

had been refused because he wanted to take his wife, would exactly rejoice over the scouts' decision. In fact, Jack had a rather well-developed sense of injustice, and a summary method of showing it. And he was by no means alone.

Jim agreed to transport the three in his schooner, which was one point well settled. Billy suggested at least a dozen absurd methods of keeping the camp in ignorance until the start had actually been made, each one of which was laughed to scorn by the practical Jim.

"She might put on men's clothes," he concluded desperately.

"For the love of God, what for?" inquired Jim. "Stick to sense, Billy. Besides, there's the kid."

Billy tried once more.

"They might meet us 'bout a hundred mile out. He could take Jim's schooner, here, and mosey out nor'-west, and then jest nat'rally pick us up after we gets good and started. That way, the camp thinks he palavers with Jim and us to get a schooner, and maybe, they thinks Jim is a damn fool a whole lot, but Jim don't mind that; do you, Jim?"

"No, I don't mind that," said Jim, "but yore scheme's no good."

"Why?"

"He wouldn't get ten mile before somebody'd hold him up and lift his schooner off him. They's a raft of bad men jest layin' fer a chance like that to turn road agent."

Billy turned a slow brick red, and got up suddenly, over-turning the coffee-pot. A dozen strides brought him to the camp of the Tennessee outfit. There he raised his voice to concert pitch.

"We aims to pull out day arter to-morrow," he bellowed.

"We also aims to take with us two tenderfeet, a woman and a kid. Them that has objections can go to the devil."

So saying, he turned abruptly on his heel and returned to his friends. Jim whistled; but Alfred smiled softly, and began to recap the nipples of his old-fashioned Colt's revolvers. Alfred was at that time the best shot with a six-shooter in the middle West. Seeing this, Billy's frown relaxed into a grin.

"I'm thinkin' that them that *does* object probably *will* go to the devil," said he.

In half an hour the news was all over camp. When Michail Lafond heard of it, he left his dinner half eaten and went out to talk earnestly to a great variety of people.