipated the move. Now he is wild and demoralized. Once more he dives into the ravine and sends the dust flying into the very faces of his pursuers, for now the leading hounds are so close that the foremost jaws are snapping the air at his every bound. A quick turn to the right and up the slope throws the leaders far—too far—beyond; they sweep around in long curve; but, though he has thrown them off, the hurtled, senseless, helpless wretch has forgotten the trainers to the rear; they spring across the angle he has made, and are as close as the original pursuers, and much the fresher. Wildly, madly now he twists and turns, first up one bank, then the other. Far to the rear the coming riders see the signs of his breaking down, mark the scurrying to and fro of horse and hound. "Come on!" they shout. "He's gone now, and we can be in at the death!" Mrs. Lawrence on one side of the ravine is as far to the front as Mrs. Belknap on the other. One of them must lose the brush: he cannot die on both sides at once. The dark beauty has had more than one rasping disappointed in the last two days: it would be intolerable now that, after all, Mrs. Lawrence, and not she, should prove the victor.

(To be Continued.)

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