



"I'M DURNED IF MY GUN DIDN'T GO OFF ACCIDENTAL AND PLUMB RUIN ONE OF 'EM."

things, too, which was impressive, but not agreeable for a growing child. He had formed a sort of antipathy for Injuns at that time, which he confessed he hadn't rightly been able to overcome.

"Now, he allus found himself planning how to hand Mr. Lo the double cross and avoid complications.

"We worked down into South Western Arizona to a spot about thirty-five miles back of Fort Walker and struck a prospect. Sort of a teaser it was, but worth working on. We'd just got nicely started when 'Kink' comes into camp one day after taking a passiar around the butte for game, and says:

"The queerest thing happened to me just now, Kid."

"Well, scream it at me," I says, sort of smelling trouble in the air.

"Oh! It wasn't much," says he. "I was just working down the big canyon over there after a deer when I seen two feather-dusters coming up the trail. I hid behind a rock, watching 'em go past, and I'm durned if my gun didn't go off accidental and plumb ruin one of 'em. Then I looks carefuller and seen it wasn't no feather duster at all—nothing but an Injun."

"What about the other one?"

"That's the strangest part," says 'Kink.' "Pretty soon the other one turns and hits the back-trail like he'd forgot something; then I seen him drop off his horse, too, sudden and all togetherish. I'm awful careless with this here gun," he says. "I hate to see a man laugh from his tonsils forrad, the way he did. It ain't humorous."

"See here, I says, 'I ain't the kind that finds fault with my pardner, nor saying this to be captious and critical of your play; but don't you know that them Cochises ain't on the war-path? Them Injuns has been on their reservation for five years, peaceable, domesticated, and eating from the hand. This means trouble."

"My old man didn't have no war paint on him one day back at Frisbee," whispers 'Kink,' and his voice sounded puckered up and dried, "and my mother wasn't so darned quarrelsome, either."

"Then I says, 'Well! them bodies has got to be hid, or we'll have the tribe and the blue-bellies from the fort a scouring these hills till a red-bug couldn't hide."

"Away with 'em," says 'Kink.' "I've done all I'm going to for 'em. Let the coyotes finish the job."

"No, siree," I replies. "I don't blame you for having a prejudice agin savages, but my parents is still robust and husky, and I have an idea that they'd rather see me back on the ranch than glaring through the bars for life. I'm going over to bury the meat."

"Off I went, but when I slid down the gulch, I only found one body. T'other had disappeared. You can guess how much time I lost getting back to camp."

"'Kink,'" I says, 'we're a straddle of the ruggedest proposition in this country. One of your dusters at this moment is jamming his cayuse through the horizon between here and the post. Pretty soon things is going to bust loose. 'Bout to-morrow evening we'll be eating hog-bosom on Uncle Sam."

"Well! Well! says 'Kink,' ain't that a pity. Next time I'll conquer my natural shyness and hold a post-mortem with a rock."

"There won't be no next time, I reckon," I says, 'cause we can't make it over into Mexico without being caught up. They'll nail us sure, seeing as we're the only white men for twenty-five miles around."

"I'd rather put up a good run than a bad stand, anyhow," says he, "and I allows, furthermore, there's going to be some hard trails to foller and a tolerable



"I JUMPED CLEAN OVER THE FENCE."

disagreeable fight before I pleads "not guilty" to the Colonel. We'll both duck over into the Santa—

"Now don't tell me what route you're going," I interrupts, 'cause I believe I'll stay and bluff it through, rather than sneak for it, though neither proposition don't appeal to me. I may get raised out before the draw, but the percentage is just as strong agin your game as mine."

"Boy, if I was backing your system," says 'Kink,' "I'd shore copper this move and play her to lose. You come on with me, and we'll make it through—mebbe."

"No," I says; 'here I sticks.'

"I made up a pack-strap out of my extry overalls while he got grub together to start south through one hundred miles of the ruggedest and barrenest country that was ever left unfinished."

"Next noon I was parching some coffee beans in the frying pan, when I heard hoofs down the gully back of me. I never looked up when they came into the open nor when I heard a feller say 'Halt!'"

"Hello there!" somebody yells.

"You there at the fire," I kept on shaking the skillet over the camp fire.

"What's the matter with him?" somebody said. A man got off and walked up behind me.

"See here, brother, he says, tapping me on the shoulder; 'this don't go."

"I jumped clean over the fire, dropped the pan, and let out a deaf and dumb holler, 'Ee! Ah!'"

"The men began to laugh; it seemed to rile the little lieutenant."

"Cut this out," says he. "You can talk as well as I can, and you're a going to tell us about this Injun killin'. Don't try any fake business, or I'll roast your little heels over that fire like yams."

"I just acted the dummy, wiggled my fingers, and handed him the joyful gaze, heliographing with my teeth as though I was glad to see visitors. However, I wondered if that runt would really give my chilblains a treat. He looked like a West Pointer, and I didn't know but he'd try to haze me."

"Well! they 'klow-towed' around there for an hour looking for clues, but I'd hid all the signs of 'Kink,' so finally they strapped me onto a horse and we hit back for the fort."

"The little man tried all kinds of tricks to make me loosen on the way down, but I just acted wounded innocence and 'Ee'd' and 'Ah'd' at him till he let me alone."

"When we rode up to the post he says to the Colonel:

"We've got the only man there is in the mountains back there, sir, but he's playing dumb. I don't know what his game is."

"Dumb, eh?" says the old man, looking me over pretty keen. "Well! I guess we'll find his voice if he's got one."

"He took me inside, and speaking of examinations, probably I didn't get one. He kept looking at me like he wanted to place me, but I give him the 'Ee! Ah!' till everybody began to laugh. They tried me with a pencil and paper, but I balked, laid my ears back, and buck-jumped. That made the old man sore, and he says: 'Lock him up; I'll make him talk if I have to skin him."

story. I had sized the Colonel up as a dead stringy old proposition, too. He was one of these big-chopped fellows with a mouth set mor'n half way up from his chin and little thin lips like the edge of a knife blade, and just as full of blood—face, big and rustic-finished."

"I says to myself, 'Bud, it looks like you wouldn't be forced to prospect for a living any more this season. If that old sport turns himself loose, you're going to get 'life' three times and a holdover."

"Next morning they tried every way to make me talk. Once in a while the old man looked at me puzzled and searching, but I didn't know him from a sweat-pad, and just paid strict attention to being dumb."

"It was mighty hard, too. I got so nervous my mouth simply ached to let out a cayoodle. The words kept trying to crawl through my esophagus, and when I backed 'em up, they slid down and stood around in groups, hanging onto the straps, gradually filling me with wifful gems of thought."

"The Colonel talked to me serious and quiet, like I had good ears, and says: 'My man you can understand every word I say, I'm sure, and what your object is in maintaining this ridiculous silence, I don't know. You're accused of a crime, and it looks serious for you."

"Then he gazes at me queer and intent, and says, 'If you only knew how bad you are making your case you'd make a clean breast of it. Come, now, let's get at the truth."

"Them thought jewels and wads of repartee was piling up in me fast like tailings from a ground-sluice, till I could feel myself getting bloated and pussy with langwidge."

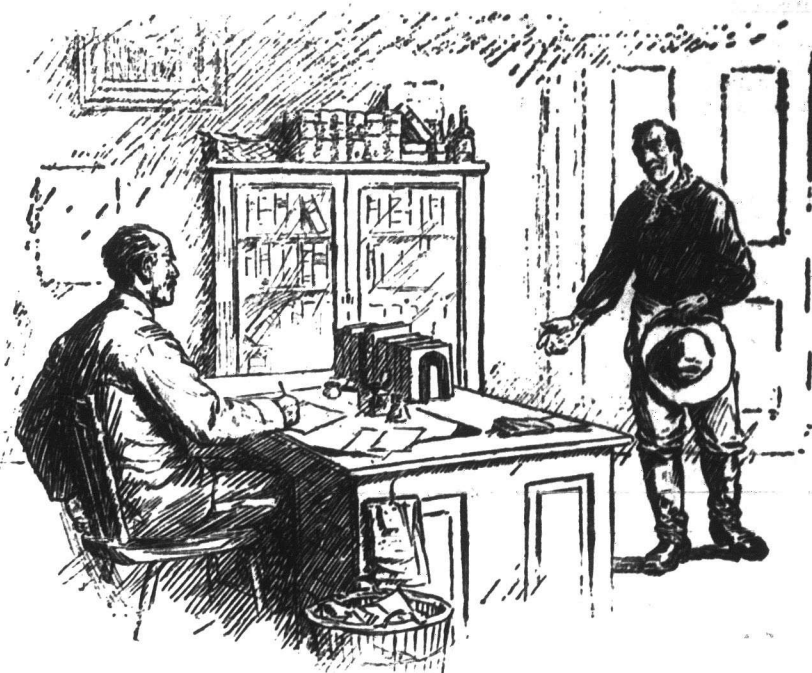
"But I thought, 'No! to-morrow 'Kink' 'll be safe, and then I'll throw a jolt into this man's camp that'll go down in history. They'll think some Chinaman's been thawing out a box of giant powder when I let out my roar."

"I goes to the guard house again, with a soldier at my back. Everything would have been all right if we hadn't run into a mule team."

"They had been freighting from the railroad, and as we left the barracks we ran afoul of four outfits, three span to the wagon, with the loads piled on till the teams were all lather and the wheels complainin' to the gods, trying to pass the corner of the barracks where there was a narrow opening between the buildings."

"Now a good mule-driver is the littlest, orneriest speck in the human line that's known to the microscope, but when you get a poor one, he'd spoil one of them cholera germs you read about just by contact. The leader of this bunch was worse than the worst; strong on whip-arm, but surprising weak on judgment. He tried to make the turn, run plum into the corner of the building, stopped, backed, swung, and proceeded to get into grief."

"The mules being hot and nervous, he sent them all to the loco patch, instant. They began to plunge and turn and back and snarl. Before you could say 'Craps! you lose,' them shave-tails was giving the grandest ex-



"YES, SIR. . . IT CAME BACK UNEXPECTED. REGULAR MIRACLE."