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HUNKER BILL'S DOG

(Continued from page 6.)

"We weren't sticklers for international amenities, in them days. If we wanted a man, and he got two or three days across the Line, or what Line there was supposed to be, we didn't give up too much time worryin' over geography. So as we struck out towards the northwest, with a breeze sayin' he'd seen a man and a dog at so and so, and a squaw tellin' us she'd spotted that same man and that same dog by a camp-side a hundred miles further up, and then a free-trapper sayin' he'd stopped the two in some pass or other—why, we kind o' felt we'd get our hooks on that Hunker Bill if we had to chase him plumb across the Arctic Circle. Once we almost had him, in an Injin road-house, with a woman called Dawson Jenny. But that dog o' his smelt us, two miles off, and they got away through the heavy timber and headed for the mountains. But still we kept after him, always markin' his trail by that fool dog, and wearin' him down, day by day. But by this time we were in a land o' broken rock and scrub timber, and horses bein' no more good than grand pianos, we had to leave our mounts behind, and keep after him on foot. But I don't want you to rope in the idea that this here man-hunt was so all-fired one-sided. We had sure and special information that Hunker Bill was carryin' along with him his Winchester and two 41-caliber Colts. And knowin' he never was thin-skinned about inauguratin' a round or two o' gun-play, we got a sleepin' uncommon light and short, in those hills o' broken-rock, where a man could creep upon you and comb out your back hair b'fore you'd even see him.

"So, when we fin'ly got Bill cut off and corralled in a hole on a shelf o' rock, with three hundred feet o' sheer cliff behind him, we sat down and chewed over the problem how to git him out o' there without gittin' hurt—meanin', of course, both Bill and us. Seein' that we had grub and water, and Bill had none, or nothin' more'n he could carry, we decided some unanimous that it would be only fool showin'-off to try to rush his position. So we just sat down, comfortable and slow, and decided to starve Bill out. We allowed, at most, about three days o' hunger, then three days o' uncooked dog-meat, and then a proposition o' compromise from the losin' side. But history ain't always followin' the trail we stake out for her, no matter how close and fine we think we're calculatin'. Hunker Bill laid low, and we laid low, and the only sign o' life between us was that long-haired mongrel o' his. And all that first night, when we were on guard, this here dog stood on the brink o' that rock-shelf and howled down at us, low and solemn and long, worse'n the moon-howl of a she-wolf, till all us boys were beggin' the Inspector for just one shot at his carcass. But the Inspector sa'd no, that dog was our man's marker, so that if he ever did get away again, we'd still be able to trail him.

"Next mornin' we saw that dog, cut against the sky, with his nose over the ledge, watchin' us. He didn't move all that day, and I allow it didn't seem that he stirred all the next day. But there he lay, down-charged on that shelf o' rock, with his watchin' nose eternally pointin' down at us. We as-soomed Hunker Bill was keepin' him there; but we couldn't quite get onto Bill's game. And I knew that dog would do anything Bill would order him to, and I knew that dog wasn't hangin' out there for the love o' the open air, or for the sake on' the scenery. I likewise recollected that Bill had never once left that dog behind. And once, down east o' Fort MacLeod, I'd seen a thoroughbred game-dog do a queer thing. That game-dog belonged to a fool Britisher, who was shootin' prairie-chicken and quail, and all the dog had to do was to squat down and point, whenever he spotted the game. That point-act was so deep ingrained in his breedin' and in his trainin' that one day when they were



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