

could be traced. Notices were posted everywhere, offering rewards, but it never occurred to anyone to suspect any member of the ranch staff—least of all the Indian messenger who had never a word to say except to Hal.

Winter came and Joe Long was given a dog team to drive to and from the city. Hal often went with him and the Indian taught him how to handle dogs, how to make harness, moccasins and snowshoes. They were good friends, the boy's quiet "I'll remember that, Joe," being all the encouragement the Indian required.

Hal was a good horseman, and each spring found him a new cayuse. Invariably he chose the most vicious, stubborn, unmanageable brute the ranch could produce, but at the end of the season it was a different animal, and the following season his father would ride it. In evidence of Hal's skill Hanley was recognized the best mounted man along the entire length of the range.

That spring, however, Hal hit upon a real tartar. It was strong as an elephant, swift as an antelope, but stubborn as a mule. It had a mouth no bit could touch, and in spite of its marvellous abilities, it was a brute unfit for any man to handle. More than once it almost broke Hal's heart, many times it almost broke his neck, but his reputation forbade him to give in and try another. Even Joe Long's warning took no effect. "You best shoot that cayuse, Mast' Hal," said the Indian, "or he finish you sure. That pony never improve. He one of the wild sort."

"Shoot him!" repeated Hal with a laugh. "Why, I'm just beginning to like him."

"He finish you sure," mumbled the Indian, for once giving voice to his feeling, and it may be taken as certain that the Indian knew something about ponies.

Hal's pony was not only a tough beast, but a fool, and though Hal was beginning to realize this, he still believed that kindness and gentle handling would triumph in the end. He loved the marvellous speed of the beast, and the tussle for mastery when it got away from him. That it fell and threw him heavily among the gopher warrens only added a touch of variety, and yet, in spite of many accidents, the beast never seemed to learn that it was madness to gallop at full speed through the very centre of a gopher city, where the ground was riddled with holes and irregular with mounds.

So busy was Hal with his new mount that he saw little of the Indian till July dawned, hot and sultry, with constant thunder storms. One day Joe was given a message to deliver to Hanley, who was somewhere out on the ranch, together with Mast' Hal.

As the Indian rode out from the corral a peal of thunder echoed among the hills, overhead it was dark as winter, and that mysterious stillness which precedes a great storm, now reigned everywhere. In the sky above the thunder birds were wheeling in gigantic circles, screaming like tormented souls—appearing in hundreds from nowhere, their shrill cries seeming to add to the stillness of the earth below.

The Indian rode at a gallop to the crest of the ridge, from which point a full view over many miles could be obtained. He surveyed the panorama for some signs of a horseman, and as he did so a deep, penetrating rumble seemed to come from the very ground under his pony's hoofs.

Was it thunder? No. The Indian's quick senses instantly recognized the sound. He glanced towards the north, and a sight met his eyes which he had seen but once before.

Across the narrow track of land between the hills swept a black mass of moving figures. They were cattle. Frightened by the coming storm they had gathered into one immense herd and were now racing across country packed in a solid mass, taking everything in their stride. In fact, a cattle stampede, so dreaded in the ranges, had taken place.

When the half wild steers of the prairies set off there is nothing but fire or water can turn them aside. Even then the forerunners are crowded to their doom by the frantic mass coming along behind. They will plunge headlong through the wire fences, piling themselves up against the massive posts that refuse to yield to the impact of the oncoming tide.

Woe betide the man who finds himself in their path. If he is on foot there will be nothing left of him when they are passed. If he is mounted his cayuse must be sure-footed and level-headed or they will both be crowded in among the line of lowered horns.

Joe Long saw that his own position was fairly safe, so he sat and watched. He saw that a single cowboy was making desperate efforts to break up the herd, but surely the man was mad. He was riding just ahead of the frantic cattle, cracking his whip in their faces, reining in his terrified and plunging cayuse directly in their path, and forcing it to stand till the forerunners of the herd were within lash reach. Then his long-lashed whip would dart out, and with the cattle actually upon him he would wheel and gain a fresh lead.

It was marvellous horsemanship, but it was mad; then looking ahead of the herd the Indian saw a second figure, a pibald cayuse rearing and plunging wildly while its rider strove to force it into a gallop. It was Mast' Hal and his mad cayuse, in the direct pathway of the oncoming herd!

Even as the Indian looked the cayuse plunged ahead and fell. The boy landed on his feet, light as a thistle seed, strove to drag up his cayuse, but the beast never moved. It had landed for the last time in a gopher warren.

The Indian knew now why the first cowboy was acting in that mad way,

that he would be trampled down beneath the terrified pony's hoofs.

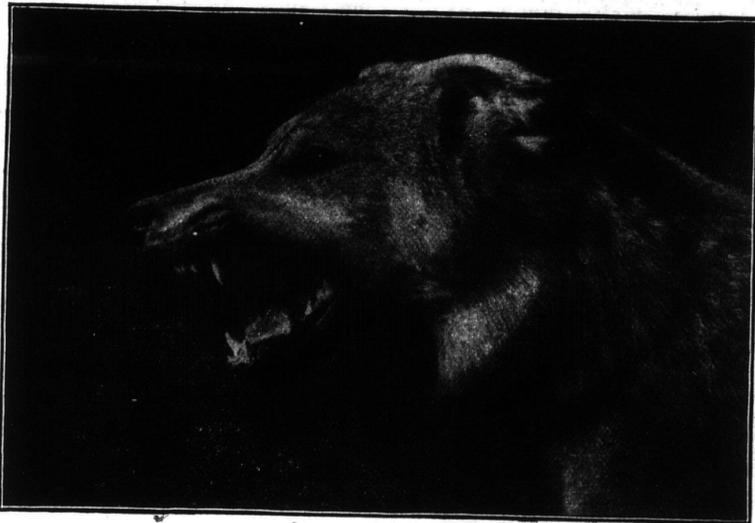
The thin, stray fingers of the Indian closed upon the boy's leather belt, and at the same moment Hal clutched the stirrup of the racing pony. They swept on together, but the Indian was hanging almost head downwards, the cayuse was staggering under the uneven load. Behind and around them was the thunder of hoofs, pounding the thin dust into the air, shaking the very earth on which they rode.

Hanley, the ranch owner, watched with eyes of horror. He saw the Indian struggling to regain his balance, saw the boy fighting desperately for a hand-hold.

"Let me go, Joe, and save yourself," shouted Hal, but it was too late. The boy let go and Joe hung on, and they fell together to the ground, the Indian's fingers still locked about the leather belt.

Hanley closed his eyes and turned away with a groan. He had made his million, he had done his share in building up a great colony, he was a man of fame, but what was all this now? The sea of steers thundered by, pounding the coarse prairie grass into pulp, pounding the outstretched body of the Indian, as he lay, limb to limb, over the form of his unconscious chum.

Hanley uncovered his eyes, but the air was thick with dust. Away over there something that looked like a heap of crumpled clothing lay upon the ground, but beneath that heap lay a young white man, with the heart of a soldier and the



Timber Wolf

trying to break up the herd by sheer force of bravery. He was endeavoring to head them off from his son, for the cowboy was Hanley himself.

One fierce and frightened cry went from Joe Long's lips as Hal's cayuse fell. Then the Indian clapped his heels to the flanks of his own cayuse, and flattening himself in the saddle, rode off like the wind. Never did cayuse travel faster down that steep mountain side, never did Indian ride with more fixed a purpose.

There was not a moment to waste—only ninety yards separated the fallen cayuse from the floundering sea of cattle. Hal had taken out his revolver and shot his cayuse dead. Evidently he meant to crouch under its carcass, but now he was waving farewell to his father with reckless bravery, knowing that his chance was small. He stood with smoking revolver in his hand, his gay neck scarf loose and untied—a fearless, picturesque figure in the midst of the wild, free prairies to which he belonged, and which he loved so dearly. He would be sorry to die, but he would die like a man in a country for men, with the open sky above and the grass below, game to the last and with a smoking revolver in his hand. Then he turned and saw his friend, Joe Long.

Here was a chance—a desperate one, but a chance, none the less. The Indian bore on, under the very hoofs of the frantic cattle, his black hair flying wild in the wind. Lower and lower he crouched till one hand almost brushed the grass tops. There was no time to draw rein; to stop meant death. The boy ran out to meet him, and for a moment it seemed

gentle soul of a woman. He was alive almost unharmed, for a bony, muscular body had sheltered him from the shattering blows; two strong and sinuous hands had gripped the grass on either side, and in one of these hands was held a simple charm—a little polished dagger of Oriental design.

Today, if you visit the ranch among the foothills, you will find an old, lame, crippled and insane Indian hobbling about the property. It is Joe Long. Simple things amuse him, simple toys please him, and ere you have known him long he will show you with pride a little toy dagger given him long ago by his master.

A life for a life. Joe Long did not give his life, but he gave his body and his manhood that his master might live, and was not that a thousand times better than that he should have lived on, sound in body and in mind? For sooner or later he would have carried out his oath, and the white man's laws would have laid its hold upon him, while today there is no man in all the wide prairies happier and more free from care than Joe Long, the pensioned Indian.

He Wasn't Scared

Employer: "Well, what did he say when you called to collect that bill?"

Clerk: "That he would break every bone in my body and pitch me out of the window if I showed my face there again."

Employer: "Then go back at once and tell him he can't frighten me by his violence."

Real Progress in the North

By Neil Mack

When a new country reaches the stage of weddings among its own citizens, it is a very good sign that it is getting on. Such highly developed social life does not fit into the scheme of things in the wilderness, or even in the first days of a pioneer settlement. There were no white people's weddings, and certainly no wedding suppers, in the new Western North for a long time after it was found to be a good country to live in; but now the North has its due share of even these. Grande Prairie, for instance, till a few years ago a blank on the map, has weddings and wedding suppers nowadays, which proves that Grande Prairie is making real progress.

There is absolutely no reason why the north country should not have its social events, its festivities, and good times. If any people in Canada deserve such things, and need them, the people of the new north surely do; and their own social instincts have quite rightly found a way of expressing themselves. Neighbors are few and far apart; the country is built on a scale of magnificent distances; all the conditions of life are of the frontier kind, and not easily overcome; there is lack both of people to see and things to do—nevertheless the northern pioneers are having their good times, weddings and wedding suppers not excepted.

Down in the older parts of the west, life has become so generally standardized, and so very comfortable, that we have almost forgotten the first stages of our own social evolution. Rural telephones, moving picture shows, railway trains, and such like, have obscured the memory of the days when we had none of them. Time was when we even had no weddings, because it wasn't a wedding country. Then a little later came the stage when we began to enjoy ourselves a bit, socially speaking, and found that weddings and wedding suppers were feasible. What the southern prairie country was like then the northern prairie country is like now; it is passing through a period of social development that corresponds to that of Manitoba forty years ago, and, with some differences, is experiencing the same sensations.

A low, two-roomed, log shack, roofed with sod, banked up with earth, and surrounded everywhere by snow; a party of guests who have driven over the trail from perhaps twenty miles or more, and a minister whose offices in that connection have not yet been much in demand; a simple, unadorned marriage service in the combined living and eating room of the shack; and then a wedding feast at a board laden, as wedding-feast tables everywhere are laden, with the best that can be had, but without formality—that picture from the Grande Prairie of the present day is true to the letter of hundreds of wedding celebrations in the older west from a quarter to a half century ago. And after the wedding the happy couple drive a good many miles to what till then has been a bachelor's homestead, and that is their honeymoon trip.

The time will come, and quickly enough, when Grande Prairie, and Peace River, and Athabasca country will have their society functions and formal niceties, and frills of one sort or another. The north has an indisputable right to pass on, as we ourselves have passed on, from one stage to another, and its social progress should, to be sure, keep pace with all its other progress; yet the passing of the day of which these pioneer wedding pictures are typical cannot be without a considerable historic interest and sometimes a half regret. The social life of the last frontier has a certain romance about it, despite its limitations.

The Minister's Fault

"Why do you sign your name 'J. John B. B. Brownson?'" asked Hawkins.

"Because it is my name," said Brownson. "I was christened by a minister who stuttered."—Australasian.