

SAGE-BRUSH STORIES

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SAGE-BRUSH STORIES

By the same Author :

THE LOST CABIN MINE
THE ISLAND PROVIDENCE
A WILDERNESS OF MONKEYS
ABOVE YOUR HEADS
DEAD MEN'S BELLS
THE PORCELAIN LADY
HANDS UP !
ELLEN ADAIR
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
THE S. S. GLORY
TWO GENERATIONS
CINDERELLA OF SKOOKUM CREEK
MAPLE-LEAF SONGS

SAGE-BRUSH STORIES

By FREDERICK NIVEN

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To
JOHN MURRAY GIBBON



To Messrs. Street and Smith, of New York, and to the Proprietors of *The Pall Mall Magazine*, of London, I beg to express my appreciation of their sense of fairness and Square Deal. By asking of me only those rights that they could use, namely the magazine rights, they left me free to gather together now, under one cover, these stories, the majority of which originally appeared, in magazine form, under their honourable auspices.

F. N.



FOREWORD

IT seems to be necessary either on the one hand, to apologise for, or defend, a volume of short stories, or, on the other, to resort to some ruse for selling it—and yet perhaps there is another way ; when there appears to be only a choice of two evils there may be also (as Nance Holdaway said) a good choice as well. I have seen a volume of short stories that looked like a novel by reason of the stories being called chapters, and each title being set under the ostensible chapter number ; and that method does not appeal. A certain writer collecting his own magazine stories a year or two ago, wrote a little preliminary treatise on the short story in which he mentioned the names of many other short story writers, his contemporaries, and gave his views on them ; and that proceeding did not appeal to some of them ; nor does it appeal to me.

Nobody can tell me why short stories require a preliminary spoof, or at least a spiel—such as I am writing just now ; but evidently they do, which vexes me, for though one or two of the stories in this book are doubtless just so-so compared with certain classic examples, there are others that I can re-read myself ; and I don't like to resort to anything at all in the nature of subterfuge (or what Americans call " throwing the con ") to get people to read what

I hope requires no subterfuge or throwing of the con.

So all that I shall say to the person who is averse to short stories without having diagnosed the reason for that aversion is this : My dear sir or madam, please try to be victorious over your unexplained prejudice against a story that is not long ; please look inside. You may care for the contents. There are here nineteen chances of finding a story to your mind, instead of there being only one chance. Consider it that way, and have a trial dip at any rate—for your own sake, and mine.

FREDERICK NIVEN.

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SAGE-BRUSH STORIES

DISCRETIONARY POWERS

IN the days of our Youth generally do we love those narratives in which the quiet, unassuming, almost delicate-looking man, roughly handled by a bully, whips off his coat (disclosing the arms of an Apollo) and wades into his tormentor—routing him from the field before one could say "Jack Robinson." With gathering years there is a tendency to be sceptical of such stories, at least we hear them with some touch of scepticism.

But hearken to the tale of the measly-looking little person who arrested the shell-back, the mulatto, and the two coons who raised Hades on Van Doren's Island, off the coast of the Pacific Province.

He was indeed measly-looking. His clothes hung on him as clothes hang on a nail—for west of the Rockies there is no gay red tunic on the swelling torso of the policeman, no smart cavalry pants add grandeur to his stride. He is often so little in evidence that persons have been known suddenly to sit up in their chairs, in B.C. (after having passed across the Plains and seen the red-coat dotting them), exclaiming; "I say! You have no police here!" Far be it from me to say that all the Provincial Police are out of the running when someone is wanted to pose as the blacksmith in a tableau of Longfellow's celebrated poem; and yet—hearken to the tale of one of them, a man not unique; nay, rather a mere unit of a type.

Of his clothes I have made mention. As to the man who wore these clothes—he had a weary manner. Even his moustache looked weary, dropping dismally on either side and half over his mouth. From each cheek bone, downward almost to the chin, was a sunken line. He had a slight stoop. His utterance was so drawling and careless that one was at a loss to know whether he were drunk or sober. See him in conversation with a man not used to him and they made a quaint two-some:—Smith, the meagre one (that was his meagre name), would be mumbling and drawling, the other man constantly repeating: "What? what?" or "I beg your pardon?" or "How?" according to his manners.

Some people who did not look into Smith's grey eyes were sometimes apt to think they had been talking to a "no-account" person. That was their mistake. The merely perfunctory observer would have dismissed him at a glance as a hobo, or tried to patronise him and draw him out as a character. See him among his friends, talking, and you might well imagine that he was a hypochondriac giving full details of his tired feeling to the listening and sympathetic group. And in all probability he would really be trying to tell them (seeing they were keenly anxious for details) how he arrested Larry the hold-up man, or how he took down to Victoria the Bughouse Remittance Man, who after a final jamboree ran nude in the woods. He had a funny little laugh in his chest in the midst of his narrations of such episodes—a laugh half apologetic, half relishing. But indeed he was no great talker. Often, when he had been got to begin a yarn, he would suddenly let it fizzle out, slip a faint oath into the preliminary and whetting sentences, and declare

himself too tired to go on. He looked it. He generally looked it—bored stiff; that is unless you heard his deep, clucking laugh, or caught the twinkle of his eye.

He looked just as usual on the day that this yarn begins, sitting on a tree-stump and cleaning his pipe as if he had all time to do it in—the tree-stump in question being one of many in the unbuilt lots of Simpson Inlet. It was a day for lotus-eating—the kind of day when west coast men feel that something is to be said for a land where food falls in the mouth out of trees instead of having to be worked for, hunted for, or even fished for. It was quite early in the morning, but it was already promising a stifling day up the inlet. Only when a sea-breeze fanned would it be tolerable.

Suddenly Smith sat up, a little less humped on his tree-stump, and said: "Say! They're paddling some. It's a wonder to me they don't skim *out*!"

Those who heard looked along the inlet and noted a long dark streak, and a much longer white streak, in the midst of the reflections of timbered mountains. The canoe and its wake broke up the still reflections into a thousand—into thousands—of little pieces of waggling, wavering portions of mountain, agitated ripples. And in a minute or two the long canoe (that had once been a cedar) was shooting for the beach, and the six squat effigies in it were putting on the break with their paddles.

The effigy in the bow got out and shuffled up the beach. Other men had come out of the houses alongshore and were in evidence, but the Indian (that is if he was an Indian—some of the coast tribes seem half Mongolian) made straight for Smith. Smith blinked at him and went on cleaning his pipe. He came close; and the least interested-

looking man on the beach was Smith. When the Siwash stopped beside him he glanced up quizzically. The Siwash began to make a clicking and clucking sound, much like that sound produced when kneading dough—or mixing putty. One understands what is meant by guttural speech when one hearkens to this coast Indian. Germany is exonerated then; German is nasal by comparison.

Every now and then Smith murmured a swear-word, as one might say: "Quite so." That was what he meant, but the swear, in a gentle, astonished intonation, came easier. Then he clicked and clucked, and made a few noises as of suffocation and strangulation, looking up at the Siwash. The Indian's face cleared, and he replied. Smith gave a little elevation of his brows, a little nod, and rose, putting his pipe in his pocket, and keeping his hand in with it—a sort of labour-saving device, or so it seemed—he went easily up the shingle to a shack among the stumps.

He came out presently, hands still in jacket pockets, but under one arm was a rifle comfortably tucked, butt up, barrel pointing to the earth a foot ahead of him. He had put on a cartridge belt. He still looked shabby and seedy generally. He might have been going forth to commit suicide, leaving behind him a note: "Fed up—bored stiff. Tired of life!" or something like that.

The hotel-keeper, looking at him wandering down the beach, shouted out: "You ain't changed your shoes, Smith. You ain't goin' in them——"

"Any old thing will do," Smith answered sadly.

His response made the men smile. Up till then they had not smiled, for many of them understood, if not all of it, at least the gist of the clucking and strangling. And it was pretty tough; to wit—a

whisky-smuggling boat had been wrecked, the owner and skipper drowned, the four seamen (or toughs that had helped them) alone survived. And these four toughs were raising Hades on Van Doren's Island with the whole cargo of the wrecked sloop.

"Don't you want anybody along with you?" hailed the heavy-weight champion of the place, a man who could lift trees, but was, alas! a bully.

"What for?" asked Smith. "I ain't goin' out weight-liftin'!"

The bully determined to pick a quarrel with the men who smiled broadest over this response, but froze up temporarily. Just as he waded to the canoe, and was ready to step in, Smith called suddenly to the hotel-keeper:

"Tom!"

"Yap?"

"Look after them pups of mine, will you?"

"Sure."

That was all. If Smith wanted a deputy he would ask for one. Nobody need offer himself.

Away they went, the canoe leaving a long cut ripple like a white feather behind it. From the shore Smith could be espied tucking his head down, holding up his coat in front with his left hand, shielding a match in his right, lighting a cigar. A flutter of smoke whirled backwards. The six effigies dug into the water with their paddles.

II

THERE is, to-day, a saw-mill on Van Doren's Island. But it was only put up this year. They are taking the "big sticks" out of the place, but even till a year ago it was as when Smith drew close to it on

the late afternoon of the day on which he had told the hotel proprietor to look after the pups. True—"any old thing would do." And the dried salmon of his canoe-men was palatable and filled the purpose intended of food in the mind of such men as Smith. That the pangs of hunger be allayed was all he asked; and he had a pocketful of cigars.

There was no necessity to tell the Indians to make time. They were making it as only Indians could—six "progressives" from a village not very savoury of reputation, but reputed rather for debauchery than for belligerence. They took advantage of every current that could be taken advantage of. Even Smith's eyes gave a jump of the adventurer's delight now and then. They were on the inside (eastern shore) of the island; consequently, hugging the land, they were in gloom now, under the shadow of Van Doren—with not a sound but the occasional bark of a seal, or up in the thick woods that gloomed down on them the cawing of rooks, or angry scream of bald-headed eagles, or falling of some old tree in the forest.

It was too late, Smith considered, to see the sights of a rifle fairly. Mists began to creep across the water. One of the Indians took a fit of coughing and spat over the side. Smith looked at his back and considered: "Another consumptive!" and ruminated over the pros and cons of civilisation and savagery, on the curses, and blessings, of each. Suddenly the Indians steadied all and swept their cedar out of the current and further inshore, where a gash of an inlet ran away backward from the sound.

And as they did so there came over the water a sound of shrieking and yelling. The paddlers turned and looked at the lone figure in the stern.

For themselves they were scared. Was Smith scared? He was smoking, they noticed, smoking his cigar, the butt end—the chewed, frayed final of it, and he was smoking it with difficulty; it was as if he was hard up, going shy on cigars.

Every draw that he took illuminated the palm, and the reflected light from the hand smouldered and waned on his face. It was the face of a man disinterested. The paddlers were reassured. The shrieks had no effect on the man they had brought (they being civilised, and don't you forget it) to quell the trouble—just as the eastern, law-abiding citizen blows a whistle for the policeman when trouble visits his residential area. In the inlet it was darker still. A hail came to them from the lugubrious, plashy shore.

“That you, Smith?”

Smith looked shoreward.

“That Clallidge,” said one of the guttural paddlers.

“Hello, Claridge!” called Smith, and bade the canoe-men pull inshore. They swept alongside Claridge's pathetic little jetty of lashed trees. From further up the inlet the yells were fearsome and disgusting.

“They seem to be whooping it up here,” said Smith, stretching up and taking Claridge's hand.

“By heck! You're wanted all right,” Claridge answered.

The Indians lounged down listless on the instant. They looked like effigies for their own totem poles, but they had been at it for twelve hours, having started out this morning in the morning mist, at four a.m., and paddled till the mist of late afternoon.

“Couldn't have come quicker on a cruiser,” Smith remarked as he clambered up the sea-weedy and slippery logs. “How is she stackin' up?”

"Search me! I'm keeping close. I've got a blame arsenal ready for them if they come around to rush me. I tried to stop it the day before yesterday. I tried again yesterday, and they told me they would plug me if I didn't pull out, and, by heck, they came over and tried to rush my store. I stood them off all right. We're like that now—I got to keep out of the village and not butt in to their slopping out the liquor; and they got to keep around the bend of the rocks there or I draw a bead on them."

"The Siwashes?"

"No; they ain't huntin' for me—yet. They're all right. Even if they did I got some friends. The whisky men, I mean. I guess you got to commend me for not going down and picking them off anyhow, so as to make sure of them."

Smith laughed in his chest.

"Could you have done that?" he asked.

"Easy. They got fires agoing in the open. You can go around the bend there and rubberneck at the potlatch, and them never see you."

"Guess I'll hike over," said Smith.

"Well, just wait a minute till I get my argument, and I'm with you."

"I don't want you, Jim. You stay right here."

"You'll get no backing over at the village now," said Jim. "Guess these six are half regretting they didn't stay along and have a share," he added in a lower tone, "instead of pulling out for you. Just wait till I get my pacifier."

"I told you already," grumbled Smith, "that I was going over myself. I am liable to want a reserve behind me. You come when you hear me holler——" he paused; "if you don't mind," he finished, gently.

And away he went up the inlet-side, in the gathering darkness, to the bend—and there a radiance as of bonfires was ahead of him. He grunted to himself all the way, little grunts, like a man aggrieved. This we know from Claridge, who followed him stealthily in the rear. But probably he was grunting only because he was aggrieved at Claridge following him, though Claridge never seemed to think that and looked at me in indignation when I suggested such a reason to him. Yet he admits that suddenly Smith wheeled, came directly back in his tracks, and said :

“ Don't you do it, Jim. Don't you track me up. If anything went wrong we want you left behind to go ahead with them six fellers. You don't seem to understand, Jim, that, by heck, these whisky-fellers—here—have—just—got—to—be—taken ! ”

And, leaving Jim to make out the line of his argument, off he went again, and the shadow of his figure was whelmed anon (after having shown a second or two against the radiance of the further fires) in the black woods that in those days stretched down to the cape.

Not for quite some time did Claridge venture to follow, and then did so on his stomach, till he could look down into the revelling village ; and beside him crawled four of the six paddlers, the other two—after making fast—having curled down where they were, to sleep. And though he could see the “ whooping-up ” village it seemed ages before anything happened.

III

SMITH surveyed the scene and then threw away his cigar. In the forests of Van Doren's Island

things are different from what they are in the forests of the Rockies and Selkirks. You can throw away a cigar-end here in midsummer, and nothing will happen. It dropped on moss and emitted a long, dying hiss.

Smith could join in a potlatch with anybody. He could, when occasion was pressing, "celebrate" himself. But never did he "celebrate" to such an extent that he could not be made an example of uprightness, fail to see the sight of his gun, or—if a call came—be able to respond and go forth and hale home to incarceration and trial whoever, be he white man or red man or yellow man, had transgressed the laws. The sight he beheld now was disgusting. By heck it was! He was a son of a gun if this here village shouldn't be photographed and put upon the lantern slide, and lantern screen, of every Temperance agitator in America!

It offended his sense of the uprightness of humanity. As for them two coons—him leaning against the tree, beside the other that was ladling the booze, looked as if he was imitating a Chicago cop. Six foot two, he guessed. The other fellow a good match. Smith suddenly chuckled to himself. He guessed that if he toted them down to Simpson Inlet he could start a side-show, and paint over the door *The Alabama Giants. Come in and have a look!* He would have to raise the roof of his shack, by heck! The Siwashes and Claridge said there were four of them—a white man, a half caste, as well as the two niggers. Maybe the other two were dead. These Siwashes lying about drunk before their doors—were they dead for sure, or dead drunk?

The fires flickered and flared, and the light ran up and down the tree-stems. It was a wonder the

Indians were not all scared of the Hoodoos coming out of the woods and sucking their life blood while they lay around that way. Never hunted in their own woods, them Siwashes; scared of Hoodoos; only fished in the creeks and in the inlets. Now—there was a waste of good liquor, Smith thought, as he saw one of the coons rush after an Indian who ran about crazed and screaming, and deluge the retreating back with a pailful of whisky as if it had been water. He reckoned there couldn't be much left, or the sloop was sure loaded heavy.

Where were the other two fellows? He must locate them all before he started in to arrest—just in case of being taken in the rear by one of them. Away through the bush he went, from tree to tree, till he was at the end of the straggle of houses that constituted the village. They were not the old solid style, but poor imitations of the white man's shack. He looked through chinks in one after another, and retired from one after another thinking of the Temperance lecturer. One screaming debauchee came rushing round the gable of a house and almost collided with him, leapt aside, yelled again, and fled to the woods.

The next shack offered no peep-holes. Smith stood and bit his ragged moustache in thought, then slouched round to the front, slouched on, slouched to the door, all huddled and imitating the uncertain steps of one far gone under the influence of whisky, or ammonia and blue-stone water—the concoction of poison that is generally brought up in smuggling boats. He came to the door. He lurched in and, on the instant, in a hard and determined voice he said: "Now you —, don't let a cough out of you, or your name is Dennis."

He had treed one of the men he wanted. And

he thrust his lean and tired face close to the bloated cheeks of the half-caste of whom he had been told.

"Who are you?" said the half-breed.

"Me? I'm the man that will blow the top of your head off if you sneeze, by heck. You savvy? I'm the man you got to obey. I've got the skipper out of Nova Scotia skinned in the way of bustin' the *ego* out of you if you don't do just what I tell you."

"What do you want?"

"What do *I* want? What do *you* want, you mean. Do you want a long stretch or a short one? If you stand by me and do what I tell you I'll speak up for you. Savvy? I'll say to the commissioners: 'This man here seems to have been led away by the others. So far as I could see he wasn't taking part in the trouble.' Savvy?"

"You're a policeman?"

"I am. I'm the policeman that's going to take you shipwrecked mariners down to Simpson Inlet, write out my charge, and shove you down to the Island in no time. And I'm giving *you* a chance. I'll speak for you if you'll do as I tell you. It will shorten your stretch a whole lot."

"I'll do what you say, boss."

"Good. Then you begin by telling me where the other man is. I see the two coons that I've been hearing about. But where's the white man?"

"I guess he's in the shack further up on the other side."

"Well, just you give him a hail and tell him to come along in here."

"Yes. What do I tell him I want him for?"

"You tell him to come in. You tell him you've got a surprise for him. Go on. Get busy and shout."

" Maybe if I shout de other two fellows over dere will come over too ? "

" All right—leave that to me. The door's narrow, ain't it? And they're big and stout, ain't they? You start hollerin'."

The " hollerin' " was successful. A shouting answered and, over the bent shoulders of his ally, who stuck out his head as he called, Smith could see a typical specimen of the water-front tough coming cake-walking along in response to the hail.

" What you want ? " he asked as he came nearer.

The ally explained that he had something to show—a surprise. The water-front tough slipped his hand to his back, drew a razor from his pocket, and made it flash in the firelight as he said :

" If you're foolin' me you'll get this ! "

The ally drew inside a little way.

" I tell you dis man is dangerous," he whispered to Smith hurriedly. " I don't know why de drink does not knock him over. He has been drinking tree days and he don't get knocked over."

The man outside was evidently not in the slightest degree afraid. He had enough belief in himself to come to the shack whither he was thus called. As he approached he said :

" I tell you, John Lincoln, if you got nothing in there to surprise me I'll cut off your head. Look out! I'm comin' in."

" This feller ain't open to reason," Smith grunted, and as the tough lowered his head and charged in, razor in hand, Smith at the side stuck out his foot. The fearsome and fearless one crashed on his face, hand still behind him clutching the razor. Smith put a foot on his arm, and the cold end of his rifle-barrel on the man's neck, and said quietly : " Don't holler ! You know the feel of that."

The man wriggled, turned his head, and saw what it was that he felt. He broke out in malediction on the ally, but he knew too much to move.

"Drop that razor," Smith advised. Slowly the recumbent man opened his great hand and laid the weapon down. "Sit up!"

He sat up.

Smith tucked his rifle butt under his right arm. There would be a wild recoil if he had to fire in that position; but he needed his left hand for a second—to draw out a pair of handcuffs and throw them to the ally.

"Put them on him," he ordered.

The prone man gave a yell for help, but did not risk rising.

"Put 'em on!" rasped Smith, and the ally snapped on the "come alongs" as one who knew all about them of yore.

"Now then," said Smith, "you must look after this fellow while I strolls over to them two others. If he hollers out you fix him."

"What can I fix him with?"

"Fix him with? Any old thing." He nodded at the razor. "What's the matter with that? *I* don't want to finish him. *I* got to take him in A—L—I—V—E, you see—alive. It's up to me to do that. But I leave him in your keeping."

He looked keenly in the half-breed's eyes; they showed a suspicion—and a doubt.

"You ain't so tough as that, eh?" Smith chuckled. "Well, I guess he would do it to you. I believe you *are* the best of the four. No, I don't want you to fix him unless it is absolutely necessary. And say," he looked down at the captive, "you needn't try to make a break away into the woods.

Plenty of men, you know, have tried to get away into the woods—not on this island only, but all up and down the coast. It's no good. You got to come out of them woods some day, or die in them. I'd get you again all right. Even if you got the handcuffs off—which you couldn't, easily—you wouldn't do any good. Don't forget that. I wouldn't follow you—I'd just camp right here and wait for you to come back. You'd come back all right, crazy. There's an asylum at Victoria."

So saying he strolled out of the shack and loafed over to where one of the coons sat across the last barrel, looking round on the scene of Bacchanalian hideousness. His companion, some distance off, was trying to do something that looked like a cross between an Indian dance and a dance from the Bight of Guinea, with an old Indian woman—one of the last still afoot. It was not a pretty sight. Smith walked over with the air of an inhabitant of the Island out on a hunt to see what he could raise, rifle under his arm—and now not at all upset by the scenes around him. Thus, I believe, do doctors walk through the rooms in the Bedlams over which they have dominion. He stood looking at the gruesome dance. The coon astride the barrel stared up at him, bleared, bloodshot, incapable.

"Who—who—what in thunder—where did you come from?" he stammered at last.

"Me?" said Smith, looking back from the Bedlam shuffle to the nigger on the keg. Very quietly he spoke: "You fellows are covered from the bushes." He bent down and flicked a sheath knife from the man's belt. "No—don't bend for your gun."

The dancing coon and the hag, intent on their primitive shuffle, did not see him. The other man

looked like a fogged imbecile. Smith went on, more softly.

"I got to arrest you, you know," he said, and clicked the handcuffs on. The man almost offered his hands, like one stunned. In the midst of his debauched mind he felt he had met his master.

The click of the bracelets—or instinct—brought the dancing coon round with a jerk. He flung his hand behind his back, gave a yell—and leapt. Smith shoved up his rifle; but, cool still, he did not touch the trigger. There was a rush through the bush, and Smith guessed that his ally, seeing hope of the turning of the tables, had become hostile. No; it couldn't be that. Thought is quick at such times. He whirled alertly to see if he was to be attacked on two sides—and Claridge crashed on the Giant Coon, downed him by weight of attack, and, on top of him, grabbed for his razor hand.

"Oh hell! Buttin' in!" said Smith, disgusted.

The fallen giant struggled. Smith took out his next pair of handcuffs and crouched down on a knee ready to slip them on when occasion offered. He and Claridge were like two men in a corral taking first action upon an unsaddled colt. The giant's arm was bent back in the fall. Now, as he struggled, and Claridge suddenly levered at him by some piece of unconscious jiu-jutsu (for Claridge could shoot with the best of them; paddle without being ashamed before Indians; hit, if necessary, and hit hard; but knew nothing of the gentle art from across the Pacific) there came a sharp, unpleasant click, or half click, and the giant grunted in pain.

"Quit strugglin'! Quit strugglin'!" cried Smith in a rasping voice, using his teeth to bite the words over, his mumbling utterance gone. "You

better come quiet. This won't do you any good at the trial."

The black giant, chin in the earth, spraddled out, right arm dislocated—the forearm sticking up the wrong way from the elbow—moaned: "Let up! Let up!"

Claridge, still on the giant's back, looked at Smith who half crouched over them.

"Let him up?" he asked.

"Yap. And say, if he makes any trouble over things—shoot him. I've got the others. I guess he's resisting arrest good and strong, all right."

Claridge stood up, but with alertness, ready for the giant to rise, and covered him with a Colt from his belt, a Colt of that massive pattern that beginners are wont to make a rest of their crooked left arm for, when drawing a bead on the target. The coon rose and Smith looked him in the eye.

"Let me put your arm right," he said, leant his rifle against a stump, took the nigger's right wrist in his right hand, the elbow in his left hand, fumbled at it for a second, then suddenly pulled back the wrist. There was a click, and the forearm was straight again, the elbow back in the socket. Then Smith shouted to the other two to come along. They came—and the four prisoners eyed their captor strangely. He was back again in a shell—an unfathomable looking man, a rather dangerously unfathomable looking man, with his rifle tucked under his arm.

"Let no man who ain't seen Smith in action call him a slouch," says Claridge.

As for the Indians—with the exception of the old crone who had been shuffling with the giant, there was not one erect in the immediate vicinity. The few who had not taken part in the orgy were either

in the woods with their own kids and the kids of others, or else were camped around behind Claridge's store. Through the darkness the four prisoners "hiked" in the direction Smith ordered, leaving the village and its prone inhabitants. Suddenly he turned to Jim Claridge.

"Do you know who these fellows are skulking along beside us?" he asked, nodding into the woods.

"I hadn't noticed!" said Claridge. "They're some of the boys that have been down back of my store." He puckered his eyes. "And one or two of the ones that fetched you up," he added.

Smith stopped.

"I hate it like hell," he grumbled. "If that's who they are you tell them to fetch a torch or two to light us along."

Claridge called the order to them, which they obeyed with alacrity. They had only been holding back because of the stern order of Smith—the amazing little man whose word was law.

"They've been around here ever since you went up, waiting for you to holler," Jim explained.

Smith turned his head.

"You mean to tell me," he said deliberately, "that they've been watching me out of the woods all the time I've been manœuvring this here grip," and he nodded at the prisoners.

"That's what."

"Gee!" said Smith. "*That's* why I felt so blame peculiar all the time, I guess. I believe in this yere telepathy you know, Jim, and it stands to reason that all these there fellers peepin' and rubberneckin'—why, I can't think of it! I don't like it now! Yes, sir, I guess that's why I felt kind of shivers once or twice."

But the torch-bearers were back now, and down

the side of the inlet went the procession to Claridge's store; and in the trade room the four men sat—four of the ugliest figures that Smith had ever had through his hands, four bloated, blood-shot-eyed ruffians. Anon they went to sleep, with less to fear there than had their captors. In a big chair sat Smith. On the high counter Jim was perched. Outside, noses against the glass, the relieved and sober section of villagers looked in.

"I don't suppose you need to pull out now?" asked Smith. "I suppose you stay with your store and your teetotal friends? You'll be able to hold your own end up when the jamboree bunch wakens in the morning with a bigger thirst than ever, and half of 'em with the Blue Devils and Pink Lizards, or whatever kind of snakes they fancy?"

"O, I ain't scared of that!" said Claridge. "I'm only leavin' Van Doren so's to see you down with them fellers. You're liable to want to sleep."

"Pshaw! You lend me your boat," said Smith. "I'll bring her back and run in to see how they get on here with the fancy lizards and you. That's why I'm sorry you twisted that feller's arm. They're going to work their passage down."

"O say—well—I can tell you a dozen of the Siwashes here that would come along with you for that matter, good fellows too."

"That's all right. You give me your boat when morning comes along. I'm going to have a nap now. Keep your eye on them," and he put his chin on his breast.

Immediately his face assumed a sad and broken expression. It affected Jim strangely—that face of the sleeper, inert, lined, pathetic. He slept so till dawn, only moving once—to loosen his shoes, as if in his bunk, their slight construction evidently

affecting his sleep. When the gray dawn filled the room, and the scream of gulls began again, he wakened. Then he stirred, stretched, yawned, said "O hell!" three times, and sat up. He looked at Claridge, still on duty, took in the surroundings—the four snoring toughs who, shipwrecked on Van Doren's Island, had raised Hades there.

Jim went off to get the boat ready, and when Smith heard the grating of its keel on the beach as it was run out, he rose and whooped: "Tumble up, you sons of guns!" and up staggered his prisoners. He herded them before him from the store. They looked at him afresh in the morning light—at his tired face, his grim, weary expression, his dragged moustache, his dejected eyes, and they did as he bade them, waded, and got into the boat one after the other.

"Just you tie 'em by the legs to the thwarts, Jim—tight," said Smith. "I guess they might try to swim. There ain't goin' to be any tricks on the way down."

The man who had had his arm twisted asked if they were not to have any breakfast.

"Eh?" said Smith.

The coon looked at him, and seemed scared to repeat.

"Breakfast?" said Smith.

"I've put some grub in," said Claridge, "and water."

The man plucked up courage. He asseverated, with many oaths, that he would not touch an oar until he got some food.

"Now, ain't that interesting?" said Smith.

"I was going to let you off rowing altogether—seeing your arm is like that. But now—now, by

heck, you'll pull with the good arm. Sit here, you; you'll pull stroke too—and you'll set a pace worth talking about. I'm gettin' tired of you whisky-peddlin' stiffs!"

Claridge and one of his Siwash helpers (a good boy, in whose keeping he was wont to leave the store on occasions when he was absent from Van Doren's Island) tied the men's legs firmly. Smith, wading alongside, took their handcuffs off—then leapt in, sat down, and laid the rifle on his knees.

"Half a minute," he said, "wait till I light up." He produced a cigar and lit it. "All right—so long, Jim. I'll look you up again. Shove off! Give her hell you now, if you ain't huntin' trouble."

Away went the boat, and the last Claridge saw of it the four men were pulling hard, Stroke with one arm, and in the stern sheets was the wizened, vindictive looking (for the time at least) Policeman Smith, chewing a new-lit cigar.

* * * *

"Trouble at Van Doren's Island?" said Smith to me when I asked him. "How did you know?"

"Claridge told me."

"O Claridge. Sure! Where is he now?"

"In Victoria."

"Well, well—made good, I hope?"

"He seemed pretty well fixed," I agreed. "He told me to ask you to tell me the story—and how long the men got."

"Seven years, if I remember right," said he. "The other feller—the man I got to be my ally—got off easiest. He only got a year. I put in a soft speech on behalf of his tenderness——" he chuckled in his chest. "He was a tough all right too. But that's what I call using discretionary powers."

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T GET A JOB

WHEN Mack arrived in Eureka—the last city of that name—he believed that he had come to his own Eureka. It was evening, a blue and serene mountain evening, and the little town was infectiously astir. Its one main thoroughfare—Dawson Street—was all a-joggle with humanity, as if Eureka were not a town, but a fair.

"She"—Mack called Eureka "she," in the manner of his roving kind—captivated him. Men had just suppered, and were physically content; the last mosquito hawks were still zigzagging overhead, for though Dawson Street was in shadow, and the lamps were alight, the last glow of day still illumined the surrounding peaks. A witching glamour was on the dusty street and upon the faces of those whose heels hammered slow on the thronged sidewalks.

Mack accepted the hotel to which the first hotel rig that claimed him carried him. The driver seemed determined that Mack should be his, and he made no protest. Even the swish of the horses' long tails seemed a matter worthy of note. Eureka fascinated him. Here he was—and there was no denying that he was—in the spell of a new town. He had read the boosts of Eureka, and here *he* was and here *she* was, hardly a season old, tucked away in this fold among the sierras—the rich sierras, where gold strikes had recently been made well

worth the while of opening up. Up there, somewhere, in these crests, where the last glow now abruptly went out, were the famous mines—the Ophir and the This-is-It. Up there, also, were prospectors looking for more Ophirs, or hunting round for shows of mineral that would warrant the ejaculation from them of “This is *it*, too!” At least, they would be in camp now, at this precise moment, but they were up there, nevertheless. From the veranda of the Gold House, Mack could see a twinkle like a star that had dropped a little way from the sky, and rested in the shadowed mountain.

“Is that the light of the Ophir, or the This-is-It?” he asked some one.

“No—I expect that is a prospector’s camp,” he was told. “You can’t see the Ophir and This-is-It from here. They’re over the crest. At least, you can’t see the lights in the bunk house. During the day, from the end of Dawson Street, you can just make out—if you know where to look for it—a puff of steam now and then from the pumping engine at the Ophir. The This-is-It is over the crest altogether.”

“So?” said Mack, put his heels on the veranda rail, and, having lifted his eyes to the looming mountains with admiration for a spell, dropped them to observe the street below. The hum of talk and laughter went on from end to end of Eureka. She was, he felt, a live new town.

But—the tariff at the Gold House was three dollars a day, or, for a week, cut rate, eighteen dollars. So, at the end of two days, he left the Gold House and went round to First Avenue to a boarding-house there, where the tariff was twelve dollars per week, or, cut rate, if one slept in a double-bedded

room, ten dollars per week. Mack moved because he had arrived in Eureka with only twenty dollars, and because—despite the lively appearance of the town—he couldn't get a job.

Loughlin, owner of this boarding-house, had jumped into Eureka at her beginning, had bought half a dozen town lots—some of which he was holding, some of which he had already sold—had also a share in a prospect in the mountains, and had started the boarding-house as a stand-by while waiting for Eureka to go ahead. But his opinion of the place leaked out to Mack upon the second evening of Mack's sojourn under his roof.

Most of the boarders were "down-town;" that is, they were round the corner, in the next street—Dawson—playing poker at the West End, or listening to the Salvation Army open-air performance at the East End, or strolling to and fro, talking town lots and eating cherries. Mack, alone on the veranda, sat listening to the blent music of the band of the Salvation Army and of the town band, which was serenading a newly arrived company promoter at the Grand Hotel, a man who, it was hoped, would believe in Eureka enough to start another mine a-going, and open up a smelter. Out on to the veranda came Loughlin.

"Good evening!" said he. "How does it go?"

Mack moved his cigar.

"Good evening!" he responded; but how it went he did not say.

Loughlin sat down, and softly he inquired: "Got a job?"

"Nope!" said Mack, with a definite nod.

"And tried?" asked Loughlin sympathetically.

"And tried, sure," said Mack.

There was a pause, and then Loughlin, after

sitting comfortably and tilting his chair, and saying, "Thanks—I don't mind," to the cigar proffered by Mack, cleared his throat.

"I've heard it said," he commented, "that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is wanted in that town and not supplied—and then to supply it."

"Yes," said Mack, with a dry reservation in his mind—that one needs capital to do that, and that what some people want is just a job. It was only a personal reservation, however; he did not voice it.

"Well, sir," said Loughlin, "so far as I can see there is no scope for any one in Eureka. She has hotels at all prices; she has so many that some are liable to shut down because provisions are at boom prices, and there ain't no real boom. Eureka has all the superficial appearance of boom if——" he hesitated.

"If you arrive after sundown, and see the crowds of people," suggested Mack.

"That's right," agreed Loughlin. "But if you go along Dawson during the day you get a different impression. For every man at work there are three watching him—envious. Up at the Ophir and the This-is-It certificated miners are working as muckers, hoping for another prospect to open up rather than move elsewhere. This country is all rocks—there's no sand bars here for placer mining. Do you think this fellow"—and he waved a finger in the direction whence came the town band's music—"will open a smelter here? No, sir—not for a long time, anyhow. He's only here to make a splash, so as to attract buyers for his own town lots. He has pocketfuls. He is, of course, helping all of us that have lots for sale—that is, if we can catch the buyers

that he brings along. But he's got a heap to make out of Eureka before he begins doing anything for Eureka. That's capital! What about the others—without capital? What about the hotels, boarding-houses, livery stables, general stores, ironmongery, barber parlours, fruit stalls, book and drug stores, soft drink and candy stores, photographers—cabinet size and stamp size—skittle alley, tobacco stores? Where's the opening for stores and so forth? And as for jobs—carpenters have finished about all Eureka will want in the building way for a long spell, now; there's too much built already. Street workers? Her sidewalks are all down, her blocks are cleared. Oh, I'm not *knocking* Eureka—she's all right, but overdone! All I say at the moment is that I've heard it said that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is most wanted, and not supplied, and——” he gave a little grunt. Some of his boarders were in arrears, and, though he let them stay on, he was doubtful if all would, eventually, get jobs and pay up. “I think what is most wanted in Eureka is jobs!” and he chuckled sadly. “Or should I say *are* jobs? The big majority of the folks here want a job, and they can't get a job—that's all that's to it.”

The arrival of a prospective boarder with a roll of blankets and a suit-case called the proprietor away; and, left alone once more, Mack pondered the talk he had listened to. It depressed him a trifle, but he did not thrust it aside in his mind. He allowed it to stay—and then, suddenly, he had light, brought down his chair from the tilt, a notion advertising its arrival in the dancing of his eyes, and—walking smartly and businesslike—he set off into the stir of Eureka with its crowds, chatter, lights,

haze of cigar smoke, rubadub of heels, band music, gramophone songs, and all the rest of it.

II

"Two days at the Gold House equal to six dollars," he meditated. "Cigars equal one dollar—total seven dollars—Seven dollars from twenty equals thirteen," and he turned over his bills. He had only ten left—what the other three had gone on he could not recall. His mental ledger was usually like that; but this lapse of the bookkeeper he promptly condoned, having other affairs on hand interesting all his staff.

"What is wanted in this go-ahead city," he said to himself, "is, as Loughlin says, a job. There is a tremendous demand for jobs, far exceeding the supply."

He was now in Dawson Street, projecting himself along with forceful, swinging strides, and he remarked to himself, walking westward, how well supplied was Eureka in other ways.

"Yes," thought he, counting three fruit stores, "Loughlin was right. There's competition in Eureka in most lines, and here's one field utterly untouched. What!" For a great placard across a window announced: "These premises will shortly be opened by the Bargain Hardware Ironmongery Company." "Another hardware store! And in the rooms above it are three dentists! Competition in every field—and the one thing wanted in this town is not supplied: jobs."

So ruminating, he entered a door on the lintel of which was the legend: "H. Markheim, Real Estate, Land, Mines, Houses bought and sold."

"How do you do?" said Mr. Markheim, behind the counter, laying down his cigar.

"How do you do?" said Mack. "I've come to see you about a shack that I notice you have to let just above the depôt. It has been empty for some time, and, though it's not what could be called central, it's about the size I want. What's the rent?"

"That building?" asked Markheim. "No, it's not central, but it's the first building that a man sees coming up from the depôt, which makes up for its lack of centrality. It is, therefore, not depreciated by lack of centrality, for what it loses in that way it gains by being seen by everybody."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mack. "I seem to see it differently. I almost missed that shack myself when I arrived, for I was looking on up the hill into town. It might have been just a boulder by the roadside."

"Well, sir, it's right handy for the depôt, ain't it? It is a building I have on my books as 'close proximity to depôt'—I make a point of that. What it loses in centrality it gains in that, too—it is easy of access. The rent is forty dollars a month."

"That will be thirty, then," said Mack.

"Oh, no!"

"You can't let it," said Mack. "It has been vacant ever since I came to Eureka."

"How long have you been here, sir?"

"Four days," answered Mack, with a bland smile.

"You can have it for thirty-five," said Markheim.

"All right—give me the key."

"You don't want to go in right now, do you?"

"Sure. I'll get the place in order to-night. You can draw up the agreement," and Mack took eight dollars seventy-five from his pocket. "Here's a week's rent in advance as a guarantee of good faith."

Markheim found the key, and handed it over.

"What's the name?" he asked.

"John Mackenzie—I'm at the Loughlin House, First Avenue."

"I'll give you a receipt for this."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mack. "You can have it for me to-morrow when I come in to sign your agreement."

He had a faint doubt amid his hopefulness—and he wished to establish an easy, a nonchalant way of treating the business. If he couldn't trust Markheim for twelve hours with a receipt, Markheim would be less likely to be easy over collecting rent when rent was due; and Mack was just a shade uncertain of his scheme, the scheme that had brought his chair down from the tilt so triumphantly a quarter of an hour ago.

In the Eureka Book and Drug Store he purchased two sheets of cardboard—ten cents each—and a small pot of ebony stain—twenty-five cents; a brush—twenty-five cents—eight drawing pins—ten cents—and returned through a Dawson Street more glamorous than ever to his boarding-house. His room-mate was afield, and he had solitude in the little summer-heated room, coat off, to inscribe, in careful print—with tongue, though he knew it not, rhythmically wagging to and fro as he worked—upon one card:

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE
PREMISES?

THE EUREKA EMPLOYMENT AGENCY OPENS
HERE TO-MORROW.

COME EARLY TO AVOID THE DOOR
JAMB.

The other card he kept in its pristine state.

The black stain dried fairly quickly, though it seemed not to dry quickly to Mack. At last, with dusk creeping on the "city," he set off to his new premises and pinned up his printed card upon the top panel of the door, then stepped back to admire the effect. The landlord could not object, he considered, to this notice being here to-night, a mere mentioning of the bald fact that the shack—which Mack now called "premises"—would be opened next day. Mack was possessed of a deep-set belief that he would have to perform the operation known as "getting busy" right speedily. This was the speediest beginning he could think of. He stood back on the sidewalk's edge, admiring his heralding handiwork while the arc lights of Eureka flickered and sizzled up, and the mystic blue haze of night drew over all.

And as he surveyed his sign there advanced along the sidewalk a hefty specimen of humanity with slow, indefatigable stride, odd blend of weight and litheness, and looked at the piece of cardboard. Mack at that moment, had come to the decision that it was a hair's breadth off the straight, and he stepped forward to adjust it more mathematically; then he stood back a few paces again, acting much as does an artist who walks forward, and backs away, before his canvas. The hefty one, lingering, gave voice.

"Are you the proprietor?" he asked, and indicated the "premises" with the glowing end of his weed.

"I am, sir," said Mack.

"Well," said the hefty one, "I've been looking for you. It seemed strange to me to see a town so full of men and no employment agency. My name is Candlass. You may have heard of me."

Mack bowed—adroitly. It might mean: "How

do you do, Mr. Candlass?" Or it might mean: "Who has not heard of you?"

"I've just arrived here to get busy on a timber job, and I want thirty men."

Mack was on the point of saying: "You can get three hundred by raising your voice an octave higher," when he checked himself. There was a look in Mr. Candlass' eye, suggestive of wireless telegraphy. Mack, as it were, popped his operator into his own wireless station—and received his message.

"I intended to make my charge on opening day," said he, "one dollar. But if it is timber men you're after, I think I'll make it two."

"And you still have your dollar," said Candlass, as if talking to the sign.

There was no more to be said. Mack produced his pot and brush from his coat pocket, and, propping the card at an angle between chest and crooked left arm, he added:

WANTED:
A LIMITED NUMBER OF EXPERIENCED
LUMBERJACKS.

Candlass nodded.

"That gives me every right to fire them at the end of a week if they ain't experienced," he remarked.

Mack gave his deliberate bow, and commented: "And put the suggestion of not playing the game upon the shoulders of such gentlemen without any kick."

"And then I want some carpenters," said Candlass. "Maybe a dozen."

Mack inclined his head, and wrote again upon the card, gently wagging his tongue:

EXPERIENCED CARPENTERS

Then, brush in air, he remarked: "That means

you want a cook, and a cook's assistant, and a couple of hash slingers."

"Go right ahead," assented Candlass.

"I got to print smaller," said Mack; and continued:

ALSO OPENINGS FOR COOKS AND WAITERS.

Candlass, while Mack thus toiled, advanced to the window and looked in, putting his face close so as to see into the dark interior, shading his eyes with his hands from the lamp glow without.

"Guess you want a table and a chair," he remarked, "a ledger and a pot of ink. I see you got a counter. But a counter alone don't make a place look altogether slap up and imposing."

"The furniture's coming round to-night," said Mack. "Might I have the pleasure of liquidating with you now to seal our deal?"

"Guess it's about supper time," said Candlass. "I've just been strolling through this progressive city looking for you—and now that I've found you let the aperitif be on me."

III

"Mr. Loughlin, could you do me a favour?" said Mack. "Could you lend me, for one day only, a table, a chair, armchair preferred, a pot of ink, a penholder, nib included, and—and—er—let me see——" he paused, considering what else he required, desirous to get the whole, not at all easy, request made in one instalment.

"And a waste-paper basket," suggested Loughlin, "also the loan of a sixshooter, in case the scheme falls through. But what is it, anyhow? You can have them free, in return for allaying my curiosity."

"I'll tell you," said Mack. "It is really up to me to tell you. You said to me; 'I've heard it said that the way to make good in a new town is to look around and see what is wanted in that town—and supply it.'"

"And you've discovered *that!*" exclaimed the proprietor.

"Not I," said Mack. "You did. Wherefore, it is all the more up to me to inform you of my reason for getting up the necessary gall to ask you for this outfitting loan. I think, indeed, it is up to me to offer you a commission when the books are balanced at the end——"

"Don't mention it. My curiosity rises. I guess the news of your design is enough."

"Well, you said further," went on Mack, "that what is most wanted in Eureka is jobs. So I'm opening an employment agency."

Loughlin began to grin.

"What's the joke?" said Mack.

"Well, sir," and Loughlin chuckled more, "if you don't see the joke, the only excuse I can think of for you is that you've been hunting a job yourself so long that you've got the facet of humour rubbed off you. You can't get a job for yourself—and you're setting up to get jobs for other people!"

Mack began to chuckle, too. He chuckled, indeed, all the way down to the "premises," carrying a table on his back, and going thither across rearward lots so as not to bump into the prospective job hunters that again thronged the main street on their evening constitutional. About five minutes later, he was back in the boarding-house, where the generous Loughlin was getting ready the rest of the necessary effects. The proprietor, who was coming

"down town" to do some shopping for the morrow, accompanied him with a hanging lamp in one hand and the inkpot in the other, still chuckling, in a mood approaching levity.

"Why! You ain't going down across lots!" he said, seeing where the laden Mack was heading.

Mack, under his load—old, repolished armchair, old and battered wastepaper basket on one of its upturned legs—looked a question.

"No, sir!" said Loughlin vehemently. "Great is the power of advertisement," and abruptly, and definitely he turned round the corner for Dawson Street. At every sign of a bump he clearly ejaculated: "Pardon, gents. Make way, gents, for the employment-agency furnichur." On he went, a few paces in the lead, beaming, lamp dangling—with his chuckle and a happy aspect that made the passers-by smile responsive as he intoned: "Excuse me! This gentleman has a jag of furnichur on—out-fitting the employment agency. Make way for the employment-agency furnichur!"

There was nothing for it, when the furniture arrived, but to light the lamp; this because a cue had already formed. It was not a rude cue. It pretended not to be a cue. It pretended to be strolling thus far westward beyond the area of stores by accident, or by the call of the balmy air of evening; but even as Loughlin got the lamp a-going, yes—even before it had ceased swinging from the hook to which it was suspended—there were men without, at the halt, reading the notice on the closed door.

"What's the matter with opening to-night?" said Loughlin, steadying the lamp with a hand.

Mack stepped to the door, and, opening it, surveyed his handiwork on the sheet of cardboard, then unfix-

it, laid it on the window-sill within, produced his brush and black stain, and, in small, but very thick capitals, he painted beneath the notice already blazoned :

NOW OPEN, AHEAD OF TIME.

And he did not return the board to the door, but stuck it up in the window where all might read. They came in one by one and were interviewed somewhat thus :

" Good evening ! How do you do ? "

" Good evening ! How do you do ? "

" What can I do for you ? "

" About those lumber jobs. "

" Lumberman ? "

" Bet your life ! "

" Experienced ? "

" Sure ! "

" Well, you can have the job, if you are experienced. The only men who will get me into trouble are the inexperienced. I can't inquire into the past life and labours of every gentleman who comes in here, you know. But I've promised to supply only experienced men—I've given my promise. I'm too polite to doubt any gentleman's word. What is the name, sir ? I will make out your note to the employer—thank you—at the Delmonico Hotel door to-morrow afternoon—after lunch. That will be two dollars, please." He ran all this together and if there was sign of hesitancy he added, easily but abruptly : " Dollars refunded here if by any chance you don't sign on."

By nine o'clock the thirty experienced lumbermen were supplied with their notes, and sixty dollars reposed in Mack's pocket—also fifteen carpenters had departed, each with a slip indorsed by

Mack, and their thirty dollars rustled the wad in Mack's pocket up to ninety.

"Pardon me a minute," he said to one who entered, and, rising, he took down his card and marked out the demand for lumbermen, annotating it neatly, "Demand for the moment supplied." This obliteration, and mere hint of future possibilities, did not vex the newcomer. He heaved a sigh of relief, and commented: "Ah! I thought it was the chef that was gone."

"Chef still open," said Mack. "The job is to cook for forty-five men—wages three and a half a day; assistant supplied. Fee, two dollars."

"Oh, I don't pay till I get the job."

"Sorry, sir. I perfectly trust you, but I don't know you. I'm located here, and you can come around any time and find me. I refund the dollars if the job, by any chance, at the last moment, doesn't—er—matriculate—er—materialise, that is to say. I make no charge for entering names—I keep no register in which to enter names, and ask a fee for doing that, as the manner of some is. If I haven't a job, I tell you so. If I have, I give you a note to your prospective employer; and I'm not here to skin anybody. But I can't go around collecting fees, after jobs are secured, from gentleman who might—through press of other matters—forget me. I can make out no note to any prospective employer without an exchange of two dollars from the prospective employee. Bring me back the note, crossed 'N. G.' and signed, and the two dollars slide back into your pocket and the slip into my w.p.b." And he glanced at the waste-paper basket and gave a little nod to Loughlin, who was standing in a corner trying to look as if he wasn't there, and wasn't amused.

The cook had his slip and Mack had his two dollars. By ten o'clock the thirty lumbermen, the fifteen carpenters, the cook, and two waiters had dropped into Mack's pocket the sum of ninety-six dollars. He brought his feet down from the table and rose from his chair.

"Well, sir," he said, "before the *assistant* cook arrives," and he carefully divided his dollars, forty-eight in a pocket to right, forty-eight in a pocket to left, "come along, sir," and out went the lamp, and he and the chuckling Loughlin slipped into the air. Without a word, they drifted eastward, but just as they departed a young man arrived before the closed agency, and said: "Too late?"

"No, sir," responded Mack, turning back. "Always open for a deal. What can I do for you?"

"I am an experienced cook."

Mack put a kindly hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"I'm right sorry," he said; "the only thing I have left in that line is assistant cook—called by some dishwasher—wages two and a half."

One or two others, late comers, had arrived, and now stopped, hung back, eyes on the trio. They drew aside; they just faintly heard the young man say: "Look here, I'm broke—and I hear you charge two dollars for a job. If I give you my word to bring you the two dollars first pay day—"

Mack felt a great magnanimity within him, a pity for all poor fellows out of a job. He put his hand in his pocket and extracted two dollars.

"I'll lend it you," he said. "Come around in the morning and see me. You can owe me that privately. I'm not allowed to give the job without payment, for it's a square firm—and if at the last

moment the job to which you receive our note does not materialise, the two dollars is refunded. But we have to protect ourselves against dishonesty; so we have our rule, to which we strictly adhere. It is the method in all our branches over these United States of America, in our Canadian branches, and is even practised by our Mexican representatives. If the job doesn't materialise for any reason, our method is this—return us the slip marked 'N. G.' and indorsed by the employer who, at the eleventh hour, didn't employ, and the two dollars is refunded."

"Well, you're a white man," said the young man. "I assure you I'll not forget——"

"Don't mention it. I'm not so old but I can recall the day when I, too, felt things tight, when two dollars—not to put too fine a point upon it—meant more to me than—well, ninety-six, or, at least, forty-eight does to-night. Good night, sir! Come around after breakfast."

The others who had dallied seemed averse to calling back a man after business hours. But what they had overheard put him high in their esteem—and they would spread it for him through Eureka. One hailed him in a tentative fashion: "Any railroad jobs going, sir?"

Loughlin suddenly chipped in.

"I guess there will be," he answered; "look in to-morrow morning."

They moved on, and Mack quietly said: "Now, what in thunder makes you hopeful of railroad jobs?"

"Ssh! He's coming after you. Didn't you see who that was who strolled up while we were speaking to the kid?"

"No."

"Well, don't look round."

"Not going to. I'm wise to-night—I feel wonderful wise."

"Railroad superintendent. That's who it was. And if I can read the expression in a man's eyes he's got a deal at the back of his mind that he'll lay gently before you at the first opportunity."

Mack nodded his head.

"Half a minute," he said. "I'm just going in here to pay for the shack. Come in with me—I won't detain you two ticks."

Loughlin's only reply was a laugh deep in his chest.

"Well, sir," said Mack, entering the estate man's office that was still open, "I've begun business, and——"

"So I hear!"

"And it's up to me to let you know. You said thirty-five a month. If you make it twenty-five you can have cash down right now."

"Um! Now you know you only got that key to prepare the place. And I hear you've started business. And I've got your agreement drawn out with to-morrow's date. Well—say twenty-five then."

"Good!" and Mack counted out sixteen dollars and a quarter, which he laid down on the counter.

"Sixteen," said the estate man, "sixteen-twenty-five, and eight dollars seventy-five earlier—that's right. I'll just give you the receipt, and you can sign the agreement."

On the agreement were, as they say, no flies; it was wholly wholesome and normal; and Mack signed, pocketed the receipt, and came forth into the street again muttering.

"What's that?" asked Loughlin.

"Oh, I was just saying forty-eight, minus two

to that dead-broke kid, equals forty-six; and forty-six, minus sixteen-twenty-five, equals twenty-nine-seventy-five. And twenty-nine-seventy-five minus your commission——”

“No, sir!” Loughlin broke in. “I’ve enjoyed myself enough without that. Besides, you’ll soon owe me boarding, which will bring it down some.”

“Well—twenty-nine-seventy-five is pretty good in one day.”

“Twenty-nine a day! My dear sir,” cried Loughlin, “there’s more than that to it! You don’t pay a month’s rent every two hours. It wasn’t forty-eight you drew in—it was double; it was ninety-six—and *in two hours!*”

“Yes—but I’m laying aside half, and pretending to myself that I don’t get it.”

Loughlin nodded his head gently several times.

“I see you don’t need me to post you on how to come to an understanding with the railroad superintendent,” said he.

“By the way, where is he?” asked Mack.

“On the other side. Guess he’ll sleuth you home to see where you’re stopping, and call later.”

“Well,” said Mack, “I’ve to see a gentleman at the Delmonico first, to tell him to put N. G. on anything unsuitable, and send them back to me.”

“Was that invented as you went along?”

Mack nodded.

“I enjoyed your inventions,” said Loughlin. “All right—see you later,” and, laughing, Loughlin went off to do his shopping, while Mack passed aside to the Delmonico to see Candlass. On the way he was smitten with a sudden dread. Was Candlass *straight*? Himself so lately on the perilous edge, and only saved by a sudden inspiration, it occurred to him that Candlass might have been in

similar predicament, and have been somewhat similarly inspired to invent his mission to Eureka and need for men and half-share scheme. Horrible thought! Perhaps Mack's cardboard jogged Candlass as Loughlin's grumble jogged Mack! But here was the Delmonico—Candlass' hotel.

IV

AND as this is not a story of suspense, you may as well know that the sudden doubt in Mack's mind was groundless. Candlass was not that kind of man. He was truly in Eureka to oversee the opening up of a timber limit. Only he didn't see why, if there happened to be an employment agent in Eureka, he should not make a little himself on employing the men. Over a cocktail, in a humorous fashion, at the Delmonico, he put his case to Mack, smiling whimsically the while.

The interview with Candlass over, and Candlass richer by forty-eight dollars, Mack passed out again into glamorous Eureka; and there was Loughlin, bundle of provisions under his arm, hovering in wait for him, advancing on him abruptly, with a furtive: "Say! I forgot all about it. Give me that key, and you go on to the boarding-house."

"What's the trouble?"

"There's a town fee for opening up business—five dollars. The town clerk is on to you—I heard in the grocery store. I'm going back to cut off that addendum you made on the foot of your notice and stick it up afresh same as it was—setting forth that you start to-morrow—so's to help you save the fine for starting up without licence. Town office is shut now, but if you go around in the morning and

register I guess the town clerk will send down a kid clerk with you to see the place formally, and he'll take the face value of your notice. Lucky old Markheim valued your tenancy as beginning from to-morrow."

"Do you think I need to see to the notice?"

"Well, it will help the bluff; one more card for you to make the legal side stronger, eh?"

"I'll go down again myself——"

"No, sir—don't. The railroad superintendent is liable to get tired of hovering around for you. He don't know yet where you are putting up, and he's got to keep track of you. When I came along to post you on the town clerk and the fee he was rubbernecking in after you, and asking if you put up there. He's still around, I think—yes, there he is. I'm off."

Loughlin departed precipitate. The superintendent was evidently tired of playing sleuth, for he advanced boldly now, seeing Mack alone upon the side-walk, and said he:

"Excuse me—are you the gentleman who has just opened an employment agency?"

"Yes. Well, at least, I open to-morrow—I've just been putting in the furniture to-night—nominally, anyhow; some men took advantage to crowd in on me. Anything I can do for you?"

"Well, if you——"

"Come around to my rooms, sir," said Mack. "I'm at a boarding-house on First Avenue—got a set of rooms there. Quieter than a hotel. We can chat in peace."

Toward the railroad man—Mr. Gregory by name, Hiram B. Gregory—Mack did not feel the same attraction that he had felt toward Candlass. He couldn't just tell why. But the deal with Gregory,

as it progressed from hint to more than hint, was a repetition of the Candlass arrangement; and on the morrow Mack had a new list to pin on his door and affix in the window after having paid five dollars to the town clerk, who, in the event, said nothing about the start ahead of time, before payment of licence. Eight dollars—a week's board—to Loughlin, who refused finally any commission for his unwitting suggestion, and the five to the municipality left Mack sixteen dollars seventy-five in pocket.

Upon the authorised day of opening he gave his slips to twenty railroad men, and before lunch time put twenty dollars in right pocket, twenty dollars in left. It seemed to be the Candlass caper all over again, but after a day or two of signing on men to extra gangs and steam shovels, he discovered that Gregory had deeps beyond the depths of Candlass, for that gentleman called at his "premises"—the shack—and, after talking pleasantly of such side issues as weather and dust, said:

"Now, I've a few passes over, more than jobs indeed. There must be plenty of men in Eureka of the right sort——"

As he paused and eyed Mack, Mack could only repeat after him: "Right sort, sure!"

"You savvy?" asked Gregory.

"Yes. Well—er—do I?"

"I mean the kind of fellows that just want to get out of Eureka," said Hiram B. Gregory.

Mack pondered this, silent.

"Deep, very deep," thought Gregory.

And with that in came a very evident railroad worker. Gregory stood aside, and to the newcomer Mack said: "Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"Got any railroad jobs left?" and as he made his inquiry this man most markedly winked—for Mack's private view.

"What kind of railroad job?" asked Mack. "Construction gang, extra gang, shovel gang, section gang?"

"Any old thing—so long as it is far from Eureka. The farthest you have on your books." The inquirer's eyelid quite clearly slightly drooped again, and Mack—the simple and the ingenuous, *tumbled*, if you will pardon the colloquialism.

"Come around after lunch and I'll see what I can do for you," he said. "The charge will be two dollars."

"Five cents a mile is railroad fare in this part of the world," said the man. "There is forty times five cents in two dollars. After lunch, you say?"

"Yap."

And after he was gone Gregory and Mack smiled at each other. That visitor was not the only one who wanted to get out of Eureka, not the only one who asked, with a droop of the eye, for a job on the railroad, heedless of the kind, anxious only on one point—namely, that it be far distant. The superintendent was going off to another company, had only a few days longer in Eureka, and in his desk were spare passes for use in sending men to work for gangs up and down the railway line. He didn't see why he shouldn't leave the desk tidy, as little littered as possible. If, through some slight oversight, he sent a man or two more than was wanted here and there—well, trifling errors will occur. And besides—he was leaving the company!

At the end of a fortnight Mack had cleared two hundred dollars, and the streets of Eureka were less congested. **There** seemed to be no signs of more

"opening up" around Eureka. The passes were all used, the superintendent left to-morrow. Loughlin was of the opinion that the smelter would be talked of for a year or two but not erected. Mack cleared up the out-of-works in Eureka and realised, in pocket again, how recently he had been "up against it."

Sitting on the veranda at his boarding-house after a quiet day, he made a chance remark, dropping it into a talk of other strikes, other excitements, that he was half inclined to "pull out" himself. He did not foresee that he was thus opening the way to another deal. But he was. For a new arrival heard the words with satisfaction; an elderly, worn, slightly shelf-rubbed-looking gentleman, who took the first opportunity to comment: "You intend to leave town?"

"I'm thinking of it, sir," Mack admitted a little dryly, with just a hint of "but I don't know you—and this is my own affair."

"Well, sir—if your business is for sale I'll make you an offer."

Mack was in his easy mood, the mood that had made him, a fortnight ago, almost tell Candlass that if he raised his voice an octave higher he could get all the men he wanted. For a man who had performed such a little flutter as this agency flutter he was oddly unequal. This time he voiced his thought, instead of reserving it.

"I don't know if it will be much worth," he said. "You should have been here a couple of weeks ago and seen the crowds. I've got them jobs. I've shipped them out. And most of the others have pulled out of themselves."

"Oh—a quiet little business would do me," said the depressed-looking man, but with a

momentary gleam of astonishment—or puzzlement—wondering what lay behind Mack's "knocking" of his own business. "A small turnover would be good enough for me. I have other irons. I don't suppose, seeing you've been so full of real matter, that you've begun circulating yet?"

Mack did not understand, but was now on guard.

"Not yet," he said.

"If you think of pulling out let me know."

"I will," and Mack drifted away to ask Loughlin if by any chance he understood the meaning of *circulating*.

"I do—surely," said Loughlin. "It means making an arrangement with bosses to fire a few men now and then—or lay them off—and it's up to them, if they want to get back to their old job again, to go to the employment agent that books up for their outfit when it is taking on men. But if that old stiff thinks he can work the racket either at the Ophir or the This-is-It he's away out. That fellow maybe thinks, like What's-his-name, that every man has his price; but I know the boss of the Ophir will show him far if he hints such a proceeding, and I'm just about as sure of the boss of the This-is-It. Still, if you are going to pull out, sell him your business—and let him try."

"I see there are tricks in all trades," said Mack.

And three days later he sublet his premises for the rest of the month to the new employment agent and pulled out of Eureka. From the new town of his choice he wrote a cheerful letter to Loughlin, telling of how he had fallen on his feet, and remarking:

"... and funny thing, it was not until you pointed it out that I saw the joke of the man who couldn't get a job setting up to find jobs for others."

To which Loughlin replied :

" I saw the fun of it all along. But the new man don't strike me as funny—he's too professional. You were a glorious amateur. He pulled out of my house here, and stuck up a partition at the back of the agency day after you left, put in a stove and a bunk. I laughed more then, for both you and me forgot—what with the fun of it all—that the furniture was mine. So I went down and collected it. He tried to be nasty, but I had witnesses to my furniture. I wish you could have heard the things he said about you when he saw it was no good saying things about me. He said you were a double-dyed deceiver—just the kind of remark a fellow like that would make. Now, if *he* had borrowed those things and forgotten them, I'd have known he didn't want to remember—but you were a blessed amateur. I'll never forget the employment agency that you opened when you couldn't get a job "

A WYOMING ACCIDENT

I

THIS is a story of a row of poles stretching across a section of Wyoming's wilderness—and what they led to.

They were erected because the cattlemen feared their ranges would be ruined if sheep browsed upon them and, as Cyrus B. Long said at the Stock Association meeting of his district: "If these sheepmen come in here the country is ruined. It will go the same way as the New Mexico ranges—sheep to spoil the land for cattle. They'll bring *goats* next to nibble, hogs to root—but we'll all be paupers long before that. And I prefer that this line between the cattle and sheep ranges don't remain an imaginary line like the equator in the school books. My men know what to do when sheep come on the cattle range; but I propose that we stake that imaginary line. We can't fence it—for the cattle drifting," he paused and smiled grimly; "but if we stake it, there it is; and if the law ever steps in to inquire into disputes, there is the staked boundary!"

The poles were stuck up there from horizon to horizon, each one just far enough away from its predecessor—or near enough to it—for a sharp-eyed man, accustomed to these solitudes (like a grey-green and billowing ocean that has been magically solidified) to be able, arriving at one pole, to sight the next by a quick, puckering-eyed survey of the landscape before him.

Sunshine Joe, one of Cyrus B. Long's men, put them up on Cyrus's behalf. The job took about a week. A waggon had preceded Sunshine, a waggon laden with the posts (which had been cut in the woods along Parkman Creek), and every here and there the driver of the waggon threw one off. Sunshine's business was to erect the poles. On this mission he led a pack-horse behind his own, or drove it in front, varying the order of progress to ease the monotony. The horses learnt the object of the journey before they had gone far, and stopped of their own accord when, following on the waggon trail, they came to one of the recumbent posts.

Sunshine then dismounted from his own horse, took from the back of the pack-horse (where it was thrust under the rope that held his blankets, frying-pan, grub), an instrument like a long-handled pair of scissors. At the end, below the hinge, two sharp-pointed concave spades confronted each other. Straddling his legs, Sunshine raised the implement, opened the confronting spades by extending his arms, drove them down into the earth, pressed his hands towards each other, drew them up, held his arms apart and, in doing so, opened the spoons (or little sharp shovels) and dropped out the earth they held between them.

So on, he went, plunging down, pressing, lifting, emptying, till he had made a hole of a depth that promised to hold the pole securely. Then he took up the pole, dropped an end in the hole, stuck his tool back under the rope on the pack, put foot in stirrup of his saddle-horse, swung his leg over, and away the two horses and the man went upon the trail of the waggon till the next recumbent pole was reached.

His wages were forty dollars a month, and he

thought as he worked : " If this is cow-punching I'd rather be a sheep-herder ! "

II

TOMMIE TOSSPOTT, sheep-herder for Joe Marshall, was properly up against it. It was a son of a gun of a day. He sang gaily and bitterly to himself, sang what will give you an idea of the date of this story if you are conversant with popular song ; he sang gaily and lugubriously, sentimentally, ironically, lovingly : " Break the news to mother. " . . . This because he was a sheep-herder, and because even the cow-punchers of to-day (who are generally called " riders, " " ropers, " " herders, ") are ashamed to sing, " O I'm a good old rebel, that's what I am ; " or :

O Boys, we're going far to-night
Yeo-ho ! Yeo-ho !
We'll take the greasers now in hand
And drive them into the Rio Grande
'Way down in Mexico.

Tommie Tosspott was up against it. All winter he had had, for a home, a tent with a stove in it ; not even a shack. On several occasions he had been unable to muster his woolly charges into the pen before blizzards broke ; had had to stay with them hudding and miserable before the storm—a thousand sheep, two dogs, a man, with the wind playing right into his backbone, as if it was hollow like a bit of narrow-bore stove-pipe. The man that brought him his food had been delayed once on the way by snow. Soon would come the lambing season, and timber wolves and coyotes would keep Tommie busy every night, constantly tending a score of little lamps that

that had to be set round the flock to keep the wolves away, so that they might not devour the young lambs.

But all these things were nothing. They were the day's work, the night's work. He had shot a good many wolves, and would get bounty for them. But now was the time of mud and spring, bleak, cold; and Tommy was closer to that silent Dead Line, every pole giving its threat, or its ultimatum.

He had just set his dogs off west to gather the sheep that were straying, when, out of the grey-black, grey-green billows, came two men on horseback. To cast something scared his flock worse than the dogs were scaring them to west—perhaps a prowling coyote. They started off at the run. They rushed like a woolly river past one of the poles.

Tommie shouted to his dogs, but he could hardly hear his own voice. The thousand sheep were all crying; a ceaseless "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" went up from them.

It was that sound that made the two boundary riders of Cyrus B. Long shake bridles, flourish quirts, and come on a sudden, sliding and slithering, into Tommie's view.

"What a noise!" said Sunshine Joe. "Say, Pete, would you be a sheep-herder? Wouldn't you go crazy listening to that all your life?"

But Cyrus B. Long didn't hire such men as would merely pity his enemies. He hired such as would ride the range. He wanted none of your back-east fellows out there seeing life, he would say to his foreman. When he hired a man he didn't want them to find out if he could rope, if he could break, if he was lively in a branding corral—what was his speciality. He wanted men that were cow-punchers, and could do all there was to it.

So he had the men he wanted; and Sunshine Joe and Pete, after this brief expression of pity for the barren life of a sheep-herder, went into action.

Sunshine dismounted, throwing the lines over his horse's head and unslinging a magazine rifle. Pete, with fondling fingers, drew forth his Colt. What followed was, to look at, a most unconcerned exhibition. Sunshine even paused a moment to scratch his head. He stood, with rifle low, taking the slight recoil between hip and forearm, holding the lovely weapon as if it was a fishing-rod and, in the phrase of Fommie Tospott, just "pumped lead into them sheep as if he was a-shellin' peas."

Tommie had had a religious upbringing in Camden, N.J. His mother had read him the parable of the ninety and nine. I don't know how far it influenced him now. But he set to work, riding wildly to and fro, while the sheep bleated and bleated like a thousand plaintive children calling "Hurrah!" half-heartedly to some visiting person with a grand manner and a silk hat—not because they knew why, but because they had been told to. It was a "Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" just like that.

He rode left and right. He shouted to the dogs. In the midst of the everlasting bleating the clip and rasp of the dinky magazine rifle went on, the "biff" and long stabbing echo of the Colt.

"There goes another!" he thought at each rasp and rasping echo that rushed through the rolling scene.

Tommie ran the risk of stopping a bullet meant for a sheep as he tried to turn the flock—and turn it he did, at last. As he followed in its wake, shepherding it east again, his two dogs in order, one to north, one to south, well spread out, barking, but not closing in on the sheep, he looked round. He

guessed he had got the ninety and nine together all right—so to speak.

The shooting slackened at the post; the shooting stopped. Tommie, with his flock headed away from danger, looked round again. And when he did so he saw the little piled-up knoll of sheep, a pyramid of wool beside the fatal post; and, riding away, in the attitude of half-ashamed big boys that have given an erring junior a swipe on the ear, laughing, feeling themselves right, yet unpleasant, were the two cow-punchers. As they rode they looked at the retreating flock, left hands on ponies' haunches, right holding up the bridles.

"Guess I'll remember them fellows," said Tommie Tossopot. "'Oh, break the news to——' Yes, I guess I'll remember you fellows."

III

THE little town of Parkman consisted of a score of houses, ten a side, as it were, with a broad strip of what was sometimes deep mud and sometimes deep dust between them. The street was so much like birdlime, when muddy, that a teamster had delighted the little knot on the Palace Hotel verandah by leaving a shoe in it when putting one foot on the hub of his wheel and gripping the edge of his high seat, he had stepped up to gather the reins—or "lines," as they call them in Wyoming.

Lovers of the picturesque preferred Parkman when there was dust, although that dust sometimes got into the dining-room of the Palace, the Occidental, and Mrs. Gray's boarding-house. They preferred dust to mud because, when Cyrus B. Long's boys rode into town, there was such a splendid flutter

at their horses' heels. They made the kind of picture that Charles Russell, the "cow-boy artist of Montana," has often put on canvas; dust, sun and movement.

There was a bank in the middle of the north side of the street. When you went into it you found that it was like an armoured cruiser. The counter was of steel; no clerks were visible; but they looked at you through port-holes the moment you entered. The teller was in the conning-tower contraption in the middle.

If you had first wandered in the laid-out lots of land off the main street before visiting the bank, and had seen there the pathetic little strips of ground with dots of green in them, bearing little boards, at various angles, which silently implored: "Citizens! Protect your boulevards!" if, seeing these, you had thought: "It is quite true. This west is no longer wild," and then, entering the bank, had seen the conning-tower and the general battleship appearance of the place in which the clerks were at work, hidden from view till your flag (your bank-book or letter of identification) was shown, you would have thought: "Oh, ho! It's like that, is it?"

It was, at least, wise to be prepared for its being like that.

The sheep-shearers had come and gone. The cattle round-ups were over.

Tommie Tossopot rode into town, humming "Break the news to mother." Perhaps the gramophone at the Occidental would give him a new song to take back with the new suit of underwear that he was intending to invest in—*before* he visited the Occidental, being aware how money goes when one comes into town.

He rode in slowly and circumspectly, in the manner

of a sheep-herder—grim, not broken, hard as nails, a bit lonesome-looking. A man learns an awful lot of quiet in encounters with the elements or in lonely thoughts, as well as on absurd battle-fields.

He rode to Ed. Strange's store, casting but a fleeting glance at the projecting sign, "Pool and Pyramids," over the Occidental. He dismounted slowly, his journey over. He tied his horse to the telegraph-pole with easy, slow movements. He stood a spell, looking left and right, and then strolled into the store.

A man with a goatee beard appeared at the back and said: "How-do, Tom?"

"How-do, Ed.," said Tommie Tospott.

Ed., after his salutation, began turning over the pages of a monster catalogue, consulting the index, consulting letters that lay beside it; he looked at the book, the index, the letters. It seemed to be a long job. His beard thrust out. He paused to scratch under it. He frowned over, and pointed with a snarled finger at, the picture of a bath-tub in the catalogue. He consulted the letters again.

Tommie moved round, reading the labels on the tinned goods. He moved round two walls. He came to where the writing-pads lay, wiped his hand on his breeches, and lifted them one at a time and read, without any criticism, the words: "*Feint Ruled*—Wyoming Bond—Sioux Linen—*Faint Ruled*—U.S. Tablet." "I see there's two ways of spelling 'faint,'" he said.

Ed. put his letters in the catalogue, closed it on them so that they stuck out a little way, marking the place of his researches, looked over his spectacles, pushed the catalogue to one side, and glanced up. "Well, how's things?" he asked again.

"All right. How are you stackin' up, Ed.?"

"Pretty good. I'm just exercising my brains over a catalogue here. Guess I'm getting elderly. Brain begins to slip cogs. There's more call for bath-tubs in Wyoming than there used to be when I first came in here."

"So!" said Tommie, giving his head a little wag of interest. "Well, give me a plug of chewin' to make a start, Ed."

It was when Ed. and Tommie had come down to the underwear that a whooping broke out in the distance, and Tommy gave ear.

"You find them all right, I guess?" said Ed., stroking the apparel.

"Yes, I guess I'll have them." They had a nap on them, these clothes, that might be calculated to make an alligator itch.

The whooping drew nearer, and Tommie walked over to the door and looked out. "Ed.!" he said. "Come here, Ed."

Ed. looked over his spectacles at Tommie in the doorway and came slowly toward him, as a man who always, when anyone tries to rush him, takes hold on calm, seeing the possibility of getting flurried before being well aware, or as a careful driver puts on the brake before coming to the hill.

Down the street, riding in a careless, three-quarter-face manner beloved of cow-punchers when taking life easily, came two horsemen, brown as Indians, scarfed, large-hatted.

One was a stranger to Tommie, but he knew the other in an instant. "Who's that fellow there?" he asked, and pointed at him. He had none of the finer reticences of a refined society. He pointed naturally, raising his hand.

"That? Oh, they call him Sunsh——"

The cow-puncher saw, it would appear, the

movement in the doorway of Ed.'s store, saw the hand go up, recognised the man who pointed, but did not see that he merely pointed; and very abruptly, with a quick look of alarm, made a rapid movement, down and up, and a white puff of smoke burst from his hand. His horse leapt like a cat, and he curbed it, as a bullet compressed the air between Ed. and Tommie—and crash! went something in the back of the store; and there followed a woman's scream.

Tommie's horse, at the telegraph-pole, stood on its fore-legs, stood on its hind-legs, squirmed this way, that way. Tommie rushed out to catch it—a stupid thing to do. That action showed Wyoming was changing. In the old days men knew better than to do things like that when guns were popping. He clutched for the horse's head, and it swept round against him.

The two cowboys were reining up now. Tommie plucked his Colt from the saddle-bag. Sheepherders don't ride into town with guns on their hips nowadays. Up went the Colt, forward, and down—and he had the inestimable, cold, contained, demoniac satisfaction of seeing one of the men who had shot his sheep some months ago falling out of the saddle like the snapshot of a diver.

Here now came Ed., who had run indoors at the first shot, his goatee beard sticking out of the store, himself half bent, carrying a Winchester.

The other cow-puncher spurred hard and went on down the street, his horse a mere tangle of legs in the heart of a rising dust-storm, his hand coming up and down in the middle of it—quirting.

But it was in the opposite direction that Ed. suddenly looked. So did Tommie Tossopot, wrestling with his startled pony again, wrestling with it as a

man does things by force of habit when there are other, and more important, new matters at his hand waiting to be done.

"Look up, you!" cried Ed.

Tommie heard shooting—and looked up. And there was the other fellow who had helped to make that hole in his flock, coming down the middle of the street, on the jump, with three more men who, though they had doffed their chaps, being off duty, were clearly riders of the range too.

Pete saw Sunshine, along there (beyond the telegraph-pole, where the pony contorted and snorted), sprawled out in the street. He saw Tommie Tossput. He recognised Tommie—as Tommie recognised him. What on earth old Ed. Strange was doing, mixed up in this, the cow-man couldn't fathom. But it was a moment for action, not for understanding anything except that his life was in jeopardy. His rein-hand checked his horse, and he flicked a shot at Tommie. Pete's partners, not to be left out of it, must needs rein up and open fire too; so a fusillade of shots sounded, with shouts intermixed, and sounds of breaking glass.

Then the smoke rose, drifted away. There was an exceeding great silence for what it is permissible to call a very, very long, little while; and then all the inhabitants came out on both sides of the street, all except the bank clerks and the teller. They were in their turrets, sitting tight, eyes on the door, revolvers in hand, dreaming of promotion and larger salaries, in an ecstatic blending of funk and bravery.

What the inhabitants saw was Tommie Tossput sitting on the edge of the side-walk, one leg over the other, holding a foot tightly, from which the blood ran. Ed. stood on the side-walk with his head up, his goatee beard pointing to inhabitant after staring

inhabitant as one by one they appeared. The beard seemed to be saying: "Well—what's it all about? What are you all rubber-necking for?"

In the middle of the street three men lay close together and three horses fidgeted, pirouetted, ran away, changed their minds, stopped, and putting down their noses blew through them. Farther along, Sunshine lay. His horse stood over him, with head down as if Sunshine and he were posing for a motion-picture poster.

Ed. shouted to someone on the other side: "Doc! Doc! Come over and attend to my old wife."

The people began to talk. The doctor ran across and disappeared with Ed. in the store. The rest of the inhabitants did various things, according to their temperaments, their instincts, the way they had trained themselves, or the way they had not trained themselves.

Tommie's horse had made such a wriggling and dancing that it broke the cheek-strap on one side and, with a final dance, slipped the head-stall off altogether and left the reins, with a foamy bit, hanging to the telegraph-pole. The barber stepped out to intercept it in the beginning of its flight. It stopped. He spoke comfortingly to it, advanced on it slowly, but with decision, then abruptly caught the saddle-rope that hung from the horn and, while the horse quieted, slipped that round its neck for a halter and led it back to the pole.

Others, spurred by his action, led the remaining horses over to the Occidental and hitched them there. That done, these either helped to carry the four fallen men to the undertaker's, or joined the knot around Tommie. They heard him say:

"I guess he thought I was drawing a bead on him. Ed. will tell you I only pointed him out,

standing right there in the door. Guess he recognised me. He shot up a whole lot of my sheep. Say! This foot bleeds." And he began to whistle oddly, through his teeth: "Break the news to mother!"

The "doc" came out of Ed.'s store and parted the crowd round Tommie Tossrott. "Now, friend, let me overhaul you," he said.

Mrs. Strange followed the doctor, her head in a white cloth as if she had been shampooing. "Say!" she cried, in her shrill falsetto, "you carry him in here."

Which they did with alacrity. And, having helped him into the store, they were able, while the doctor staunched the bleeding and put the great toe in splints, to see where the bullet had crashed through the boards behind the counter, and, velocity lessened, but still travelling, had ended its course in Mrs. Strange's temple, where she lay in the back parlour, having a siesta. The bullet had struck, deflected, run over her forehead, and dropped on the floor. It is on Ed.'s watch-chain now.

It was quite clear to everybody, even before the trial, that there could be no verdict possible except "Accidental death." At the trial Ed. won the esteem of the jury by saying that he was extremely sorry that Sunshine had been such a fool as to take a pointing finger for a bent gun, and he received a commendation, or congratulation, for his solicitude regarding his wife—and sympathy to her from the jury.

"Accidental death!" And they planted Sunshine Joe and Pete, and the others, in the new graveyard.

If you should be fortunate enough, visiting Wyoming to-day, to get old Cyrus B. Long to tell

you this story he will add: "The blamed irony of the thing is that I sold my last steer six years ago. I'm deep in this sheep business now—it pays better than steers—yes, siree—it pays better than steers; at times I feel kind of sorry we weren't wise to that years ago, around this section; for there was an awful lot of good men passed in their checks one way and another along that line o' posts."

CYRUS FLINDERS' TRUE STORY

THERE are various yarns of the mountains around Spring Lakes, but most of them, apart from a few of the Indian ones, are of the kind that the most hard-headed gentleman on Wall Street could believe in. They deal with Angus MacDonald, who gave Lake MacDonald its name; with Plummer, who terrorised the neighbourhood; with the way Bill Smithers found the Lucky Mine; with length of horn of the ram shot by So-and-So; with hardships and with "making good;" with gold, silver-lead, rainbow-trout, silver-tips, mud-slides, droughts and cloud-bursts, mosquitoes, and blizzards. Some of them are short stories. Some of them are tall stories—that seem to grow taller in every telling; but this is one of the few I have heard from a white man that simply couldn't happen, yet he believed it—and it happened to him. If I temper his language here and there in repeating it all I trust I may not, being in the tempering way, temper the Facts.

This yarn is not just a thing that happened on the trail. It bores deeper than that, so you may as well know that I was born in Oklahoma, when folk called it The Indian Nations, and half the people who were scouting round there at that time were people who thought that, with all the annuity and treaty money that was being doled out to the Indians, a white man with an eye for chances should

manage to see to it that some of the dough drifted his way. And they invented ways of making it do so.

There were all sorts of ways, from adopting a Red orphan for a ward to shaking the dice with the annuitants on pay-day. My father was some inventive, and being averse to hard work, he quirted and spurred his inventiveness till he made good on guardianship as if he had struck the mother-love of all the Rockies. He would "convey," as the lawyers call it, a chunk of land to me, maybe worth forty dollars an acre. Next day he would purchase this land from me for one of his Red wards at five hundred dollars an acre. It was a safe deal, even if some chance friends of the Red man got on the trail of it and instituted enquiries. Instituting enquiries is a slow job. A man can pull out while the enquiries are going on and shave his moustache, or grow a beard—either way—and set up the same game elsewhere. And even if he stays with it, it is usually a good deal. The adjudicators will allow the sum was excessive, tell him they'll cut it down to half and that he must pay back to the ward two hundred and fifty dollars an acre. But two hundred and fifty dollars an acre for land worth forty dollars is good enough to stay with the enquiry for—even if it comes to a jury trial, and a whole jury to get cigars out of it as well as the other folk.

I had a bit of trouble with my father before I reached the years of discretion, and, being his only child, I bust his game of conveying by pulling out for Texas with a grey blanket and a six-shooter. My mother gave me the blanket, and I borrowed the gun from my father one day when he was in town blowing in the interests on his last skin-game.

My mother's heart was with me in my hike out to

make my own world and my own means of sustenance. Looking back on her I see she had a tremendous holt on the notion of being true to your wedded partner ; but she was the kind of woman who would feel cold in an ermine cloak if she knew some fellow had been scalped to get it. She would have been happier back in Ohio in the corn-ranch instead of down there where the motto was that a man didn't go west of the Mississippi for his health.

She was some touched, I remember, that I wanted to carry along with me a daguerreotype of her—told me to write when I could, and kissed me adios. Those were the days when a youngster rolled a blanket and spraddled out west instead of putting tobacco and surreptitious pipes in a red handkerchief and piking to the nearest water-front. I was only one of many. The pristine sheen upon that daguerreotype, I'm sorry to relate, lasted no farther than Lincoln County, where wages on the range were seventy dollars a month instead of fifty—because a rider was liable to have to shoot more than quail. And the wages didn't need to be up, either, to get the men ; for the fellows that took them was mostly of the kind that was *blasé* on quail, and disremembered the day when they hit their first tomato-can on the top of a post. My first job was a fifty dollar one ; but I wanted to see myself among those other fellows. They looked tougher, and a youngster admires toughness without enquiring into what kind it is.

Now regardin' chips: there was no kid in The Indian Nations but knew the meaning of chips, but my mother's influence had kept me so far an on-looker at all the multitudinous ways of handling them. But these Lincoln County boys couldn't hit town without drawing in their stools to confront

the sports with the tender palms that flutter cards more adroit than Texas Jack could exploit a lazoo in comparison. And just as sure as whisky leads to lock-ups so does gambling lead to gun-play. Sometimes the gun-play is on the sport that runs the bank, sometimes on the subject that the sport cleans out.

Not that we troubled much about being cleaned out. There was always a job on the range when the dough was gone—no need for a wise man to go and plug himself, even if he gambled his saddle. I mention these things to show you how the kid what was me employed his days. But before I had ripe experience in losing money over cards I did, I allow, act mean once on a losing game at Las Vegas.

Next to the chips my greatest diversion was Tanglefoot. I tell you what it was—I was a slave to that beverage. It was no beverage to me; it was a prison and a foe. All the same I got to admit that quit it I couldn't until an extraordinary experience I had in the north-west corner of Montana. I quit it then—prompt.

It wasn't anything ordinary and every-day that led the way to that experience. It wasn't cattle that took me there, nor freighting to construction camps, nor silver-lead mining, about the only reasons you could think for a man being there from the days of Lewis and Clark to the era of the tourist. It was the buffalo that led the way to the great experience, in a day when buffalo was practically extinct too. Our boss, when he was up in the mountains, discovered half-a-dozen buffalo in a way back valley. They had adapted themselves to circumstances, and it was the queer trail they left that he got on to, wondering whatever had done it. They had pushed along browsing through the bush and

pea-vines, browsing and horning, browsing and horning till it was as if they had made tunnels among the vine that meshes the trees there.

Up in Canada they were forming a National Park about that time ; they had some buffaloes in it, but were open to trade for more. Buffalo was a sure gold-mine—alive. So the boss opened negotiations for the sale of them beasts, and when he got a bid that was worth while he asked for volunteers to go and rope them. I was in that outfit, and it looked at first as if the profits of the sale of them wild and shaggy creatures would be lost in the ropes ruined trying to lazo them. They invented, on the spot, just as soon as they were brought up against the rope proposition, ways and means of snapping ropes, of upsetting cow-ponies, and of performing get-away stunts, that would have made a range-steer observing of them go down on its fore-knees in adoration.

When we got them at last in a corral at the ranch-house more profit oozed away in the time they kept us hunting out new corral-bars and hammering nails in what was left while the new ones was being toted along and rammed home. Somebody had suggested a drive, a drive of them buffaloes to their new quarters. It would have been no drive. It would have been a kind of everlasting stampede. Them that talked of a drive hadn't witnessed the roping. It would have shown more understanding of the job to suggest getting a spur-line of the railroad run up to our ranch, and sending us the strongest cattle cars on the system for these buffaloes.

But the same bunch of cow-men that had volunteered for the original fracas went on with it in all its stages—got them buffaloes, somehow, out of the corral, got them, somehow, to town ; got them,

somehow, into the cattle-cars there ; and then, having put their horses in another car, they fell up into the caboose of our special train, stretched out with a sigh of satisfaction, and away we all went. We were zig-zagged from one junction to another, feeding and watering these buffaloes where we could, till we found ourselves on the C.P.R. lines instead of the Northern Pacific—somewhere in Manitoba, or Assiniboia (what they now call South Saskatchewan) and on we goes to this buffalo park of theirs, and opens the car for the delivery of our consignment of survivors of that disappearing race.

They wouldn't go out. They thought the wide world was a trap now. It would frazzle you to think over that buffalo job, to say nothing of living through it. Eventually they smelt some of the native buffaloes and ran out to visit them. So we left them then to the native cow-punchers that had signed on to take over delivery and see that they stayed with the other herd in the park.

Our job was over. We had cow-punched what no cow-puncher had ever cow-punched before—a small herd, to be sure, but a different species, and aggravating beyond measure, although powerful handsome ; no mange on them ; fur like a b'ar in his prime. And it comes into our youthful heads that it was up to us to celebrate the end of that trek as no cow-puncher of steers had ever celebrated the end of his. We started in right there ; but while we were still docile the law-givers of that country advised us to hike. We had decided on coming home across country, anyhow, with our horses and blankets—no more switching about on all the railway systems they could find for us.

So we moved on, as we were advised. We pulled out on the sedate little mountain-town adjacent to

their Park, came down on to the plains, and when we sighted Calgary rode at her whooping our war-whoops till the Red Coat police-boys allowed they would ride herd on our rejoicing. On us resenting this here suggestion they said they were only thus lenient to us knowing who we were—because a certain latitude and longitude seemed natural for boys who had wrestled buffaloes for over a month; but there was limits to leniency. Some of us wanted to make a stand-off of it, but wisdom won and we hit down along the old road to McLeod—and took up our interrupted celebrations there, with the same result. We moved on again, less amenable, but whatever.

Pincher Creek heard us next, and some of the boys at Pincher even aided and abetted us. Natives were incarcerated, and we were told we would be done the same with if we don't move on to our own range. We moved—lest more sympathetic natives might get into the calaboose for extending practical sympathy to our Celebrate. We moved on, and across the boundary we came upon a whisky pedlar going up to visit a tie-cutting camp beyond the U.S. Blackfoot Reserve. We bought his stock with the last of our buffalo money and celebrated right there—our lonesome selves, in the midst of them almighty hills. I guess it wasn't right.

It was after that the queerest experience of my life happened to me:

I found myself alone, riding a trail no man ever rode before. And eventually I found myself walking it. It was a tough trail, and me without an axe. There was pea-vine, and a heap of bush, of saskatoon and cranberry, and them there tendrils all over, tripping a man up. But at last I came to a clearing, and there was a house. I was dog-tired—all in.

I sang out : " Hullo, the shack ! " for up in them hills you got to advance circumspect in such lonesome places lest you scare the inmates—they're that lonesome. There was no answer. And then it struck me maybe said inmate didn't like the place being called a shack—for it was a small house.

So I sings out again : " Hullo, the bunga-loo ! " No answer. And I looked at the place, puckering and concentrating my vision, and it seemed like a fort—one of them old forts you hit the ruins of up there, Fur Company, or Hudson Bay Company.

I sings out : " Hullo, the Establishment ! "

Not a squeak. So I spraddles across the clearing and rubbernecks in at the windows. Swellest ranch I ever struck. I knocked at the door. No answer—except echoes. So I tried the door, and she opens to the try.

I repeats my hail : " Hullo, inside ! Shop ! " getting frisky. No answer. So I reckons to go in, see to my wants in the pantry, and leave a note of thanks—as is quite according to Hoyle for anybody barring hoboos, as you know. With this aim I walked through the house, opened another door—and there was a man sitting at a table, looking up at me. I stood and stared. I stared more when he said :

" Oh, it's you, Cyrus Flinders. Come right in."

" Didn't you hear me holler ? " says I. " How do you know my name ? Who are you ? " I fired off all them questions in one breath.

He answered one question only. At least I took what he said then for an answer to how he knew my name.

" You've been up delivering that little bunch of buffalo ? " said he.

I thought may be he knew of the outfit and had

got our names, didn't argue the how and the why very thorough at the moment.

"I lost my partners somehow," I said. "I got off the trail. It's a blame queer trail."

"All men lose their partners somehow," says he, not taking his eyes off me. "And all men some day go on what you might call a blame queer trail."

Something in his voice kind of quieted the air; and it was quiet enough anyhow. The door opened, and a Chinaman came in with grub on a tray.

"And he didn't hear me holler neither!" I cried, seeing he had a Chink around too.

"He was getting your grub ready for you," answered this queer person.

I took that for an explanation; and the smell of that grub enticing me I sat down and fell into it. Now and then I glanced at the man of the place. He had a pointed beard—was almost Spanish-looking, but his eyes slanted a bit, like the Chink's.

"What's this grub?" I asked him. I had never struck anything quite like it, not from a Dutch oven under the waggon-box to a six-bit restaurant. Pie! That Chink was an artist in pies!

"It's my invention" said he with a queer twist of his face, and it struck me the man was bug-house—a kind of swell hermit, or maybe some fellow gone crazy with living here.

"Have a swig at the bottle," he suggested, so I turned up a little bottle that I had made a note of on the edge of the tray, but that I had left for the time being till my appetite for victuals should be some eased.

When I tasted that concoction I had another look at him. There's no cock-tail in America so subtle and tremendous.

"What's the recipe for this here balm?" I asked, and then glanced at him. The way his eyes met mine made me sure he was crazy. Next minute I was asking myself if maybe I was scared, but I didn't think I could be after sharing in all the recent prowess with them buffaloes.

"It's private—if you don't mind," said he.

"I beg your pardon," I replied.

"Don't mention it," he said. "Having sampled most drinks, from Apache tiswin to railroad-camp blind-pig arsenic-water, I am perhaps an authority. That liquor will sap the soul from you more surely than any."

"I'd pretty nearly give that for the recipe," I cried, and filled another glass of it. And when I lifted my head to drink he was leaning over the table, staring at me.

"Would you?" said he.

He gave me such a turn that I took all that glassful to buck me.

"*Pretty nearly* you said," he went on. "How about it now? Is it a deal now—or *pretty nearly* still?"

That dangerous liquor was circulating through my veins, and I had the biggest fight in my life to keep from saying "No, it's right. Cut out the *pretty nearly*." I sat there and fought incessantly. I can't ever forget it. And I won it at last. But it was such a close call that I grabbed the bottle by the neck and smashed it on the table; otherwise I might have lost holt on my resolve—might have drained the bottle and called for the recipe at any price. And the queer thing was that I felt I would mean the words if I spoke them; not only that, but I felt that some Power would take them for meant, and I would lose my soul. When I broke

that bottle he sat back, looking at me meditative and cold.

"Cyrus Flinders," said he, "you've won that trick. But I'll wrastle you again. You've been coming this way for a long time. Down in Las Vegas that time you shot up the faro man—" I stared, and my neck stiffened, I tell you—"you made out that he had cheated you. He didn't cheat! And you knew he didn't! O all right—he had cheated other men. According to your company there it was all right—in a way. But *you* knew he hadn't cheated. You wanted to get back what you had lost."

"Who told you about Las Vegas and that sport?" I asked, and my voice was thick.

"That's all right," said he soothing, and went on: "Then there was that trick you played on the old Ute woman at Conejos when you filled the empty whisky bottle to the neck with coloured water, and put a bit of cork in, shoved it well down the neck—with your little finger," says he, accenting the words in a tone that kind of meant he knew everything, "and then you put in just as much whisky as would fill the neck on top to give the smell. It was an interesting expression you had on your face, Cyrus Flinders, as you corked *that*. What did you do that trick for? If you must peddle whisky to the Indians in the dark, lurking about in the bush around your little towns, why don't you peddle square?"

"I don't know why I did it," I said. "I was young, and bad I guess. I was sorry before next day."

"True, you were sorry. There were other things. There was that business in Denver when——"

I got up and yelled.

"Who are you?" I shouted.

Says he: "Look at me."

I looked at him; and I was dead scared.

"You're the Devil!" says I, and my voice was as hollow as if I talked in a cave. "If you are the Devil," says I, suddenly trying to chirp up, "you talk to me more as if you were the Recording Angel." I tell you the grip it took for me to talk like that was plumb heroic.

His eyes kind of puckered at me.

"We are both recorders," he replies. "We have both the same standards of Good and Evil—that's how we play the same game, with men for chips."

I backed away from him at that.

"See here," said he, "you're fretting now. Deep inside you're fretting about yourself and the way your life has gone now and then. I tell you what I'll do. I'll make you feel no fret again if you give me your soul—not pretty nearly, but altogether. No more fret, Cyrus—think of that! Just think of that! No more anguish inside you as you have now."

I was wise to him.

"No," I answered, my voice still thick. "Perhaps not—no more anguish till I come to die."

"Ah!" and he laughed. "I score one there on you! If you had the right thing in you, you would have said 'no' without that reason. You'd have said 'no' even if you thought there was no After-life."

I saw what he meant and stood staring at him. I was kind of frozen. Now here's the queerest thing. I had had made for me, of leather, a little case in which I kept that daguerreotype of the old lady, and he put his hand slowly out, and reached inside my coat, and I couldn't prevent him.

"You don't deserve to have any ideal about you anywhere, Cyrus Flinders," said he. "I'll take this for a souvenir of our meeting. Now you can git. Adios—so-long, till we meet."

I grabbed for his hand—and found myself rolling somewheres; and where do you think I was? I was on a clearing in a bit of woods, away off the trail, and rolling down a slope as if I had been laying there and rolled over. But it was no dream. No, sir! You'll never convince me it was a dream. My breast-pocket lining was turned out the way he had snatched, and that there leather case was gone. I looked everywhere for it, but it wasn't there. I knew I wouldn't find it—even when I was looking for it.

Fellows have tried to explain it all to me, and tried to explain it away at that. But I know it was Straight Goods. I got back to the boys and rounded them up, and we dusted home again all serene. But that was my last celebration. And more than that—I've kept an eye on myself in other ways since then, the kind of ways the Devil drew my attention to in dealing out his cards to win me.

EXPLOITATION

JIM HARGREAVES, the money-bags of our section, is often mistaken for an Englishman, because of his voice. Sometimes, even, he has been asked if he has French blood in him, or is, perhaps, of one of those old Louisiana families. His dark hair and the darkness of the pupils of his eyes doubtless give that suggestion to folks who are keen on knowing—or surmising—what kind of ancestors the people they meet have had.

The reason perhaps for Jim's voice was that he married an English girl—reversing the order of things in some quarters—and perhaps he had too musical an ear. I admit that we were all a trifle nasal and raspy, which he was not. Anyhow it was very handy, for he used to make the Englishmen who came around, willing to throw money at our valley, feel very much at home. And we wanted money flung at us. We had been eaten out by steers long ago, nibbled out by sheep, rooted out by hogs ; and we were wanting to get people in to raise fruit on the earth that was left, by the aid of water and Everyman's Handy Guide to Irrigated Fruit Farming.

The trouble was that folks wanted to see some fruit *in place*, if I may make use, when talking of fruit, of a phrase applied to minerals ; and most of us couldn't be bothered raising it. We had said good-bye to cattle and taken up sheep with sorrow ; we had said farewell to sheep and taken up grunting

hogs with anguish ; now we squirmed at the thought of planting trees and going round tending them with a squirt each day. We wanted to get hold of hopeful people who would buy the land and plant the trees themselves. But folks preferred to go on the Walla-Walla, and all the other rich spots of Oregon and Idaho, and pay fancy prices for fruit ranches already in working order. They wouldn't take our word for it that our section could have all these other places skinned if only they tried.

Something had to be done. Jim, as our cultured old-timer, made his place to blossom as the rose—imported a gardener, and got such a hustle on with flowers that two families of humming birds actually visited us, and took up their abode all summer at his ranch. He made as much as he could of those humming-birds. Jim bought a rapid-fire camera that could click its shutter in the two-hundredth part of a second, so as to snap them on the poise in front of his sweet-peas, and sent the result, with a footnote, " Note the humming-birds," to the editor of a big newspaper.

That was a fiasco. We saw the paper ; but all the pictures were the same—big squares of black. Each square had different words below it, and that was all. We saw the one with : " Jim Hargreaves' great show of Sweet Peas. ' Queen of Norway.' Seven blooms on a spike. Note the humming-birds ! " but nobody could note anything, not even the sweet-peas—not even the fence rail. He tried again. He sent it to a higher-toned paper, and the sweet-peas came out, but the humming-birds would keep kids hunting for a week, turning the thing upside down as if it was a puzzle picture.

Don't run away with the notion that we were looking for suckers. All that we were looking for,

waiting for, spreading the bird-lime for, was men with enterprise. We were quite sure about the place ourselves, and we were willing to sell bits of land to men with enough go to see what they could do. But it was evident that we had to do something more than snap-shot humming-birds, and when Jim Hargreaves said to us : " What's the matter with planting a few trees ? " we thought we might. We did. We planted a few trees. We had another brain-wave after that, or Hislop had. He changed the notepaper heading of the Grand Hotel so that it read no more thus :

GRAND HOTEL

Horse-Thief Creek, Idaho. Centre for Stockmen.

Terms 3.50.

The new memo-form read thus :

GRAND HOTEL

Hargreaves, Idaho.

Centre for Fruit-Growers, Horticulturists, etc., etc.

Terms 2.50

and up.

That was a tribute to Hargreaves—changing the name of the six houses ; but he deserved it if only for the way he rode herd on those humming-birds, trying to get between them and the sun with a camera.

Jim was all right. He was an educated plug, and though he had spent most of his time at places that didn't have a water-tank, but a livery stable, he was in touch with the sayings and doings of the big places where the locomotives start off from. He had books in his bungalow—and pictures too, not in gold frames but in dinky black ones, or all white ones, according to the picture ; and half of the pictures he had up were to Jack Garryl—our other old-timer,

whose education had been in axes, and bucking bronchos, and cross-cut saws, and maybe an occasional examination on pick and shovel and dynamite charge—these pictures were to Jack Garryl like disarranged spiders' webs; for Jim had a fine taste in etchings.

But Jim Hargreaves and Jack Garryl were old friends. More years ago than they might like me to tell, Jim had built a shack on the hillside up there. By profession he was a mining engineer, and it was after mineral that he first blew in here. One day, in winter, he came on a man who had had an accident. The man was trapping, was sure he knew the lie of the land, and that under the snow in front of him was a drop of three feet to solid earth. So he jumped down—and jumped on a snow-hidden limb of a tree that stuck into his leg. He was Jack Garryl, and Jim tended him as best he could, then sleighed him a hundred miles to the doctor. The doctor said Jack would have been a cripple for life if he had been later by a few hours, and Jack, turning to Jim, said: "Thanks to you, sir!" but Hargreaves only said: "O pshaw!"

They had seen men come and go, and they had stayed with it. They were our oldest old-timers. Jack Garryl it was who hunted out the horse thief on the creek that lies a mile or so north of the Grand Hotel. Jack had said that the settlement should be called after Hargreaves as long ago as that; Jim said it should be called after Jack—or by some such name as "Hidden Branch" (if Jack was shy of having it called straight "Garryl"), as in Indian nomenclature. While they were each offering the honour to the other, folks around, who wanted to get their mail—if any mail was to come to them—called it "Horse Thief." Jack

never did feel happy about that, and when, at a meeting of the old-timers in the bar of the Grand, someone put it before us that our name was against us in the matter of raising apples for the kids and bouquets for the pamphlets and "Hargreaves" was suggested—"Hargreaves" was carried unanimously.

These meetings in the bar of the Grand must have seemed, had any outsider dropped in, somewhat quaint to that outsider—quaint and charming. Hargreaves always looked polished—a big man, of the size of a railroad magnate, quiet spoken; and he was even more polished since his marriage. Jack Garryl had always looked tough, and had grown tougher-looking yearly; but the advent of a Mrs. Hargreaves made him shave twice instead of once a week, though he still would persist in always coming into town with his big Colt on his hip. It was the biggest kind procurable—like a young rifle—and he always went through the formality of, the moment he entered the bar-room, stepping up to the bar and presenting it in both hands to Mr. Hislop.

Nobody joshed Jack about carrying his gun when we were trying to boom the place for apples. But if Jack didn't look out he was to pass from the state of being our old-timer with old-timer's ways, into the condition of being "a character." Still—he would not be only discourteous, but full of temerity, who should use the words "a character" of Jack in Horse Thief—I mean in Hargreaves. We were a united family, and there (in Hislop's bar) we gathered one evening from five miles off to sixty miles off, to discuss What Next after the sweet peas and the humming birds.

The various liquids that seemed expedient at

such times had been decanted, or cigars taken in lieu of them ; chairs had been tilted to the proper angles for consideration, and then Hislop said, as if in jest : " Well, boys, how's things stacking up in the way of land development ? "

It was then that Jim Hargreaves startled us all.

" I've been considering the matter, boys," he said, " and I don't believe we've gone about it right."

Jack stared.

" I've planted trees," he began, definitely, " just the way——"

" Oh, it's not the trees. What we want is a church," answered Jim.

Chairs came down to the four-leg-on-ground state with a click.

" Yes, boys—a church. A bar-room may be a pleasant centre for thirsty horse-wranglers ; a pool-and-pyramid room a desirable haven for drug-store clerks, in the evening, and for sheep-men too ; but a common centre, a rallying place for fruit-growers, is a church."

Everybody breathed deep. Jim was smiling kindly. Then somebody sang out that he had been looking at emigration pamphlets and believed that was so. Jack Garryl wagged his head. He had evidently decided to swallow the church, but——

" If that there church has a bell," he said, " I guess you can learn how to toll her—for me, I'm through."

There was no doubt it was a shock to many, but after filling the glasses, that were half drained, to give courage, the suggestion was discussed in detail. I am afraid we were rather humbugging about that church. We did not boldly say to each other that it was the card to play for the sake of land develop-

ment. We said that of course the fruit-growers would bring in their families, and the young people would want to have harvest-thanksgivings, and things like that. We discussed it as if we were doing a kindness to the inhabitants to be, as if we were thinking solely of making them feel more at home.

"The trouble of this here social centre," said Jack, who had said nothing, leaving speech to the others after his comment regarding the bell, "is that if you get her you got to get——"

"Get what?"

"Why, a parson," said Jack. "A sky-scout. You *can* have a sky-scout without a church—I've seen several; they go tramping up to the mines with their blankets on their backs, and hymn-books in their pockets; and fine fellows some of them are. I seen one with a frying-pan once. And one of them I once seen helping to jack up a waggon that had lost a wheel on a narrow waggon-road; and nobody let out a cuss word all the time. Sure he helped, though it was kind of trying help on the rest of us. Yes, you can have a sky-scout without a church," his voice went melancholy, "but if you get this progressive edifice you got to furnish her with a parson. There ain't no end to this here Progress."

II

WE obtained the Edifice.

As we were not authorities on such architecture, we feared there might be some delay, but we heard of a catalogue one. Of course we purchase most things in these parts from catalogues, so the notion of a church in a catalogue did not strike us as quite

so odd as it might strike folks nearer to a department store. There was, to be sure, no woodcut of it. But it was mentioned in a preface to the work in question, casually, as one of the things made by the establishment that issued the catalogue.

Jim wrote to them about it, and in response came a little catalogue with nothing but cuts of churches, from "shack churches to palaces; mission halls to cathedrals," as Jack said, thumbing it over. Probably they were not the only firm in the field, for a letter accompanied the catalogue to say that "our representative will make a point of calling on you. We have telegraphed to our north-western traveller, at present in your neighbourhood, to go to you at once. His visit, we would impress upon you, puts you under no obligation to go further."

And, sure enough, three days later the new automobile fired into our midst a very dry gentleman whose language was oddly guarded. He spoke of "the excessive celerity" of the auto that plied to us; he spoke of the discomforts of rapid travel on mountain roads—wonderful roads, of course, nothing wrong with them—as slightly trying. But he dropped all that and realised that he might have phrased it otherwise when Jack Garryl said: "Well, pilgrim, lay your chest against the bar and speak free. This here drumming must be all-fired trying."

"You bet your life!" said the representative, and we all conspired to give him a good time, from cocktails to bear-hunts.

Jack, by the way, had three bears in a pit all ready against the arrival of any tourist from New York or Britain with an eye to taking up a fruit-farm in our midst; for these fellows like to do more

than grow fruit. They like to have a polo-ground in the middle of their section, and bear in the hills. This we had already discussed, had cleared the polo-ground; but Jack had remarked: "When you ain't looking for b'ar they set around in the bushes picking berries and smiling at you. When you go out for a b'ar steak it times looks as if they bin plumb exterminated." So, in his spare time, he and some of his boys dug a bear-pit, went out to the hills, and confiscated three cubs.

One of them was sacrificed to the drummer, because after two days' hunt no others turned up. The drummer missed it in three shots, for it was travelling at high speed back to the hills when the party encountered it. Jack let it go too. He told us later that it was his favourite of the three, and he was getting attached to it—used to feed it on flap-jacks, and it was "that tame" it would sit up and let him take shies into its mouth. The other two were now to be kept solely for tourists and Back-East sports in gaiters, who were willing to take a fruit-farm if bear could be found in place too, for a bit of relaxation from the arduous duties of spraying for flies, or blights, or going around with a pot of white paint, painting the stem of a tree, like house-decorators gone loco.

But if the drummer went down in our estimation for three misses he went up again for the way he could walk around smiling with a shelf of bottles inside him. It was agreed to give him his order—and along came the church a few weeks later, with a bunch of men to set her up. She was all in pieces, numbered, like a jig-saw puzzle; but these fellows had a plan of her, and all the pieces in the plan were numbered too, in case they forgot—and they set her up. After they had pulled out we rested a

spell, looked at her, tried to get accustomed to her, and then one night Jack broke what we knew must come sooner or later.

"This here hanging on and suspense is too much for me," said he. "We have put our hand to the plough, and I guess we got to shake the lines. It's either get a sky-scout for her, or——"

"Or what, Jack?"

"O, I guess the alternative don't go. I was going to say or else shove a charge under her, and boost her into the clouds. But that's out of the question. What have you bin doin', Jim? Have you any scheme in your head for scouting out a parson for her? I guess you don't get them in no illustrated catalogue."

Jim knew all about these things. He explained them to us. He acted as our secretary. He was successful. We had achieved the Edifice. We achieved the sky-scout. We left it like that for a spell.

The parson had a shack painted white, and Hargreaves transplanted some sweet-peas at the door, and the parson walked over to the Grand three times daily to eat. Also now and then he hired a rig and drove round to visit his flock, but after one palaver with each member they fought shy. When they saw the dust of any rig arriving they used to peer carefully at it, and if it looked like him coming they pinned on their doors all kinds of notes, such as: "Gone up in the hills after deer. Back next week." "Gone into town. Back day after to-morrow, or day after again." This was their idea of making a compromise, of letting him down gently, being polite without seeing him. On Sundays, from a congregation of twenty, we dwindled to Jim and Mrs. Hargreaves—so Jim sprained his

ankle, and Mrs. Hargreaves had to stay at home to bandage him next Sunday.

Hearing the news, and half suspicious of it, Jack visited him, and, as he was getting used to Mrs. Hargreaves, knew she was a woman who could relish a joke so long as it was not strewed with cuss-words, he said: "Jack, my boy, you've sprained your ankle. I'm seriously thinking of breaking my neck myself. Sprained ankle can't last more'n a month of Sundays. You ain't no keener on this yere Progress than any other old-timer in the section. That's what I see. But you are the king-bolt of the business, and you oughter stay with it."

In self-defence Jack said he had photographed the church, with the parson in the porch, and produced a church magazine, that had just arrived, for evidence. There it was, for sure, in the middle of the page, among some others, with twirly decorations round the lot, and a heading: "Extending our Boundaries."

There was, anon, a distinct rise in visitors—land-lookers—and we made no doubt that the venture had been successful. Some very decent folks—looking for a "home" they said, whereas we used to say "location"—ran into the country and looked round. If they stayed over Sunday we used to pass round the blacking tin, and the brush, and the polishing pad, and ride, or hike, over to the edifice. One or two decided to settle with us, but none could say we were hustling. Exports from our section were, once upon a time, steers, anon wool, anon sows. Of late they had been empty bottles—as Jack pointed out at a meeting convened in the Grand Hotel bar one morning early.

I must explain why it was early in the morning, instead of the evening. The parson had taken to

sad habits. He ate but two meals a day now. He lay abed till eleven or so, rose then, dressed leisurely, and showed up at the hotel for lunch. He spent his evenings there too, in the parlour, near the door, so that if anybody put a nickel in the mechanical player in the bar-room he could get full advantage of the strains. We felt sorry for him now. He led a life more lonely than a sheep-herder's.

So we gathered together to see if there was anything we could do for him. Ironical position! We were responsible for his condition—and we gathered together to see if we could ease it! We were sitting at the back of the saloon that morning. The tongue-loosener necessary had just been dispensed, but the tongues had not yet been loosened, for we felt slightly strained. We were all in this Progress racket, and we all wanted to blame somebody else for the way it was going. Suddenly the door opened and, the picture of misery, our sky-scout entered. He had got up early the very morning we hoped to discuss his plight!

It was a glorious morning outside—all sun and reflections, blaze of blue sky, grasshoppers on the jump, bugs clicking about full of mirth. The saloon was dark, and he didn't see us at first. Hislop was still behind the bar, putting back the corks and the cigar boxes. The parson saw him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Hislop," he said.

Hislop's jaw dropped, mouth opened.

"Eh? O good morning," he answered.

"I will have a cigar," said the parson.

"Gee-whiz!" whispered Jack, and then leant his head into the centre of the table, indicating that we all draw close. "Shouldn't some of us invite him to lay his chest to the bar? It seems sociable."

Jim shook his head violently.

"No, no!" he said.

Then the parson saw us, and Jim rose.

"Good morning," he said.

"O—good morning, Mr. Hargreaves."

Jim sailed into it at once.

"We're just discussing a little plan for you," he said. "It struck us that we have not given you a chance—or, as the boys say, a show. There are very few of us here, and we are mostly—er—rough frontiersmen."

"That's what!" agreed Jack, and the others nodded, and smiled.

"I'm going to come to you in a little while," continued Jim, "with a suggestion. We are just arriving at it. Will you be at the—er—vicarage?" Even he seemed slightly flustered, but then he had just observed that he had risen with a glass in his hand, with about "three fingers" in it, and had laid his cigar on the table edge. He had thought it was the other way round.

"I'll be very happy to see you," answered the parson. "Very happy to see any friends," and taking the tip he backed out with his cigar.

"Friends?" asked Garryl, after he was gone, "Why, he's too rapid that ways."

"O," said the storekeeper. "I guess we're too much all same Indian. Eighteen months I sat in my store before an Indian looked in. Whites dropped in first week; but the Indians rode past the door no matter what attraction I hung up a-purpose. I guess we're too Indian ourselves. To be sure the sky-scout sets himself back on friendship every time he comes out with 'friends' that ways. But it's our fault. What's your notion, Jim?"

Hargreaves had sat down again. He tapped the table with his finger, then wagged it at us.

"That church was never opened," he announced. "We want a ceremony. We want to get a bishop to come down here, in full war-paint, boys—and *declare* her open."

"A bishop!!"

"Yes, boys."

Several made the motion of men laying down cards—our sign language on such occasions. Hislop shook his head.

"The feeling is all right, Jim, I guess," said he, "and we'll back you—but I guess you've to be the organiser here again. I ain't posted on bishops."

"I ain't never *seen* a bishop!" said Jack Garryl, and he made a further motion of his hand—as of one passing in the chips.

It is better to go straight ahead with a thing than to make a tangle and have to unravel. But Jim was only the more decided to have a bishop of consequence down to open the church now that it dawned on him that it should have been done before. Still, as Garryl pointed out, though that card should have been played before, it had not been flung away. It could still be played. Jim, and a deputation, visited the parson and over cigars in his white house—which made things easier—discussed the opening ceremony; and then Mr. and Mrs. Jim departed for the railroad and realms of concrete side-walks, plate glass windows, electric cars.

While they were absent two more families came into our midst—with females old and young, white dresses, and sunshades. Properly mustered and spread out in our little Edifice, or about the door, we reckoned on making some sort of show when Jim had (as Hislop voiced it, not disrespectfully so much as because it was his way) "thrown the con into that bishop and got him to agree to come down."

III

OUR storekeeper and postmaster was the Home Secretary of the Affair while Jim Hargreaves was busy away from us. To the parson we were a little warmer, feeling that he was to be given a fair deal, and he looked happier too, though we did not misjudge him, and calculate that it was the prominent place he would occupy at the Pow-wow we were preparing that pleased him, rather than our interest in thinking of it all. It let him know that if we were not swift to take up new ways at least we wished to treat him fairly. Most of us, I verily believe, forgot what was the original, actual root reason for having that Edifice in our midst at all.

At last came the expected day. A bishop had been secured. Arrangements were made for his advance upon us. He was to come by the river-steamer, instead of by the auto-stage, because he was a man much given to sitting in soft chairs, and having regular meal hours, and it was surmised that he would be frayed considerably by the day's jolt in the automobile, whereas the stern-wheeler—though small compared with some on the lakes and rivers of the west—had plush settees, like any other, round her diminutive saloon. She also had two or three waiters in regulation white. The bishop could call "Steward!" and have a soda-sundey at his elbow while he watched the scenery go past. He would arrive fresh, without a hair ruffled.

Mrs. Hargreaves had come down on Wednesday's auto, and had got the church decorated, all the new women in white helping, delighted to find that they had arrived when something so auspicious was afoot. Even Mrs. Hislop showed up, she who was generally on the back verandah with a few cakes of chewing

gun and a bit of knitting. She showed up in her most radiant attire. If it didn't rain overnight the bunting would be all right; even if it did rain, at that time of year the next day's sun would dry it in ample time.

And here at last was the great day. Away down the river the stern-wheeler got the bishop aboard on a decorated gangway that let him know he was on the last lap of his journey. And then began the final anxieties of Jim Hargreaves, Master of Ceremonies. It had been planned that all the way along, on the spits of sand or shingle nearest to his home, each resident would silhouette himself when the stern-wheeler whistled. She would churn up, grate on the shingle, take the man aboard, and he would be presented to the bishop, then stand pat. So on it was to go, one after another all the way up to the "city"; there was deep enough water for her to come so far.

And at first all went well. There, on the sand-spits, suddenly appeared the greeting residents, waving. The stern-wheeler let forth a blast, churned to the beach, the welcomers clambered aboard. Hargreaves shook hands, and then introduced them to the bishop, who sat on a deck chair, in the deck's centre, in front of the pilot house. As this went on he grew more red, more delighted. Hargreaves felt that all was going as if oiled. He had a fine line of conversation for most men, and he soon put any resident, who was doubtful of bishops, at ease, worked a chatter in which all could take a part, if it was only a listening one. He negotiated the deck chairs. He had things so that no man could feel he was looked upon as of no account. And then showed up a little burly figure on a spit of sand.

"Still another!" cried the bishop. "Delightful! This is really going to be a memorable visit."

It was Jack Garryl in a new stetson, with his black satinette shirt and white tie, out of honour to the occasion and the guest. He waved his hand in air with great dignity. The whistle pealed out, and the echoes repeated and repeated, away up into the mountains to the claims that Jack had up there, claims awaiting development when railroad should displace auto as auto had displaced stage-coach. The stern-wheeler surged ashore, and Jack came aboard, head up, neck back, chest larger than ever—on duty, the old-timer of the land, he who was trapping up in the hills when Hargreaves was fumbling about prospecting among the rocks, and no other white man near for miles. He had to do this thing in style. He took Jim's hand and crushed it, saying: "How-do!" banishing from his eyes the look that began to show there of: "You've got him!"

Jim turned to the bishop, who had risen.

"Let me introduce," he began, "our oldest inhabitant—"

And at that Jack stuck out his hand at the man who must be the bishop.

"Put it there, Mr. Bishop," he said.

Nobody so much as wilted. They all looked tremendously stolid. The bishop put it there, and, desiring to do in Rome as Romans do, did not wince when he felt that awesome grasp, but grasped his hardest too—to show signs of recognising equality, and fraternity, and to show respect, and all that sort of thing. Jack thought better of him at once. Not thus had the parson shaken hands. He surmised that the bishop was a better man. Round went his hand to his hip, and out came a flat bottle containing a reddish-yellow fluid. He drew the cork and held it forth, hospitable.

"Have a suck, Mr. Bishop," he suggested.

Jim swallowed his Adam's apple. There was a movement in the knot of welcomers. They glared before them. They became strainedly eager to rove their eyes over the deck planks, as if looking for knot-holes. They stared at their own scenery as if it was astonishing them.

The bishop bowed from the waist.

"No, thank you," he replied.

"Go on," urged Jack. "This is sure. It, Mr. Bishop. This is filled from my emergency stock—the best procurable."

"It is, I am sure, very kind of you," the bishop held up the flat of his hand, "but I never take alcoholic liquor."

Jack stared, astounded. Then he turned to Jim.

"Well, Jim," he said, "here you are," and he held forth the bottle.

"Thank you, thank you," said Jim, hurriedly.

"No, thank you, Jack. I—er—I very seldom—no, thank you."

"Well, gee-whiz!" cried Jack, as if his world was turning. "This is the first time I've known you to look that-a-ways at a bottle of nose-paint."

Expressionless, the bishop eyed Hargreaves. Jack turned round, went back to the rail, and looked up at the pilot-house.

"Put me ashore at the next point," he sang out.

Our skipper at the wheel nodded, wondering why this request. For he had missed the scene. It took place directly under his raised house, and so was hidden from him.

Leaning against the rail Jack Garryl looked at "Mr. Bishop" who had spurned his hospitality. He wanted Jim to see him looking. He despised the whole thing. He eyed the hat of the bishop with curiosity that was tinged with disgust, he eyed the

gaiters with bland interest, that ended in disdain, but on the apron he fixed his eyes for a final scrutiny. Then, as if he had seen all that he ever wished to see, he turned his back, and waited to go ashore again—the land, the next small cape of shingle, rapidly approaching.

Hargreaves was a little—nay, a great deal—upset. But he feared that a worse scene would ensue if he tried to make the peace with Jack. The latter, indeed, was more wroth with Jim than with the bishop. Bishops there might be, but Jim was responsible for this one who had refused the friendly flask. Partly that feeling—but much more (for Jack was at bottom “all right”) a re-awakening sense of being a host, caused the old-timer to turn again when the stern-wheeler grounded on the desired shingle for his departure and, advancing on the bishop, hold out his hand.

“Well, so long, Mr. Bishop,” he said, “hope you enjoy the celebration.”

The bishop took his hand and thanked him. Round abruptly Jack turned, not looking at Jim. Now Jim knew his old friend well. He knew that to speak then, at that moment, would be to hunt, if not trouble, at least a scene. It might be only a mild scene; it might only mean that Jack, clinging on to his notions of a welcome, would draw Jim aside to whisper: “I don’t think much of him—but I think still less of you!” Yet even that, for the moment, would be a pity. So Jack went over the side, and without looking round tramped up the slope, disappearing in the bush.

The bishop, to make things easy, bottling both smiles and looks of severity, said: “Mr. Garryl seems to be quite a character.”

The word hit Jim on the raw. He knew the life

of cities and clubs, and he knew the life of mountains and camps. He felt that it was up to him to talk ; he felt moved to talk. He signed to the bishop to be seated again, and he sat down beside him.

" Yes," he said, slowly. " We would call Jack Garryl a character if we were talking over our country in city clubs—but here I feel that he is not. He has led a queer life, a wonderful life——" and he began to tell of his old friend to the bishop, the other residents sitting round in silence. He told of how Garryl had traded with the Indians in the Rockies before the railway pierced them ; of how he had been one of the first to bring the cattle industry in here, made money at it, lost it ; of how he had prospected and squandered, here and yonder, but how always he turned back to this valley ; how the last Indians of the district all knew him, and how he knew every one of them by name—of how he had lived here now for twenty-five years—and had only once gone out in that time, intending to take a trip to the eastern cities, but how when he got as far as Spokane he felt as if he had enough metropolis there to last him a life-time.

" Yes," said Jim, " he came back to say : ' Didn't go no farther than Spokane. They got electric cars there now and plate-glass windows. What would I see at New York but more electric cars and more plate-glass windows ? Anyhow, I was kind of wanting to see them old hills again.' "

Jim paused there, and the bishop—who had listened silently—realised what had started Jack Hargreaves off on the narration.

" I take it back," said he. " He's not a *character*." He considered a spell over something in his mind. " I expect," he added, " that I, in his eyes, am a character."

And this is the story that they tell you in Hargreaves to-day:—How the bishop thought he would like to delay the opening of the Edifice for a day, how he chartered a rig, and was driven down to Garryl's ranch. The young man who drove him down says he was in there with Jack pow-wowing for some time, and when they both came out they were looking as if they "felt good." Thence they drove over to Jim Hargreave's ranch—a shingle bungalow, white-painted, with sweet-peas at the door, you remember, while Jack's was of log, all log, even the new portion that he had added of late.

Mrs. Hargreaves received them, a little surprised, but hiding her surprise well. Her husband, she said, was not very well; he was asleep. She would tell him of their arrival—and when he was told, and entered the room, the bishop said: "I've just brought Mr. Garryl over. We've been discussing the little troubles that may arise through forgetting that East is East and West is West and—er—well, life's short——"

"It is. That's what," said Jack Garryl. "It's Godam short," and he held out his hand, and nobody seemed to notice the strong word that he used before both the bishop and Mrs. Hargreaves. Jim took his hand, and looked as if he was "feeling bad" no longer.

And after that, what was by then quite of secondary importance—the opening-up, fair and genuine, of that there Edifice—was seen to. There was no mere courtesy in the bishop's speech to the effect that he had never visited a church with greater emotions of pleasure. He made us all forget the original intention of the Edifice. It did seem to be then—straight goods and no josh—a centre for us all.

THE CHINK'S CHARM

THE "Chink" at the Occidental Hotel, Milk Creek, Alberta, was an elderly and withered Chink. He had been long away from Mongolia; a fact which maybe was explanation for another, namely that the inscrutable and cryptic smile, so much the vogue with his compatriots, was, in his case, seldom resorted to. With the eradication of the smile from his features, the everlasting "No savvy!" had almost faded from his vocabulary. He seemed to have taken down around himself—or perhaps Time had taken it down for him—a heap of the intangible (if you have conversed much with a Chinaman you will understand me) Great Wall of China. Now and then, of course, bits of it were evident; but he was markedly at the other end of things from that very common type of immigrant from across the Pacific, the type that is walled and moated and ringed about with smiles and slanting glints of eyes.

"Chang" was good enough name for him, all he asked for; so Chang he was to everybody; and he was more than tolerated—he was recognised. He *fitted in*. Despite all his difference, racial difference, his falsetto singing, among the pots and pans after supper, and such Oriental traits, enough to set him apart among the deep-chested, low-voiced whites, he fitted in. If I may be allowed to say so without offending delicate folk, he pared his nails. In cranberry time no squeamish diner need pass by the pie on hearing that Chang had been up early and out pick-

ing the fruit himself. Though he smoked a pipe on occasion, he did not keep the nail of his index right-hand finger long for pipe-bowl cleaner, in the manner of some of his race. Coarse cut pipe tobacco in wheat-coloured cigarette paper was his usual evening smoke.

One evening he sat on the—I know not whether to call it large-size step or small-size veranda—at the back of his abutting kitchen quarters, whiffing his cigarette, gazing away out over the plains. A wonderful day was ebbing. Only an occasional grasshopper chirred, accentuating the big silence. The rolls of the plains seemed to be outlined. Westward the blue of the mountains turned to amethyst, then into purple. Shafts of gold light, like nebulous pillars, slowly were dissipated away in the infinity beyond. Chang turned, hearing someone in the kitchen. It was the hotel proprietor come to pluck a bristle from Chang's broom for pipe-cleaner. The Chink eyed him negligently through the mosquito netting and spoke :

" 'Melica velly fine countly. In city—huh!—people, hot side-walk! Plains A.I. 'Melica velly good. Me die, I billy heah."

He had raised his voice so that Murphy, the proprietor, might hear.

" You bet ! " said Murphy, and departed.

But another had heard, because of the raising of Chang's voice, and he now came enquiringly round the gable, where he, too, had been at evening ease gazing over the plains.

" You what ? " asked this young man, appearing round the gable.

Chang looked up.

" Hollo ! How you do, Spaling ? I say 'Melica velly fine countly. I billy heah."

Frank Sparling was puzzled.

"Billy," repeated Chang. "You savvy billy? Some man say," he smiled, graciously acknowledging slang, "*plant*. Now you savvy? Billy—*plant*—all same die. I *live* heah. I *billy* heah. Velly good."

To himself Sparling mused: "What a queer, pensive old gentleman in this Chang!" Aloud he enquired "Not go back to China?"

"O-h! Do'know. No mattah. Long time away, evelybody billy in China now. No fliend. 'Melica——" he waved his lean hand out in a semi-circle, indicating the sweep of plains where the majestic day was fading, "plenty good—quiet. Velly good foah live—velly good foah billy."

"I wouldn't worry about being buried yet, Chang," said Sparling.

"O no, no. No *wolly*. But man die all same live, bym-bye. Evelybody!"

"Sure!" Sparling agreed.

"Me no fliend in China," explained China. "No fathah; no mothah; no wi'; no little-n. 'Melica velly good foah live——" he waved his hand again, gave a little final nod and instead of harping on upon the "billying" merely added: "Velly good."

When the war broke out Frank came in to Milk Creek, in a rig—not riding—with three others. The foursome liquidated, the rig drove away with only the driver, and there were three blanket rolls on the veranda. It was after lunch that Sparling gravitated to the kitchen, and sat on the window-sill while Chang washed up. There was only: "How-do, Chang?" and: "How-do, bo-oy? You come light in—you my velly good fliend."

(Chang's "velly good fliends" were those who came and chatted to him without gazing at the pie

shelf. He had a sphinxy manner for those who affably stuck their heads into the kitchen and roved their eyes round for pie as they talked. To them his responses were cold, monosyllabic. He would tolerate them for a few minutes only and then say : " You wantum pie ? " cut a slice, and present it with one hand, holding the door open courteously with the other.)

" You quit you job ? " he asked.

" Yap," said Sparling.

" You go away ? "

" Yap."

" You go fight ? "

" Yap."

" Huh. Velly bad," Chang brought out, drying his hands on a roller towel. " Velly bad. You leave that," and he nodded to the plains. " Blave bo-oy—velley blave bo-oy. O I know. Misa Mu'phy tell me. I know Gelmany—I savvy Gelmany. Him want to be all same——" Chang struck an attitude of greatness with a gesture. " Kill evelybody. Make fight with Flance, but scale to go light into Flance—too much folt. Go to fight Bel-Bel——"

" Belgium."

" Yes. He say too small—I kill him, and go on and kill Flance. Huh! Bym-bye him say to England : ' I no hu't you if you keep out.' Huh! All same if he kill Flance, kill England——"

" No, siree ! " Frank broke out.

The paternal Chang laughed.

" O well, tly—tly," he said. " Then come ovah and kill 'Melica—tly to, tly to. Huh ! "

" Then go and kill China and boss the world," said Frank.

Chang went serious and shook his head.

" Velly bad," he said, slowly. " Velly bad thing.

I know. Velly bad when one side neahly beat. He go mad; he do bad thing. China!" he spat out. "No! Chinaman if he angly velly bad—cluel. You savvy cluel?"

"Yes."

"Chinaman velly bad. If you—if white man fight Chinaman, maybe nevah—but if—you savvy *if?*"

"Sure."

"You no go plisonah. No, you no go plisonah. Velly bad be plisonah. Velly cluel."

One of Frank's partners vociferously yelling at that moment ended the chat, and in the evening there was so much talk elsewhere that Sparling did not hear more of Chang's views on the dangers of falling prisoner. The automobile was not yet at Milk Creek, perhaps because it was a centre for a horse country, and the horse-raisers were prejudiced; but once weekly a rig called "the stage" ran to the railroad. It was just as the stage appeared next morning that Frank ran round to the kitchen.

"So-long, Chang!" he hailed.

Chang was ready for him.

"So-long, bo-oy," the ageing and pensive Chang answered. There was no genial and careless smile of parting; Chang looked worried, as a father might have looked. "Velly good bo-oy; but fight velly bad. I think Gelman maybe cluel—you take ca-ah, you no go plisonah. I give you plesent." He held something out in his hand, the fingers closed over it. "You my velly good fiend. I give you plesent," he repeated; he opened his hand, disclosing a small locket. "I say to myself some day I want this maybe. I do' know. I give it to you. Velly good—if you plisonah, velly good."

Abruptly he threw the string, to which the locket

was attached, round Sparling's neck, and with a jab of his forefinger thrust the locket under the young man's shirt.

"This is very good of you," said Frank, in a humouring voice. "Is it a charm?"

"Cha'm? Cha'm? I no savvy cha'm." He raised a finger of warning. "Not open! Not open, only if you—if you *up against it, up against it.* Yes."

"O it is a charm!" said Frank. "Well, thanks, Chang. So-long."

"All aboard for Berlin!" came the hail, and then other voices: "Where's Chang? So-long, Chang! Nearly forgot Chang! Too bad."

Chang, smiling pleasantly, went to the end of the hotel to give the high-ball in friendly fashion to them all as the packed stage drove off in a whirl of dust.

As a matter of fact Chang's charm came off Frank's neck before he left England. It reposed safely enough on his breast at the first two stages—Valcartier and Salisbury Plains, but when the identification discs were served out, preparatory to going to the Continent, Sparling took off the quaint little box locket, and put it in his pocket. Some men might have opened it. Plenty others, however, would—like Frank—have "stayed with" Chang's request. "If you are up against it," Chang had said. All right; he was not yet up against it.

So the charm went into his pocket. He would give it back to Chang when, the war over, he came again to Milk Creek. He would say: "Here's your charm, Chang. Very good charm, O you Chinese-American!" And Chang would smile a smile more white than yellow.

II

AGES seemed to have elapsed since the Rocky Mountains dwindled on the horizon, and the long grey-green rolls of the Alberta hills went billowing past the car windows, on and on. These haunting and lovable foot-hills seemed to have been seen in a previous existence, so far off were they. It was as if the Frank Sparlings of yesterday, and the day before, of last month, of six months ago, had left a log, or a journal, which the Frank Sparling of to-day had read. He knew all about the other Sparlings; but he was different from the last one, even as the last had been different from that one's predecessor.

That was how he felt in the quaint town of France that had to be only "Somewhere in France" in letters, even though the Canadian censor was perhaps more jack-easy than the letter-censors of the British Army. Any one in Milk Creek who knew France might have had a shrewd surmise as to where Frank was on hearing from him that he was in a town of about ten thousand inhabitants, and tickled to death over the droll fact that most of the inhabitants got their water from a pump in the market square! "Packing water," the Canadians called it, and it tickled them, though they found it tedious too. It gave them, farther, a tired feeling to think of ten thousand people content to pack water like that. Still, they were seeing the world, and in times of peace maybe the villagers with their yokes and buckets were part of the old-world charm of that town "somewhere in France."

To Sparling it was, sometimes, as if he had done little but turn a kaleidoscope during these past six

months. Valcartier, the transport ships, Salisbury Plains, the old cattle-boats in which they crossed to France, the long tramp across that country—for they had been landed "somewhere" far from the Front—it was all a great kaleidoscope. He couldn't say he enjoyed it wholly. There were times when he felt like joining the "kickers," and reviling the English climate, the grub, the discipline, the red tape; but nevertheless was he surely glad that the Frank Sparling of Western Alberta had decided to enlist.

He was more glad as the days went on, the more he saw, the more he heard of Prussian ways. He and his fellows had their taste of fire soon after writing of that quaint old town where their billets were; and one of the kicks of the "kickers" was that they had been needlessly exposed that first day, the notion being to make them good soldiers. To seasoned campaigners the fire they had spraddled through was a mere nothing. "Bit of a drizzle this morning," Frank had heard a grim old regular comment. But they didn't like the suggestion that they had to be steadied, schooled.

Nothing was much like what Sparling expected. The next dose of lead that came his way was stiffer. It felt all absolutely unreal, the whole life of the trenches, this peering in a slit of the ground for so much as a rifle-barrel to show, and drawing a bead on it. There was the other side too, and now and then a man would give a grunt, and crawl out of sight to rear, with left hand shot or left shoulder. It was the sniping stage still—and to Frank, unlearned in war, it all seemed very queer. "To hold the trench" was still their duty. The full meaning of that phrase came presently, when the great shells roared over them, falling, bursting,

leaving cavities like new, uncouth trenches. Then from rear came other roars like millions of demons hammering upon big drums. Away along on the left a bit of the world soared up, with smoke and dust and a sound of voices—a sound reminiscent of a menagerie just before feeding time; but the voices were of human beings! It was Tremendous Murder—now on one side, anon on the other.

There was a time, when mines were a-firing and men and sand-bags soared in air like small, detached windmills, that Frank felt savage that the Canadians waited here, perhaps to be blown up any moment. It seemed all of a part with the things the "kickers" had kicked about since coming into the business. He was furious. He felt that he had come from half the world away to stand in a slit in the ground—and be blown up! And then, down the trench, came an order for preparedness. If—it was an "if," but it dispelled that gloom—if to-night they saw the men show above the trenches to right of them, going forward in a charge, they were to tumble out too, go forward, and *give it to them*.

To the left, where a bit of the world on the British side had recently soared up, telling of another German mine, the steady tap-tap of machine guns went on and on. The trench had been mined in vain so far as occupation went. Blown out of all semblance to trench, littered with dead, it was still held—that bit of torn ground—and the machine-gun men broke the charge that was intended to get in before the consternation of the blow-up was over. It was a hideous orchestration, with the *vox humana* on, too. But what a *vox humana*! Here and there, through smoke and flying dirt of bursting shells, Frank could see the grey phalanxes

of the enemy. They were marching straight on to where that bit of world had gone up in air. They were getting nearer and nearer; the grey forms went down ceaselessly—yet they were always there, grey in the blue-grey fog of battle.

The grey legions came forward, then succumbed, disappeared, and anon came forward again. There was a suggestion of squirrel in a cage about it all. They seemed, these invaders, to be rushing forward shoulder to shoulder, but always almost at the same place, and before them was a growing heap of grey. For once leapt up in Sparling's mind a sense of gratefulness. Britain did not ask this of its soldiers. Britain did not go "off the handle."

"Fix bayonets!" he heard. His legs trembled under him, as a dog's do before a rat-hole. Then suddenly, opposite, up went more sand-bags, and dust, and men. That was the signal. To right there was a roaring cheer of men going forward to grapple and at once the Canadians were up and out, rushing on, stumbling, up again. Sparling felt as if the earth moved backward under him. It looked to him then as it does when one gauges whether or not the street car is going slowly enough to risk dropping.

All he had learnt at Valcartier and Salisbury Plains flashed into his mind. A grey figure was before him, and he heard, as if within him, a voice yell: "In-out!" as the instructing officer used to cry when the bayonet-practice class was at work. The grey figure went down, but another was before him, screaming on a note surely not human. Bayonet met bayonet. The enemy was locked. In a brief glance Frank saw the toothed edge of the bayonet that his had clanked against, and something sprung in his head—the necessary rage. "In-out!" he

shouted aloud this time. Through a red film he saw khaki to left and right, and there were lumps of a dark-coloured cloth at his feet, almost as inert as the hay-stuffed sacks of the old bayonet-classes. He felt he must go on and on till there was an end, nothing in front but Peace; and he went on, with the others. Shells roared overhead, but here it was all cold steel.

"All right, partner," some one cried. "It's over. Stay here."

"Eh?"

"We're to stay here."

He looked round, a little calmer. What a place to stay in! It was the captured German trench, and his comrades were throwing sand-bags up in front of them, flinging them from one side to the other. Sparling did not want to remain here, he wanted to go on, but these others knew better. Men with stretchers were coming along, lifting the fallen figures, moving quietly away, their feet going "suck—suck—suck" in the clay bottom. Sparling had forgotten about the grey phalanxes out there, and as he looked on the stretcher-bearers he thought, quite casually: "There's been an accident." It was not like war at all, just like a tragic accident—a series of horrible disasters.

The noise was hideous. An officer came down the trench, very business-like, and behind him was a man with fixed bayonet and three German soldiers, black with earth, sullen, furtive. Frank wedged himself aside and they shuffled past. An hour later they were relieved. Men with Cockney accent came clamping nimbly down the trench as the Canadians passed out.

"Wot cheer, Canadians!" they said. "Bit of orl right—not arf!"

III

ALL that confusion was but the beginning of things. Those who made the War were determined, it seemed, to bring in the elements that would make every man grim to kill.

Frank, returning to the trenches one day saw, by the roadside, three men propped against a wall, green in the face, swaying backwards and forwards, moaning, and foaming at the mouth while a Red Cross man plied them with some liquid. He stared in horror. Had Chang been right? Were the Germans more cruel than Chinamen? What was it? What had happened to them? He had seen by now many ways of dying, but these three swaying figures—what manner of Death was theirs? Whatever it was that had come upon these men, the sight of them put grimness into his heart.

Down in the trenches, their ranks thinning, came rumours of this gas that the progressive enemy had introduced into warfare. The French had fled before it, on the first day of the chemical attack; and who could blame them? And now, to-day, opposite the Canadians rose that queer fog. It began to drift in their direction. Sparling seemed to see again those three gasping figures—and he whirled round, his jaw set, to rush down the trench. Then, abruptly, he turned back with a grunt, a gasp, a blink, blink, blink of his eyes.

Down on the Canadians poured the asphyxiating fumes. They coughed, swore, coughed again, spat, strangled—and the officers, coughing and spluttering, ordered them to fall away, not out of the trench but to the extremities. They did so; and behind the fumes came, rank after rank, the grey foe, every man wearing a respirator. Weak from coughing,

Sparling watched them pour into the trench—and then, from left and right, the Canadians opened fire.

At the machine guns the men could scarcely see. Their eyes poured with tears, smarted agonisingly, but they had their guns ready and played them on the old trench as a gardener plays upon a flower-bed with watering-can or hose. Suddenly they stopped; and all spluttering, many of them foaming at the mouth, with eyes mad and staring, they went back to re-take their trench with the steel again. "Give 'em Lusitania, boys!" roared an officer.

Frank, nearly blinded by the gas, was hardly aware of his actions. He was keenly conscious of having accounted for three shadow shapes that he had blinked at, feeling outraged against the hideous handicapping. Never again, not even for a moment, did he feel inclination to repeat those frenzied two steps to the rear that he had taken on his first sight of the cloud. Who could have believed it? Who could have thought Chang correct when he suggested that Germans might be as bad as Chinamen? They had won back their so recently evacuated trench, but men who had been in the thickest of the poison gas where now fainting, squirming, coughing and moaning. It was awful, awful!

Sparling tried to clear his lungs—and could not. He tried to draw breath, and only gasped. His chest felt full of phlegm which he could not get away; he was suffocating—but thank God, anyhow, they were back in the trench, and it was floored with dead Germans. It was the only way. He was in torture for breath, tearing his chest with every gasp. A tramp, tramp, tramp of men shook the earth. What was it? He wiped his eyes. An English voice said: "Haul him up here for air!" Good!

He wiped his eyes afresh, and blinked and peered, his chest going like bellows. Dimly he saw piles of khaki-clad men going ceaselessly past. He was aware of the ovals of their faces turned to him as though the order: "Eyes right!" had been given, and he read in their blazing eyes: "All right! So be it! We will make them pay for your agony."

Something warm trickled on his lips. A hand caught him to left, another to right. He swayed backward and forward, straining for breath and every breath rent his lungs. He thrust his hand in his tunic pocket, and it closed on Chang's "present." He heard something like this:

" . . . only . . . give . . . air . . . salt water . . . no antidote . . . two days . . . or wreck for . . ."

When next he opened his eyes and looked round he found that he was in a hospital ward. A man stooped over him, holding a glass to his lips, and he drank. It was salt water. He considered to himself: "They were talking about me. I may live two days like this, then die. That is the likeliest thing. I may—I may recover. Recover! Be a wreck for life!"

Then he discovered that he was holding something tightly, and he looked at it—then looked at it again. It was Chang's charm. The doctor over him was desperately grim, his teeth set together. The expression of that medical man was a curse upon Prussia; for the locket, to him, meant but one thing. What a world! A mere kid, dying like this! No cure! And a locket with his sweetheart's photograph inside!

Frank, bending and strangling, opened the locket carefully. Surely he was up against it now. And behold it held only a little wad of tissue paper. He

unrolled it, and a little pill fell out. In a flash he saw the old Chinaman of Milk Creek, heard again all that he had said of the day when one might be *up against it*. There was deep significance now in Chang's words. Chang thought that to be a prisoner would be the worst ordeal ; but here was worse than that. Here, in Twentieth Century Europe, were shells and chemicals more diabolical than any Chinese "stink-pots." Sparling slipped the pill into his mouth.

"What was that?" asked the doctor, stooping over him once more. "What's that you swallowed?"

Frank stretched for the water.

"All right, my boy," said the doctor, "here you are. Don't try to answer. Take it as easy as you can, my lad."

Anon Frank's agonies abated. The foam came from his lips, but the struggles ceased. The pill of poison that Chang, the friendless, in so far as his own people went—the old exile, he who knew that one lived, and enjoyed life, but must one day be "billied"—the pill of poison that he kept in case of ever wishing to leave the world, had given his velly good friend release.

HOME-SICK

THE whole business of it—part of which I saw, part of which I discovered—took place between Cranberrie Gravel Pit, on the Alberta plains, twenty or so miles east of Medicine Hat, and 10, Dukess Street, off Melville Avenue, Pollokshields, Glasgow. It was a story that might to some pass unobserved, to others be unforgettable.

Of the seven men at Cranberrie Gravel Pit only two made any comment : one told another story, the other said : " Well, it is a queer, queer world," and said not another word for two days ; I expect he had a similar story of his own.

There were eight of us, then, at the Gravel Pit. The outside world was far from us. The east-bound passenger train passed our pit in the dark hours—I forget exactly when ; we never saw it, and I expect seldom heard it (though it passed within seven feet of us), for we always slept the sleep of dog-tired men. The " Pacific Express " (as it was called) went past after ten o'clock at night. Most of us were generally in our bunks by then. The door was always shut by ten at any rate, to keep the mosquitoes from coming in. One of us might go across the bunk-car, it standing there with us on the siding, and pull the door open and look out at the line of lit cars going past. The other west-bound, the " Western Express " (as it was called), passed while we ate dinner. That was all we saw of the outer world. During the day or night two or three freight-trains might

crawl screaming past. The gravel-train came and went—sometimes going away alone, sometimes taking us with it, for, though the trucks were all tip-trucks, worked by steam from the engine, and kicked up all right over the places where the gravel had to be deposited, the particular patent in use there had its limitations. Here and there a car would only half tilt, or the gravel, having earth among it of the order called "gumbo," might stick in a truck. But, as a rule, the gravel string went off without us, leaving us to pick, and wheelbarrow, and shovel on in the glaring sun—the eight of us: Slim, Shorty, Stub, Red, Ginger, Cock (signifying Cockney), Scot (or Scotty, when he was cheery), about whom is all this yarn—and the Boss.

Sometimes we worked on Sundays. Sometimes we did not. It depended on two things—whether the gravel-train was working; whether the vermin in the car had made it too populous. In the latter event we used to go off on Sundays, on the hand-car, towing a push-car, seven miles down the track to where a creek crossed—I beg the creek's pardon—to where the railway crossed a creek; alight, clamber down the steep bank, light a fire, put on a great pot, strip, boil our clothes, sit in the smoke of another fire (a "smudge" fire, a fire damped down with wet grass so that it smoked instead of blazing), sit in that smoke because of the mosquitoes, dive across now and then to stir our clothes. After they had been boiled to death we hung them up to dry, dressed, climbed the precipitous gulch again up to the prairie, where a terrific, silent day would be dying, and pump back again to the bunk-car through an air scented with sage-brush, just getting chill, under a sky that—that I cannot write of sitting here, far from Saskatchewan, or I should weep.

We were tiny pin-points of things in that North-west immensity, scratching the face of the earth, sweating and shovelling from seven in the morning till noon, from one o'clock till six. Once a month the pay-car came to us. At unexpected intervals a superintendent in tweeds and a new hat came on a velocipede. Now and then the section-gang passed.

There were no books. There was one magazine, minus all the advertisement pages and two stories and an article at the beginning, and a story and an article and all the advertisements at the end. It had belonged to somebody who had once been at the pit and had used it for shaving paper. We used it to read. We read it often. The people in the illustrations were as unforgettable to us as relatives or dreaded nightmares.

Once a month a cowboy rode past, back of the track a little way. He wore one spur only. He used to call out to us a profane and friendly greeting. And we used to look up and lean on our shovels a spell, and smile, and call back to him his greeting, and he would smile and ride on. Now and again, as we worked, we heard a tapping sound in the silence of the prairie, would look along the track and see a startled herd of antelope that had curiously come to enquire into the meaning of our heads bobbing up and down above the gravel-pit, see them all halt and twist, one foot delicately raised, heads up, acting like perfectly, precisely trained performers in some ballet, feet up, heads awry—and away all together—all in an instant.

Sometimes, of an evening, when we were sitting on the edge of the track in the long, level, last rays of the sun that made the east-flung shadow of the bunk-cars seem to stretch to the horizon, a dozen coyotes would come slinking over a rise and squat

down and lick their chops and stare at us, get up, slink to and fro, sit down and stare again, and lick their chops, forget to close their lips, and all sit erect on hindquarters, showing their teeth at us—and we sat along the rail side staring at them.

When the prairie fell all into the same tone as the ethereal shadow of the car, they would put their heads up and whine and troop away across the prairie under the white moon.

We had each our individuality. The boss was a boss because he could pass a joke to us without unbending. But he looked lonely often.

Stub kept him from sheer pessimism. Stub was the buffoon of the camp—the boss's jester. A small man, if called "Stub," must be the buffoon. If he were not the jester he would not allow you, nor any man, to call him "Stub." You would have to call him the more dignified "Shorty" and discover a new name for the man an inch taller than he.

Shorty was our grumbler; Ginger our cheery man; Cockney our chirpily witty man; Red our heavy-weight admirer of his lifting capacity; Slim—I was Slim; Scotty was our—Hamlet, I think.

II

ONE day, because there were going to be sports at Medicine Hat, some of the boys thought they would go into town. The boss was evidently going, for, in the morning, he came out of his own end of the car with a white silk handkerchief round his neck instead of a blue cotton one. I did not go. I decided to take advantage of the day to walk—daringly—over to a ranch and see if I could get a job there. I say daringly with no bombast. Lest you

don't know the plains I hasten to explain the "daringly": if you are seen walking on the plains by a herd of steers the chances are ten to one that they charge and gore you. Plenty of unmounted men have had to climb telegraph-poles to get away from steers; and there were no convenient telegraph-poles in the country I was going to cross. So I did not see the "celebrating"; and I don't think that those who did go to Medicine Hat saw much either, not unless they got drunk very quickly after the sight-seeing was over, or just before they started back.

The boss and Scotty were quite sober. The others were quite stupid, fell off the pump-car like sacks when it rattled back in the wee sma' hours, and woke in the lousy bunk-car next morning wondering if they had only had a dream. Scotty had brought back several letters that had been awaiting him at the post-office. He had also picked up, on the track, some emigration pamphlets, presumably dropped out of an emigrant-car window. He read selections of the latter to us—in a hard, jeering voice, having read his home letters first to himself.

Men who work at a gravel pit are, of course, not settlers, and they see a good deal of the life that an emigration pamphlet never, by any chance, mentions. So we found the pamphlets in question very entertaining, and admired the author's gifts.

Next morning when we rose Scotty began to pack his blankets.

"What in thunder?" one said.

"What's the trouble?" asked Shorty.

"You ain't going to quit!" another ejaculated.

Scotty said, like a westerner, "Yap," and went on packing.

"Got a better job?" Ginger asked.

"Goin' back east?" inquired Red, with a guffaw.

"Going farther—going back home—Scotland. You can't make a home here for anybody!" growled Scot.

"O! A 'ome! Well, you can't make a 'ome in a bunk-car, sure. But you want to 'old on to the country and grow up with it—slow and sure," said Cock, and scratched in his chest and killed something.

Ginger began a story about somebody who had, as he said, "been always gettin' down on his uppers but he stuck to it. 'Nil desperandum,' says he, and he—" but the breakfast gong rang—that is a stick was hammered on the bottom of an old frying-pan by the Chinaman in the next car. I didn't mention him before. He was a very decent Chink and I should not have forgotten him.

We had no table-talk. We just ate, at the gravel pit. And after breakfast we went to work, each of us shaking hands with Scotty and saying "So-long."

That was all. It was his affair. Everybody's affairs are just their own affairs out West.

III

SCOTTY was going home. He was home-sick. He wanted to see his people. He found he could do nothing here to support them, no more than he had done at home; so he might as well be near them. He was going home.

A man in Medicine Hat who had come out West from Montreal on a "harvester's return ticket," had offered him the return half for ten dollars.

Ten dollars! The usual fare east was fifty or so. He had considered the matter and decided to grasp the chance, so, bundle on shoulder, he "hit the ties" into Medicine Hat.

He found his man at the hotel where he had met him yesterday. The ticket was still procurable. He examined it and found a lot of printing on it to the effect that the ticket was not transferrable. It was signed by the purchaser on one side, and on the other was a space for his signature again, to be signed in the presence of the station agent before beginning the return journey.

Scotty paid his ten dollars and sat down to practise the signature on a fifteen-cent writing block, destroying page by page in the stove as page by page was covered with his new name. By the time the train was nearly due he had the signature at his finger's ends. He walked into the depôt and looked at the agent. The agent did not know him. He presented his ticket.

"Going back?" asked the agent.

"Yes," said Scotty.

"Sign, please," said the agent.

He signed smartly, the agent peering at him. It struck him then that this regulation was rather cunning. He had not only broken a rule of the railroad: he might be arrested for forgery! But the agent witnessed the signature. The train screamed into the station and he boarded the cars.

There is a stop there for refreshments, and as the train stood at the platform many people strolled past and stared in at the windows. The agent came out and ogled him. A little later a member of the Mounted Police force swaggered along the platform, demurely flicked his riding switch under his right arm, folded arms, and stood very erect

in his smart uniform, back from the train, head down a little. He met Scotty's eyes and they scrutinised each other a perceptibly long time. The conductor came along, and the mounted policeman and he exchanged a furtive word in passing.

"All aboard!" sang out the conductor, and people ran from the refreshment room to the train, with munching mouths. The conductor surveyed them, surveyed his train, glanced at Scotty by his window (he sat next the platform so as not to look afraid of Medicine Hat), and mounted the now moving cars.

People jostled in the aisles and found seats. The conductor came through.

"Tickets, please!" he said, advancing very determinedly on Scotty.

Scotty handed his ticket lightly.

The conductor elevated his eyebrows, shot a sharp look at him, smiled, handed back the ticket, felt in his coat-tail pocket—and produced his little bundle of thin tickets, made a mark on one and stuck it in the band of Scotty's hat.

"What mark has he made?" Scotty wondered.

He watched the conductor pass along. He looked at the tickets in the hatbands of all the other occupants of the car. No—he could not understand the markings; no two seemed the same. It was all cryptic.

He lay back—and then the air of the car made him sleepy. He heard Ginger holding forth and answered—and woke and wondered where Ginger was.

"O!" he muttered, and fell asleep again.

He heard Cock singing, and then heard the bantering comments of the rest of the gang. Cock said in his droll mixture of Brixton and Assiniboia :

"Well, you are a darned fine lot, I don't fink!"

Scotty laughed with the others—and his laugh woke him. He looked round. Two men were leaning together talking and laughing on the next seats. A man opposite looked at the back of his left hand abruptly and smacked it with his right, slaying a mosquito that had been wafted in to him somehow.

The landscape rolling past caught Scotty's eye—the rolls of the prairie. The train rattled over a culvert and away below he saw, along the slopes, the old mark of a buffalo trail, had a quick glimpse of a creek foaming far down—then lost it—and the plains rolled past.

The boys would just be knocking off work now and filing back to the bunk-car. He knew the look in the sky, the light on the plain, the eternity gleaming away and away and away beyond the line of horizon. He could tell the time by the sky. His heart swelled in his breast.

No—he was going home. He must see his people.

He pictured them—father, mother, brother. They were good people. They were religious, and he once thought them hard; puritanical he had called them. But he had seen the world since then. And so he knew that they were only very dear, fine—he fell asleep and hardly had he fallen asleep than the morning gong was struck by the cook and he woke and stretched, and smelt the sage-brush—and thought how free and good a smell it was, and how good was the slumber of a man who works with his muscles—and opened his eyes—and saw the man opposite stoop and lift a tin plate from the floor.

He dived to the window by his side and flung it up, and the scent came in to him, the scent of the

sage, and the odour of immensity ; and a voice, deep in his heart somewhere, came up to his lips, a strained, broken voice it was, and it said : " I can't go ! "

A column of smoke rose back of the track. A cowboy was making a smudge fire and a bunch of horses clustered in the lee of it, crowding into the smoke to be free of the flies and mosquitoes. A gravel bank wavered past. A bunk-car, just the same as the one at Cranberrie Pit, was at the end of it. Blackened men grouped at the door and looked out, the tall above the short, grinning. One held a towel and his face and arms were clean. Scotty glimpsed the tin basin on the box by the door—and they rolled on. He fell asleep.

IV

MONTREAL ! The air was not like the air of the west. The people were not like the people of the west.

The stone-fronted houses seemed heavy, cruel. The men seemed all like waiters ; the women all anæmic. Two coons on the pavement, in white waistcoats, and little bowler hats atilt, made eyes at every woman who passed, and twisted their pliant canes. Scotty heard them chirp at one woman as she passed, and he stood stock still and glared at them.

The coons looked away.

An old, haggard, grey, stubble-chinned man stepped up to him and said :

" I sympathise with you, sir. You can't stand that—eh ? I see by your hat you come from the west. We're tame here—we're all tame—tame—

tame!" He walked on muttering "tame! tame!" and Scotty left the matter alone and found his way to the docks, and advanced towards a sound of lowing cattle till he found a shed where were thousands of steers bawling and crowding.

A queer tough gang of brutal-faced, shuddering youths (playing mouth-organs and double shuffling), looked at him—at his hat.

"Here you are, partner," one said.

He found they were friendly. They were cattlemen, waiting to "sign on." He joined the knot and signed on at once—on the strength of his hat; and on the strength of his complexion, which was like an Indian's, was made a "straw boss." And so he fed and watered cattle for ten days across the Atlantic and arrived in Liverpool.

"I need a boil-up," he remarked to one of the cattlemen, thinking of the off Sundays at Cranberrie. The cattleman evidently was not conversant with the phrase.

V

HE sent no wire to tell of his arrival. He wanted to take them by surprise at the end. He had written from Montreal. The letter would go by mail-steamer and be in Glasgow two days before him. But the exact hour of his arrival must be a little secret.

He arrived and mounted to the flat, feeling as if he was not really here. It was not true. He was dreaming. He rang the bell.

There was no answer.

He rang again and then the door of the flat across the landing opened and the "young lady" there looked out.

"O, Mr. Macpherson! Your people are out. Will you come in here and wait?"

"Not in! Is anything wrong?"

"No. They are at a missionary meeting."

Inside him something said "Well, I'm——" but he shut it up.

"Everybody? Father, mother, John?" he asked, hat in hand, bowing.

"Yes. It's a very special meeting. There's been a course all the week. But come in and wait."

He went in to wait. The "young lady" looked him up and down and he saw her doing so. He had bought a suit of hand-me-down tweeds at Liverpool, and had had a bath. He felt very fresh and healthy and firm, and thought he looked very smart. But the "young lady" looked him up and down.

Then she brought him tea, but did not sit down. She left him; and there he sat sipping tea and eating a boiled egg and thin bread and butter—sat back suddenly and ejaculated: "I feel like a hobo!"

He sat a long while. A clock ticked. He looked at its silly, vacant face and saw that it told half-past nine. It tinkled the half-hour with a voice like a dicky-bird.

He counted the difference in time.

The boys would be just in the thick of the second lap of the day's toil—the grasshoppers would be chirring—the mosquitoes buzzing. The sun would be hanging in the sky like a gold ball of fire. There would be that dry feeling in the air that made the cheeks tingle.

The "young lady" came rushing in. "Here they are!"

He hastened out to meet his people on the landing.

His mother embraced him. His brother looked bored and felt for the key of the flat, got it out and stuck it in the lock, then turned and shook hands. His father fussed a little.

They all stood clustering foolishly. Then his brother threw open the door and turned about.

"Beautiful day, Miss Steel," he remarked to the "young lady" of next door.

"Yes. Was it a good meeting?"

"Oh, splendid, splendid——" and some talk began about a Doctor somebody or other of Serampore, and a Miss somebody else of the Zenana Mission, and Mr. and Mrs. somebody of Mozambique.

Scotty waited. Then they filed in. His father looked him up and down.

"Quite a man now, eh?" he said.

The brother scrutinised his clothes.

"Is that the only suit you have?" he asked.

Stunned, Scotty answered: "Yes."

His brother stared.

"Don't you like it?" Scotty asked.

"Humph! A slop suit."

"Come, come, we must get supper. Have you been waiting long?" asked the mother.

"I don't know," said Scotty. "I think I arrived about half-past eight. But I don't know the time. Did you not get my letter?"

"Letter?" asked the mother.

"From Montreal," he said.

"Oh, yes, we got that," said the brother, "but you didn't tell us the day you expected to arrive. You couldn't have us wait in every night till you came. Is that what you're suggesting?"

"You look well. Doesn't he look well?" said the father. "He's quite tanned."

"I don't like the shade of his neck at the back," said the brother and added, "dear boy."

"It's sunburn!" said Scotty and laughed.

"More than that," said the brother. "It's got the peculiar colour of a neck that has not been washed. I should think you could see the world without getting dirty," and he laughed. Scotty saw a row of coyotes looking at him with lips curled over their teeth as if the lips had stuck. He looked away across the plains for a moment. His mother clapped his shoulder.

"You remember Mr. Ray?" she asked.

"Ray? Ray? Yes."

"He's home on furlough from his mission in Mongolia with his wife and ten children. He is an interesting man. He has wonderful stories of his work."

"Oh yes," said Scotty.

"Well, I'm going to bed," said the brother.

Scotty stared.

"Oh, you needn't go, but I must go," said the brother. "People that have a living to make must be up betimes. Good-night," and he departed to bed.

His mother sat down and asked him of his journey. How had he come home? Where was his trunk? Had he had a rough passage? Dr. — of — had been lecturing on the mission to the Newfoundland trawlers and had told of the fogs and perils—it had made her think of her son.

The brother poked his head in.

"I may mention," said he, "that your mother requires a lot of sleep. The doctor says she should really sleep the round of the clock."

"And you told me you've been very well," cried Scotty.

The mother laughed gaily.

"Oh, I don't want to burden people with my little troubles," she said.

"Come, come, you must go to bed," said Scotty. He caught her shoulders and led her to her bedroom. They kissed a "good-night."

His brother, in his pyjamas, stood at the bedroom door.

"Your room is ready for you. You—um—have you any plans for work?"

"Oh, I'll do anything. The west has taught me that. That letter of yours in which you said you had seen a van-driver my split double made me think— Why, I don't see why I shouldn't—"

The brother yawned.

"Excuse me, I'm tired," he said, raised his head, showed his teeth, nodded, said good-night, and slammed his door.

The old man was pottering in the hall. He had fallen asleep by the fire with a copy of a Mission paper on his knee. He carried it in his left hand now, pottering in the hall, putting out the light.

"Good-night, my boy," he said.

They shook hands; and then Scotty suddenly bent forward and wildly kissed his father's cheek. The father started, then clapped his son's shoulder and fussed him into the little bedroom where a low-turned gas jet shone on the familiar room—the chairs, the white bed, the blue and red text on the wall, "God is Love."

He stood staring a long while. A clock struck once. He looked at his watch. It was half-past eleven. The house was quiet—and he turned the front door key and departed, drawing the door shut very quietly.

A taxi-cab was passing outside. He hailed it

and leaped in. The midnight train carried him back to Liverpool.

VI

WE had just knocked off work and were drawing near to our bunk-car. The smell of hash and apricots and new bread was in the air with the scent of the sage-brush. The sun was in the west, away at the end of the two parallel lines of track; and in the middle of the track was a dot of a man coming towards us.

Supper must wait. We must see who the pilgrim was.

We stood, clustered, watching the dot grow and grow. It was a man. He grew larger.

"He don't seem to be packing much," said the boss.

He grew larger. The sun drifted down. The air felt chill. A coyote barked, off on the plains. A little wind sighed across the everlasting expanse.

The pilgrim grew larger, swinging left right, left right, from tie to tie.

He carried a little bundle.

"He's packing a bundle," said the boss.

"Guess that's his tobacco," said Stub.

The boss laughed. We smiled, and stared at the advancing man. The sun went down. The pilgrim advanced on us in a glow of glory—the sunset glow.

"He ain't packing much," said the boss.

"He ain't got enough to flag a handcar," said Stub, and the boss chortled.

"Why, it's—it's——"

"Say! It's——"

" Well, if it ain't Scotty ! "

" Scotty ! Scotty ! Scotty ! "

" Hello ! Been having a jag on in Medicine Hat for a month ? "

" Hello boys ! How boys ? No—been home." He nodded all round and glanced at the new man—the man who had come to fill the gap he had made.

" Home ! " cried Red.

" Yap ! "

" Home ! " cried Red and Stub.

" That's no lie, boys." "

" Gee-whizz," said Cock—or, rather, " Gee w'izz ! "

" Why did you come back so sudden ? " asked Shorty.

Scotty looked at us and we all seemed to understand. It is wonderful how men do understand who are alone in spacious places—just by looking at each other. Stub said : " Well, it's a queer, queer world."

We climbed into the car and an extra plate was set for Scotty by the Chink, who welcomed him with a smile that lasted all supper-time. When we were a little filled, one of us began a story about a rolling-stone he knew, and we all listened and nodded now and then, and said : " Yes, sir, that's what ! That's it. Life is queer, sir."

" Can you do with a hand ? " Scotty asked the boss.

The boss jerked his head towards me.

" He's leaving in a week. If you care to wait around a week, and work or not work just as you please, you can get your grub. I guess the railway won't know you're eating off us for a week, and you can drop right into it again then."

Scotty nodded. " All right, thanks."

As we trooped from the magnificently-named "dining-car" the sky was being lit with stars. The sage brush was giving forth its evening scent. A river of wind, leagues broad, ran gently on the plains, making the bunch grass wave along the lonely coulees. From horizon to horizon an impossible light filled the colossal stretch. When we came out we all ceased to talk a spell. It seemed that if we spoke the sky would echo. We sat along the rail-edge on the butts of the ties for the evening smoke of incense, and when we talked presently we talked quietly, because of the majestic silence under that sweeping cup of sky, whelming the great North-West—that wonderful land to which Scotty had again quietly come home.

THE FADING KNIGHTS

THE scene of this story is a valley of the Rockies. You can come to its centre from the railway northward, along fifty miles of wagon-road, or from the railroad southward, along seventy-five. All the way you will see little but the firs (thinned out considerably by lumbermen, who have come and gone) and occasional solitary lakes, or occasional "parks" of short, green grass—for the cattle have been crowded there, and have eaten the "pocket" up. From Catamount Valley the cattle industry had not been ousted by the grangers; it had simply put itself on its last legs. There seemed nothing for it but to get the railway in now, and boom the place for tourists to come and look at. It would be an honourable enough proposition; for there is plenty to look at in reverence and in awe. However—the railway is not yet. One or two "irrigated land companies" have land to sell in the place. So far they have only sold the fruit land. They have raised no fruit. And those who bought the fruit lands are selling it, too. Later on, perhaps, somebody will try to raise fruit there, as well as to raise the wind.

There lies the valley, even more quiet to-day than it was twenty years ago. Then the grass was knee-high and the whoop of the cow-boy was heard in the land. Twice a year, from the gulches and cañons among the foothills, from the "parks," and from the rolling benches, the cattle were ki-yied down and along to the heart of the valley. The

bunk-houses were carpeted with wolf-skin in those days—pelts of animals shot by the boys in the act of trying to pull down calves in the spring. Ten years ago, even, the place was more thronged. Prospectors grub-staked at Long's store, and started out thence with their pack-horses to heel, to prowl among the mountains on either side, that cut up into the sky with their jagged grey and blue and white crests. None of the assays showed enough to call for an immediate railway to the valley, none showed enough to pay for shipping out. To-day all the prospectors are gone—and almost all the cow-men.

There are not many inhabitants in Catamount Valley. There are, indeed, more Indians than white persons—and more wild duck than white and red together. The chipmunks and squirrels should come out at the top in a fair census return, and have everything else "skinned" as the phrase is. Like every other valley in the Rockies, Catamount has its majority of law-loving inhabitants, also its handful of doubtful characters, also its inhabitants who let things slide. It has all types. It numbers men keen on party politics; also men who think that politics means a constant reiteration of the fact that: "I put my money on Teddy. He can shake hands with any man west of the Missouri"; also it contains "politicians" to whom politics means a frequent crying out of: "An eight-hour day and no Mongol labour."

Long's store is the human centre of the valley. There is no other store but Long's, and it is also the post office. Next door to it is the Stockman's Hotel—the old name still there in large square letters on the false front that makes the hotel look—unless you see it from the side—a storey higher

than it really is. But, the grass of the central valley, once knee high, having been eaten down, only in the lesser "draws" backward, going up toward the mountains, do a few diminishing herds still roam, and support the Knights of the High-saddle.

When rumours of war with Spain came to the valley the talk among this gathered company at Long's Store was of many kinds. Some elderly men gave long explanations of international affairs beyond the comprehension of the young men present, so far beyond that they held their peace; but though they did not understand, they saw there was a diversity of opinion, even among the wise elders. Yet it was not politics that the young men saw in the war so much as an excitement.

As for Ed. Caldwell, the discussions in Long's Store could go on or abate—it was all the same to him; war was declared—and young men who could "bend a gun" were being called for to go out and fight their country's fight. Here to Ed. Caldwell came the Chance—the chance to play the Ancient Game. Tremendous! Splendid! All over the land the wireless of it spread, and in remote valleys found listeners even as in the central halls of the great cities. Here, to the youth of these States, came the chance to go forth in the ancient way and shoot, and be shot at; and maybe they might come home again with valorous wounds and win a medal. That's good enough for twenty-one! There were, of course, people thinking that here was a chance to corner mules, or horses, or fodder. But the Ed. Caldwells thought only of the cheering around the train that should take them out, the cheering of the transport ship, the charging and bivouacking and scouting and charging again, the planting of a flag upon some hilltop to be found in Cuba, the

coming back, browner than ever, arm in a sling, head in the air. The more he considered it the more his heart beat kettledrums to him.

He was a genuine, simple, straight-goods youth. He told Miss Knapp, waitress of the Stockman's Hotel, about it one evening after a long day of riding the fence with the wire pliers.

"It's like this," he said. "I want to show I'm a man—savvy?"

Miss Knapp sat looking in his eyes, her own very bright and dancing. He leant forward eagerly and continued and she nodded comprehension.

"I would like you to be proud of me, Miss Knapp," he said.

Cecily Knapp's eyes changed a moment. She seemed to look away deep into him, and he was greatly moved.

"It's you—it's you—Miss Knapp. I'm doin' this here for your sake."

"Doing what?" she asked.

"I'm pulling out to-morrow and going to the war," said he.

"Well! For the Land's sake!" she cried out. "But you haven't joined yet, have you?"

"O!" he said. "I guess there ain't much doubt about it. I ain't throwin' hot air! You know, Cecily, though I'm around here with no more'n a pair of wire pliers most days, I'm reckoned the best rider in this here section, and I tell you, now that I'm pulling out, I'm only hangin' on around here for your sake. I'm a-tangled up in your dancing eyes like a two-year old in a rope. That's straight goods and no josh."

Her eyes laughed and he was tangled deeper; nay, he might have had another simile if he could have evolved it, for he saw her grey-blue

eyes then like mountain pools in which he floundered.

"Say, Ed.!" she remarked, and sat forward, chin on hand. "You're sure struck on me." He stretched out and took her hand, which she surrendered to him. "You mean to say you been working for old Miser so as to be near me, when you could be pullin' your fifty dollars a month breakin' at Drice's or Lamont's, or even travelling around, breakin' and bustin' through the state, at so much a head, like Cheyenne Bill——"

"That's what!" said Ed. "I guess you would think more of me if I did that."

"Guess I would," she agreed.

There was a fresh rub-a-dub in Ed.'s heart—and next day there was a man short at Miser's, and a pony unsaddled; and down the wagon-road, hitting the grit, with nothing in the way of baggage save a grey blanket, was a little bit of a young man, trudging under the tremendous firs, making for Bridger City, the railroad town south, where, so it was told in the valley, ten men were to be selected out of all applicants, ten men to wear their country's uniform, and go off to fight their country's battles. A list had been drawn out of the cow towns, a computation made of their relative size. "Bridger City—ten," so the list said. And Ed. guessed he stood a fair show of being one of the selected ten.

II

Two days after Ed. had departed a lean-faced young man who had earned, up at Prince's outfit, the soubriquet of Silent Slim, came into town. Town, you must understand, was Long's Store,

the hotel, six town lots occupied, and about eight streets marked out with posts but not built upon. It may seem amazing that one of Prince's men, taking a holiday, should not go to some place in which there was more Life, with the capital L in red, a little more society of the kind that loves to "whoop it up," but I assure you that his action was not at all unusual. Work goes on seven days a week in the mountains, and it is only natural, working thus, that the boys should take a week of consecutive Sundays, as it were, to rest. It was the same in the prospecting days, with prospectors. Every now and then one would turn up at the Stockman's Hotel, stay for a week or a fortnight, then go back to his claims again, instead of "going out"—and this despite the fact that the proprietor of the hotel has only one gramophone, whereas—at the railway town—there are fifty, and an Opera house, where, if there is seldom an opera, there is frequently a visiting company of singers of songs about mother, of high kickers, of jugglers, of skirt dancers—a mixture to suit all tastes.

But actually the cause of Silent Slim's presence now, at Catamount, was that he and Ed. Caldwell were "buddies," and Ed. had (with great difficulty, and much grunting) written to him a heart-to-heart letter—a letter explaining that Ed. was going off to fight for his country—"and will you," it read, "do me a turn?" It was to do his buddy the turn requested that Silent Slim came and loafed around the post office, lounged on the hotel verandah, sat in the door of the blacksmith's helping him to do nothing. There never was much for the blacksmith to do, but he did—financially—none so badly, nevertheless; for, when any pilgrim came along who required his horse's hoofs to be attended

to, the blacksmith charged highly, not at all diffidently, remembering that he was the only blacksmith in many long miles—fifty the one way, and seventy-five the other, as has been said.

These young men, Ed. and Slim, had their great moments. And if life is splendid when we enjoy doing what we are doing, then neither has to be pitied. Ed. wanted to go forth to the sound of bugles, one of the bunch that would be photographed at the gangways—a lock of a girl's hair in his breast pocket, and a half promise from her that she would at least think more of him when he came back.

Slim was a man for renouncements—for “choosing the better part”—a man who could never, for example, be a millionaire (unless some millionaire went crazy and thrust wealth upon him), simply because he had in him a streak of that one faculty for which millionaires have no use at all—that one faculty that they throw away in the discard before they turn the first pasteboard. Silent Slim it was, when he did speak, who said: “Say, boys, what an imagination God has, for sure—look a-yere at the markin's on this yere lizard.” An outfit in Arizona remembered him by that. Or again: “If it wasn't that the boss had the dough, and I don't have any, I would think it only fair for me to pay him for lettin' me ride this range, instead of him payin' me.”

Here he was now, Silent Slim, at the Stockman's Hotel, to be a kind of proxy protector of fair maidenhood, to see to it, for his absent friend, that Miss Knapp was not insulted by any chance “drummer, or towerist, or money-talks son of a gun” (so went Ed.'s letter) “nor by—to mention no name—but you know the people of the valley as well as me, Slim.”

It has to be explained that in two hundred miles of valley with a scattered population there are bound to be one or two mean men. And though Miss Knapp was well able to look after herself, Ed. could not bear to think of her having the annoyance of any possible insult from any of these. The cause of Ed.'s main trouble—the cause of his cryptic words to Slim—and the cause of Slim's prompt appearance) was a certain middle-aged man called Weston who, with an odour of tanglefoot, tried to wear an air of being ingratiating to every "female"—as the valley pronounces the word—and he was, in the valley's estimation, a "skunk."

III

It was no part of Slim's scheme to become a friend of Miss Knapp's. He made no advances whatever. It was "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," and "If you please, ma'am," and "Thank you, ma'am," and nothing else. But the terrible fact was that he knew, before the first day of his sojourn at Cata-mount was over, that she was the only woman in the world for him. Well could he understand Ed.'s anxiety for her to have a protector around in his absence. Greatly, also, did he marvel at the patriotism of Ed. that could lure him from Miss Knapp forth to the war, and, had he known the old lyric, he might have recalled it then, and still marvelled:

" I could not love you, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

But before many days he found himself last man in the dining-room, after all the others were

"through," talking to her, she leaning against the table beside him. Before he well knew what was going on, he found himself helping her to "clear away" after the meals were over. Before he well knew it he found that she had wanted to be rowed on the lake, and that he had commandeered a canoe, and was rowing her.

At that, after coming back, he had a terrible dark hour, sitting alone on the veranda, unable to square his conscience. He recalled his emotions as he had helped her into, helped her out of, the canoe. Chewing the end of a cigar, he sat in the outer dark. The silence censured him. The distant sound of gentle winds in the tops of the sleeping fir-trees admonished him. He heard, from the bar-room, the sound of cards being slapped down, occasional outbursts of exclamatory speech over some run of luck or acute play, but he did not join his fellows.

He was in misery—feeling himself untrue to his buddy, and yet feeling that if he now froze up, if he now retreated into his shell, he would be rude to a fee-male. The tarnation thing was that the mere presence of that fee-male was to him adorable. The sound of her voice moved him, the beholding of her gestures moved him, the very crinkle of her apron and flurr of her gown moved him—all to adoration. Adoration? Adoration? Slim asked asked himself where he stood—and Slim was afraid. His Deity was three parts compact of honour. Though he, Silent Slim, had been dishonourable, he did not eschew his Deity. He was not, whatever he was, of those who, having failed to live up to their ideals, malign and forswear their ideals.

The only ease he gained that night was drawn, after many self-accusations, from a thought that

came to him—perhaps Miss Knapp might, on the morrow, take back all she had given so far.

“I guess,” thought he, “she will be considerin’ that this here great enjoyment of each other’s society ain’t straight goods when her beau is gone to the war.”

It never occurred to Quixotic Slim that perhaps the love-affair of Ed. Caldwell’s was merely an idea of Ed.’s, not shared by Miss Knapp. But, feeling a little better after this streak of hope for the morrow, Slim tramped along the resonant veranda to the splash of light from the bar-room corridor, and, opening the door, went blinking into the lamp-light, sicklied over with his hour’s deep thought. The society of his fellows and a box of dice did him a whole lot of good.

But it was not a lasting good. Breakfast brought again the old trouble. Miss Knapp, was, he thought, a trifle aloof. He was glad—eh? Was he? No; he knew he should be glad; but he was not! It vexed him. He sat with one arm over the back of his chair, one elbow on table, waiting for his hot cakes, the main portion of the meal over. There was only one other breakfaster in the room, and Miss Knapp was chatting to him. She now passed behind Slim as he sat there telling himself he was glad of the turn of affairs—and then telling himself that he lied; she passed behind him and, dropping her napkin, stooped quickly to pick it up and in stooping—squeezed his sad and drooping hand. Just in passing, it was, and she was gone. The other man did not see the action.

When Miss Knapp returned with Slim’s hot cakes her face was mask-like. He looked up at her, worshipping her. Then, suddenly, she shot him one glance—and he felt that there was truth in

these drawings in comic papers that show rays darting from the eyes of lovers. The comic paper artists knew. They were wise to it. Oh that Ed. had not given him this trust!

Some late breakfaster now came in and Slim rose, his hot cakes eaten, and passed out to the veranda. As he stood there biting a wooden tooth-pick, taken up on leaving the table by mere force of habit, he heard a far-off hum like a thousand bees. It drew nearer. It became a rasping and humming blent.

"What in heck!" he began, and then it dawned on him. It was the weekly mail—no longer a picturesque coach, but an automobile now, one high of clearance to go over the rough roads that were often little better than two ruts through the woods.

The odd dozen of inhabitants began to turn out to see the mail coach; they still called it so—some because they regretted the passing of the old coach, others because they did not want to seem as if they put on dog over the swagger days come upon them, and the car of progress humming and honking through their solitudes.

"Ever rode in one of them gasolene buggies?" asked a voice behind him. It was the hotel proprietor who spoke.

"Nope," said Slim.

On to the verandah came Cecily Knapp.

"O, say!" she cried. "You're behind the times. You're a back number, Slim."

He shot her one glance, then went across to the post office where the car was now throbbing. Old Long handed out the regulation bag—a monster sack to hold a matter of three letters and a postcard.

"Can you take a passenger?" Slim asked the driver.

"Yap!"

Slim leapt in.

But our righteousness (whatever our creed, it would appear) is "filthy rags." Slim told himself he was doing the only straight thing left him to do in fleeing from Miss Knapp—for how could a man of honour declare his love to his buddy's girl? And if he stayed he must do so. He told himself that that was why he fled; and then, as the machine leapt and skidded and swayed, and Slim (accustomed to naught but a saddle) shot up between the seat and the canvas hood like a pea in a bladder, it occurred to him that this notion really came because Cecily had told him he was a back number for never having ridden in one of these devil-wagons.

When he alighted, late at night, at Bridger City, with a splitting headache from the shaking between hood and machine, but very greatly rejoiced over his new experience, he went straight to bed at the Occidental, and heard no sound till eight in the morning, when he returned to consciousness and remembered that he was not in the Stockman's Hotel, but fifty miles from there.

He rose and drew the blind, and looked out—saw the hardware stores, the banks, the drug-stores, with their files of magazines hanging on each side of the doorways; saw the opera house down the street, and over its doorway a sign he marvelled at; "Continuous Performance" it read. He had not been in town for a year. O yes—he knew; he had heard the thing discussed in the bar-room at Cata-mount.

Suddenly his eye fell upon another sight. In Bridger City they still had their chain gang; it was manned, for most part, by boys who had been on a spree. They had a lot of streets to make in Bridger, and side walks to lay. The chain gang,

extinct in many other parts, still flourished here under the careful mayor, who did not see why a man whose ambition was to have a hot time in the old town to-night should not pay in the morning by doing a little for the town—seeing that the lumber-camps and the mines lured away all but Dagoes and some few Squareheads from street work. In the string of men that walked with iron jingle, shackled by their ankles in a shuffling row, was none other than Slim's buddy—Ed. Caldwell.

Two minutes later Slim was in the street. Ten minutes later, in exchange for a ten dollar bill—having followed the chain gang up a side street where the prisoners worked beyond the gaze of citizens—he had got the permission of the Winchester-carrying old warder for two minutes' talk with his buddy.

"Gee-whizz!" said Ed. "I got let down on the shootin'. I could ride with any of them, and I was in the second last bunch to be tried out; but them fellows were all Billy Burkes in the making. It was too great a disappointment. I celebrated my defeat for some days—and here I am. But what are you doing yere? Anything wrong?"

Slim shook his head.

"When do you get your laig loose again?" he asked.

"Day after to-morrow," said Ed.

The warder coughed.

"It's all right—all right. Don't fret none," said Slim, hurriedly. "I waits around for you."

But, alas, Slim grew so miserable and unstrung waiting for the days to pass that he had his head turned and his legs tangled by the smallest portion imaginable of one glass of the oily yellow-red fluid he took to cheer his spirits. Forgetting it was the

era of concrete and automobiles he felt it incumbent upon him, seeing the lights festooned across the front of the motion picture-house, to go and buy a Colt, and come out on the side-walk opposite the opera house and get into action.

His explanation next morning was that he thought the electric lights decorating the front of the picture-house were targets in a shooting gallery. The judge admitted the resemblance but had to give Slim ten days in the chain gang. So Ed., set free the day that Slim was made to walk in the manacled row, waited in town the ten days—ten agonised days, ten dry days. For his dread was lest their fate was to be one in and one out of that chain gang for ever!

But at last the days were over. They were both free, and together again. At a corner table of the Occidental, heads close, they conferred, Slim talking slow and quiet, Ed. listening, alert, looking up at his partner from under his brows.

Silent Slim bared his heart. He told all the truth of how he had fallen in love with the girl whom he was to guard from all harm. He punctuated his narrative with the words: "Bud! I gave you straight goods and no lie—I could not hold it down. If it hadn't been you, Ed., gee-whizz! I'd have had to put my cards on the table—no offence to you, Ed., you understand."

Ed. only nodded and kept nodding now and then till all was said; then he held out his hand, and his grip was warm and reassuring.

"You go back," he said, "and put your cards on the table."

"Say!" cried Slim. "Say! I can't. This here is too magnanimous of you."

"Don't you mention it, Slim," responded Ed.

"I'm a changed man since I was turned down on that there shootin' contest and had my ambition blighted of returning from the glorious wars with a scar and a medal. You go back, Slim—and I wish you joy and felicity. You take the auto back."

"Take the what back?"

"The auto-mo-beel—the gasolene stage. She pulls out again to-morrow—comes in to-day."

The hotel sitting-room emptied when the automobile arrived, as it did just when Slim and Ed. had come to this amicable end. The stopping roar of it sounded outside and the stationary purr went on. They rose and moved out—and behold, dismounting, was that ingratiating old man of Catamount Valley. They saw him get on the side walk and turn to help out a lady—Miss Knapp. She saw them as she alighted.

"Hullo, kids!" she said. "I'm Mrs. Weston now."

The two sailed into the hotel, and the clerk (who had come out to greet them) trundled in their grips and valises.

Dumfounded, the two young men looked on. And there they stood, dazed, till the driver of the car noticed them and said: "How-do, boys." They came to sane life again at sound of his voice, but stared at him rather owlishly.

"How-do," he repeated.

"Eh? Oh! How-do!" they said in chorus.

"It does frazzle you, don't it?" said the driver.

"Well, I guess she knows what she's doing. He owns half the valley, anyhow."

"But—well—why, it's sinful!" gasped Slim.

"He's sixty if he's a day, and she's no more'n a girl, no more'n twenty!"

"Pshaw!" said the driver. "Take ten off your

guess at him and shove it on your guess at hers and you're getting some nearer. But what does it matter to anybody except them anyhow? Guess they both are satisfied. Guess we're all getting what we ask for more or less."

"Well, yes," said Slim, "sure. It's their business. But it do seem disgraceful—him so old, and her so young and beautiful."

The driver considered the two young men paternally. Then he said: "You fellows should get back to the range. You ain't safe roamin' around in town. I think you've been havin' too much of them soft motion picture dramas. Life is different these here days from what you fading knights of the sagebrush would believe. You come back with me to-morrow and get into your chaparreras."

He meant it well, though half bantering, half serious, for he liked these fading knights, through whose diminished realms he honked his way announcing the new era. They looked each to each, then back at him.

"Guess we will," they said.

He stepped up and sat down behind his wheel.

"Them gasoline mechanics," said Ed. after the car had gone, "when you get to know them, ain't so bad."

"They mean well, anyhow," Slim agreed. "I guess driving a—a what-you-call-it—ain't conductive to seein' much except the metallic side of life, so to speak. You can't lay the lines on its neck, so to speak, and gather any of these yere dreams outen the sky for watchin' every inch of the road."

Ed. blinked at him.

"Cheer up, bud!" he said. "Chirp up! There's still high saddles in Idaho."

THE SUN-DANCE IN THE FILE HILLS

IT was in the days when the settlers in the neighbourhood of what is now Saskatoon were wont to make up parties to sleigh their wheat down to the main—and only—line of railway in the country. It was, as the word is wont to be used, only yesterday for all that—in spite of the spider's web appearance of the map now, with all its railway lines; for a man does not need to be at all old to recall the days when there were no arrival-and-departure blackboards even in Winnipeg, the days when men at the depôt asked only for news of the Eastbound or the Westbound. I remember it all myself, and it will be long, I hope, ere I ask the elevator boy in the department store, bending over him, paternal, which is the floor for skull-caps. It was after the Riel Rebellion had become history, and before the prairie chickens sniffed and said: "What in thunder is that?" and an old bird, that had flown west, attending easily to a wing-feather, trying to hide the "dog" he wanted to put on, nonchalantly answered: "Petrol!" The last scream of the Red River carts, with their wibblety wheels and ungreased axles, was still heard in the land, had not yet quit, hopeless, drowned out by the kettle-drum-like rub-a-dub of the exhausts of the cars that now bob like boats all up and down the prairie rolls bearing land-wise folk making "cities."

It was, then, in these days that Harry Verdon,

on his lonesome, rode up into the File Hill country to discover why several Indian trails heading in that direction showed fresh and popular. He was young enough to see life as always a game. He looked on at it. It may be even said that he looked on at Harry Verdon, immensely bucked on all that Harry Verdon was seeing and doing in the game. At Regina they had licked him into shape and discovered that his Cheltenham accent (excessive) had probably been forced upon him against his will because he had an acute ear and couldn't help catching it, rather than because he had practised it hard so as to seem lofty and tin-god like. Don't judge a man always by his accent, or his surface manner. Accents are sometimes like clothes, and a man often wears what his tailor tells him to wear; finds the duds uncomfortable too, if you only knew.

Verdon had friends in the Force, and among the settlers too, even among the sprinkling of men from the Western States not partial to lackadaisical accents, who had, even then, drifted up across Montana into Her (as it was of course called then) Majesty's Dominions. He was "right there" in a prairie fire that threatened the Qu'Appelle district once. He could be greatly interested in such mundane, very mundane, matters, with no spice of danger, as helping to haul a wagon out of a slough. After all it doesn't matter with what kind of accent a man curses a wagon so long as he has his lariat taut between it and his saddle-horn.

As for the Indians—Harry had found them different even from Ballantyne's in some respects. "The Crees," he wrote easily to his aged aunt, and one can detect the lackadaisical note in the letter—and the banter, "are not always clean; but then neither

are we sometimes. I had to do some patrol work in connection with a branch of the C.P.R." (the Crow's Nest that would be ; he was stationed some time at Pincher Creek), "and consider that the camps of the construction gangs are not of much service as models to the Indians." I mention this to show that he was not a kid open to prejudice, and to give you a further notion of the kid who came into the File Hills alone because his partner had gone off with a man who was bug-house through living solitary on a most sequestered quarter section. All kinds of jobs they get, these fellows. Harry Verdon saw the departure of that bug-house individual, and it moved him. All alone now, riding north-east, he seemed still to see him.

"Poor devil," he said.

That was the one kind of job he personally did not like. He would rather arrest a tough whisky-smuggler any day than bring in some locoed person. He sympathised too much with the "poor devils." He would never turn whisky-smuggler. He had no inclination that way. He would never try to ride into a bar-room, in some jerk-water or one-horse place of the plains, loudly crying out that he was it, and that the city was scared of him. With such people he lacked sympathy. He lifted them with enthusiasm. But men who had passed from meditation to brooding, or men who, instead of meditating in the big loneliness to which they had come, were overcome by it—these men he could, if he allowed himself, sympathise with as well as pity. Pity is safer.

He felt so now, for as he rode the effect of the plains round him was as of a saucer to the fly in the centre. The horizon seemed to rise, he to sink. It was as if he floundered in a spread green-brown

blanket, not quite taut. Wherever his pony stepped, there were the bottoms of the slopes; such was the optical illusion. It was a relief to see, far off, a blue something above the plains—and to know it was not a cloud; to know it was the hills, to know that by next day they would show better with serrated bits here and there signifying trees on the ridges. There were no grangers in that section. Wheat (the limit of it) was down south, a couple of days' good ride—and then no more again till you rode north-west for a week.

Cattle was the stand-by of the country. A few head of steers helped to relieve the monotony next day, also a ranch house, with talk—for men don't go loco on cattle ranches. You may not always agree with your friends, but you can argue with them. A man all alone in a shack has no one even to disagree with. When he starts in arguing about himself—about why he's there, about what it all means, about the poor job he's made of his life in the past, about whether he's to have a hereafter or not, and so forth—the sky looks at him so complacently that it's worse than if he was dumped down for life on a little bit of a rock opposite the Sphinx. From such thoughts, and from doing a trifle more than pitying that locoed fellow his partner had gone off with, Harry Verdon welcomed the sight of the corral bars, and the long, low collection of ranch houses with a wisp of smoke rising up. It was as good to see as the pillar of cloud that you may recall in ancient history or myth.

At this ranch there was word for him regarding his Indians, and suggestion as to their goal and occupation there. The guess was that they were sun-dancing. Now, in those days, sun-dancing was considered bad. Smithsonian Institutes and

other kindred inquirers have shed new light on sun-dances, and it is pretty generally admitted that if the powers of darkness are not actually out of the matter altogether, at least the powers of light do have some say in it. Those who care to look it up can find it all in Dorsey's *Arapahoe Sun-Dance*—Vol IV., to be precise, of the Field Columbian Museum Anthropological Series. But perhaps it was as well, in those days, to discountenance it. It gathered bands of tribes together, and the young men did doubtless often get their heads together and ask why they didn't, feeling good, let somebody see what they were so feeling—put their feeling of vigour to the test!

Yes, the Indians had been passing up into the hills some numerous, so Harry was told. They were "all right." None of the boys had reason to suspect that any of the range steers had served them for rations on the way. Harry stopped over there that night, and was pulling out next day when the southern neighbour arrived. He also had news of Indians heading for the File Hills. He also had no complaints to make. He had, indeed, spoken to some of them. They were not Crees. For the only Indian language he knew was Sioux; he had treked up here from Dakota some years before and could make himself understood in Sioux. He assured Harry they were Sioux, some Manitoba reservation Sioux he thought. They were not, he guessed, from south of the border. He too had his "guess," and although the Indians did not admit it, he guessed it was sun-dancing, not bear-hunting, that took them up there. This man from Dakota said, laughing, for one does not suggest these things too seriously, that Harry should have a deputy with him—if not a posse.

Harry thought he had better push on. He might be in time to stop the dance. The ranchman here was going into town next day—they had no telephone at that time—and would tell the corporal, if he was back again, where Harry was heading. So Harry thanked him, and passed on. About noon next day he heard, in the great silence, a sound that might have been the blood in his veins, a throbbing sound. He listened. Sound is a difficult thing to locate. If there is a flash of light somewhere the eye leaps to it, locates it; with sound, unless you know what it is, you are puzzled sometimes. For example—a door slams in the house, and you wonder if it is a door in the house that slammed or the powder magazine ten miles away that blew up.

This throbbing sound puzzled Harry for a spell. It grew louder, however, and as the hills ahead began to show green as well as blue he decided, advancing on them, that it was thence the sound came. By late afternoon there was no doubt. Now Harry knew enough to realise that here was a business different from bagging whisky smugglers, from getting the drop on a gentleman whose aim was to terrorise a bar-room, or even from representing law and order at a round-up when little disputes regarding calves might arise. In the first two cases the point is to arrive unseen and sudden; in the last the notion is just to be there. In this case he knew that he would be seen arriving, whether he rode up all free and open, or tried to advance under cover. The Crees, and the handful of Sioux, might not always be clean as a house doctor would wish to see cleanliness, but Harry knew that in some things the Indian could not be given tips by the white. Once, on a survey party, he had seen how the Indians with them spared ammunition—and

also, more to the purpose, prevented the scaring of the duck—by creeping through the reeds and hitting the birds with an adroitly flung stick.

He knew that the Indians in the hills, if they were up to mischief, would have scouts posted. He knew that they would see him anyhow. He knew that the red-coat advancing open and easily might put a stop to trouble much more promptly than the red-coat advancing surreptitiously. He relied on the Indian's wisdom not to draw a bead on his red coat; but he surmised that if he advanced skulking, the temptation might arise to do so. Wherefore he advanced to the hills, whence came the beat of the tom-toms, as easily as he would have advanced to a round-up to which he had not only been sent by his superior, but of the holding of which that officer had been apprised by the secretary of the Stock Association.

No feelings now of unutterable loneliness trying to whisper things to him! No thoughts now of that locoed homesteader who was like a child and a demon all in one—and you never knew which might have the ascendancy, "poor devil." Now, instead, there was a queer feeling of wonder, wonder if he had already been spotted by many eyes. The trail was clear, and recently travelled. From south and north other trails converged into it. But to this youth, as to the one in the ballad, came the shades of night, falling fast—and so, coming to a creek he made camp, open and undismayed.

On the morrow he would be up early and ride into the Indians' hill-camp, looking for the master of the ceremonies, and would warn him that the camp must be disbanded, and the men all go back to their reserves. He lit a fire; if they saw it, if they scouted down and discovered a red-coat,

well—his job would be executed that way. The red coat was to do the trick anyhow, not by virtue of the one young man under it, but by virtue of all it signified to the Indian of the other men behind it, and the power behind them again—a power that, after all, allowed them a great deal of freedom, of home rule; a power that protected them too from many things, if it gave them a few rules and regulations to get fixed firm in their minds.

As he surmised was probable, so it befel. He was seen. About an hour after he made camp there arrived in the Indian way—whether the Indian wears a breech clout and feathers, or an old black tail coat and dungaree pants—nay, not *arrived* so much as was just there, an Indian; and the moment Harry cocked his head and looked up (and did *not* grab a gun) the Indian, who had probably tramped on the warning twig intentionally, held up his hand and said: “How, Shemogenes!” which being interpreted means: “Greeting, Red-Coat!”

Harry looked at him easily and answered, after a long silence: “How!”—and then recognised him for a sub-chief, one called “Wounds” who had once astonished Harry greatly. It was during that survey trip and Harry had wanted to buy from him, or trade from him, a stone-bowled calumet. Wounds would neither sell for golden eagles nor trade for colt or saddle the desired calumet—intended, by Harry, to grace some drawing-room table of back-home relation. But when the survey was over, and the three red-coats and the two chain-men were pulling out, Wounds gave a parcel to Harry saying: “You open bye-m-bye.” For some reason unknown, the kid had found favour in the eyes of Wounds; for when he eventually

opened the parcel he found the calumet in it. Since then they had met but once—a pleasant meeting. And now here was Wounds again, in troublous time.

“How are you, Chief?” said Harry. “You bully?”

“Me bully. You feeling good?”

“Yap.”

Harry produced his tobacco, and Wounds accepted the hospitality, squatting down. The tom-toming had ceased at sunset, and Harry opined that sunset ended it, not a rumour of his advance. Everything was very quiet. They drew on their pipes a spell, the little fire flickering, the staked horse tearing grass. Red man and Red-coat sat looking at the flames, puffing for some time, and it was the Indian who first spoke after that long silence in which each, in some queer way, had been measuring the other, wondering about the other, less of his war-strength than of himself and his people.

“You come stop dance?” asked Wounds.

Harry looked up slowly from the fire.

“I guess that’s my job,” he said.

There was a pause again.

“I guess,” said Wounds.

“Why you dance?” asked Harry.

“Why? What for?”

“Yap.”

The Indian looked in the fire again, as if trying to select from his small vocabulary of white words the “what for.” And, as he considered, a throbbing began in the night, and ever and again, in its rising, its growing, came a queer keening of voices with a high note, a note that stirred Harry in a new way. It suddenly struck him that these voices, in that special way, so foreign to a white man’s ears, were of *the*

soil. Prairie nights had blent with them for ages. Some of the notes, far-carried in the quiet, high and presumably triumphant, were yet full of pathos to him. They were sad as plovers' cries on the moors at home. And at last—"What for?" Harry asked again, and Wounds tried to tell him.

II

Now it happened that the patrol wagon came over for that locoed man after all, and so Corporal Reid did not have to go to Qu'Appelle. And with the patrol wagon were three men to support Reid and Harry, with orders for all to go up into the File Hills and break up a dance reported to be forming there. From somewhere down Wolseley and Grenfell way word had come of Indians slipping off from reserves, and going north to Beaver Hills or File Hills. It was to be a big camp, and rumour had it that even some Assiniboine from south had crossed the railway on the way to join.

Back came Corporal Reid, having delivered his "poor devil" to the patrol wagon, left his rig at the post, and set off with the three new arrivals on the trail of Harry Verdon, leaving the other policeman to look after his work and Harry's till the sun dance in the File Hills should be broken up, and the dancers sent wending home.

For their arrival no look-out was kept by the Indians. They were not expected. The assembled dancers believed that Harry was the only Shemogenes on the job; and, with no hilarious triumph—with thanksgiving rather, with, perhaps it may be said, naïf joy in a convert—they were rejoicing

over him. For he had reverted. The beat of the tom-toms, the "Hah! hah! hah! hee!"—he had "tumbled" to these sounds. He had heard them not as mere noise. Indians say that our pianos, when first heard, give them but the impression of little hammers hitting wires. But though tom-toms and "Hah! hah! hah! hee!" are not complicated as a pianoforte, doubtless the other way enlightenment, or realisation, can also come. In the simpler noise there is music too—and Harry had succumbed.

Perhaps, too, the "what for" of the sun-dance as told by Wounds last night, blowing smoke and talking in his low voice, had wakened sympathy in that sympathetic kid. At any rate what Reid saw—he having left his three men in a gulch below the camp and advanced, marvelling that the tom-toms kept on, with him so near, and Harry probably arrived—what Reid saw, cresting the hill and looking down on the tipis and the central dance, gave him a shock. All afternoon they had heard the throbbing of the tom-toms as they drew near. It was now well on towards the evening shadow again. And there was Harry Verdon, Kid Verdon, leaning backward as a man leans when he walks before a heavy wind. He was in his blue regulation pants, but his red coat was off, his shirt was open. He had little pieces of wood, like skewers, in his chest, and from them to the top of a lithe pole stretched a cord. Kid Verdon leant back with his weight on the cord, looking at the sun, a great determination on his face. He was having a new experience. He had, as the French say, thrown his cap over the windmills. He might not write of this to his aged aunt later on, but he would remember it to his dying day. All looked at him—all the collected Sioux,

Assiniboine, Cree were rejoicing over the convert ; and the tom-toms thrilled to aid him.

Reid drew rein and looked on. It seemed to him as if he looked on for ages before any saw him. Then shouts and counter shouts broke out. Some were for flight, some were for fight, some were hopeful of another convert ; soon there might be no more missionaries telling them to have a white man's religion, no more missionaries telling them that there were errors in their creeds, but white men coming along to be brothers and take part in their ceremonials. Reid considered the position and, holding up his hand, rode down to the camp.

"Don't cut the strings !" said Harry, in a voice of staying-with-it.

Wounds came up to Reid, and other chiefs too, with him. They were anxious. They wanted to see how the tide set with him. The tom-toms, that had slackened, broke out with new hope. Reid spoke Cree, and in Cree he asked how long Kid Verdon had still to go.

"You can arrest me after !" gulped Harry. "I'll stay with it till the skewers break through—or till sunset."

Reid, with carbine in crook of arm, leant forward in the saddle and listened. He felt that too many were all trying to talk at once. When a lull came he held up his hand, in a very Indian gesture, for quiet to talk. He explained that he had come to stop the dance. He explained that Harry Verdon was a young buck whose head could be turned, and that if he reported this dereliction from duty, the young buck would be cast out of the white man's soldier camps and disgraced. There was a murmur of disapproval. To some of the young red bucks crowding behind the chiefs the obvious way out

was to put an end to Reid, seeing that he spoke thus, and was not at all like the younger red-coat. But the chiefs told them to be quiet, and Reid grimly told them that they must all go home. As for the kid who had been sent to stop the dance, and was now dancing—

Wounds suggested that Reid need not tell. Wounds was of the order that favoured diplomacy. He would fain be Indian in his life, but "too much white people come." Wounds smiled, almost fawning, as he suggested that Reid kept silence regarding it all. Then Reid indicated the country behind him and explained that there were other red-coats there. They all served the White Chief Woman, and the others might tell. The young bucks began to wonder how many red-coats were to rearward, and whether they could not all be killed. But once again the chiefs knew better. They knew the dance had to stop. They knew also that the young red-coat would be in serious trouble. They realised that this quiet, lean corporal was desirous to shield him—that he, too, had a liking for the kid. And no wonder, thought they.

There was a stir over there at the beaten dance-ground. The sun was just sinking, and the red-coat who wanted to be Indian was falling back. The wooden skewers came away; he dropped exhausted. Then Reid acted promptly. He told the chiefs that while the Sacred Women were attending to Harry, the others had better be striking the tipis. There were about fifty Assiniboines. They were to move south at once, and keep moving until it was too dark to move. The Sioux were to stay and follow in the morning; they were a mere twenty, a family or two, and they had only three or four tipis with them. As for the Crees—who were

in the ascendancy in numbers—they were to take down their tipis and hit the trail, all to their several reserves.

When the other chiefs, some sullen, some eager (for various reasons, thinking of themselves, and the kid) were ordering the striking of the tipis, Wounds came up to Reid, who sat there on his horse very august now and unapproachable. The young man, he assured Reid, would be all right anon. The Sacred Women would give him the ointment for putting on the places; that was nothing. It was tiring for anyone, even the strong. But he would be all right; in the morning he could travel again—and the others need not know, the young red-coat could still be a red-coat.

Reid listened to all this, looking in Wounds' face as he might look, in musing mood, at a wall. But Wounds thought it would be all right with the kid who, even as they, had to abstain from doing things that the White Woman Chief—who was very good, to be sure—said they must not do. And he was right. It was well with Harry. He appeared soon, white, but with bright eyes, truly more than a trifle tottery in his steps, but bracing his muscles well. Reid beckoned to him, and he came, ready for anything.

"I didn't cut you down," said the corporal, bending over him from the saddle. "I let you stay with it."

Harry tried to meet his eye boldly, without any shame. But there were no tom-toms now; there were just the Crees and the others—"rather dirty," some of them, perhaps, though all of those who were in the dance proper had been washed and purified in a course of sweat baths. There they were, just those sullen-looking Indians, striking camp. And

he felt a certain shame at his downfall, as a boy who thinks he is too old for toys may feel shame on being discovered at play with them.

Reid jerked his head backward, indicating the plains from which he had come.

"If the others over there think you look bad you tell them you had no sleep for nights," he said.

Hope showed on Harry's face.

"No, siree," said Corporal Reid. "I'll keep my thumb on this. If it leaks out on the other side—" he nodded at the moving camp—"well, I guess it's a tall story, a delusion they suffered after fasting, and dancing, and being hypnotically influenced by their medicine men."

But the Indians did keep their thumb on it too. You may hear of it now-a-days, if you get "next" to some Cree, or you may not. You may get the length of having your question heeded, and of receiving the reply: "So they say. O no, I don't know. Plenty fellow ask me." But you will not likely get farther than that in finding ratification. And assuredly it will never get into any volume dealing with the history and work of the Royal North-West Mounted Police—at least not till the force is disbanded. I give it to you now, anyhow, as a yarn you read in a magazine. Put it that way. "Some fellow tell me."

THE MAETERLINCK SOCIETY

THERE are many tales of men who have gone back east ; but not so many about those who have gone back west—certainly few about those who have gone back west to be disappointed. Yet I heard of one such disappointment, heard it from a man of thirty ; and the story was his own. I mention his age because, young though he was, he had known the pang that comes, in less mutable lands, chiefly to the aged.

When quite a youngster he had gone west—to Colorado, with Denver for his " jumping off place." He had felt the bigness of the country very heavy upon him. The sandhills of the Platte, and the cañons of the mountains had depressed him instead of exhilarating him. As he told his story I saw him, a youth fleeing from a kind of belated Pride and Prejudice society in a back-east village, fleeing west through sheer boredom ; and then, in the sandhills of the Platte, being stricken with loneliness ; and, further on, among the Colorado gulches, with terror.

He told me, laughing, how he was " scared to step off the cars " at some of the stopping-places of old Nebraska, so wild did the men seem that loafed about to watch the train go through. They all looked, to his eyes, accustomed to the quietists of the Pride and Prejudice village, " like the cover of a dime novel." He told me, chuckling, of his first night in Denver : he looked under the bed

before turning in, and put a chair against the door, so much had he been overwrought by seeing the unwontedly wild characters in the bar-room and vestibule below.

He accepted a berth as a waiter to begin, with a furtive thought of how "low" his people at home in *Pride and Prejudice* would think he had fallen. Later he had felt ashamed of himself when, the annual cow-boy sports being on then in Denver, he had attended to a table of bronco-busters, heard them talk, and remarked to his intimidated soul upon the freedom of their lithe movements, and upon the devil-may-care rake of their pliant shoulders. He laughed as he told me of this; and when I knew him he was as devil-may-care as any.

He had crept before he walked indeed. His next job had been waiter—still a waiter—but in a mining camp in the mountains, Leadville way. There he kept his eye on the cook, picked up the simple culinary arts of a camp—and soon went off to another camp, as cook. He told me, how later, at a mine in Colorado, the leading proprietor had arrived from the east and, in his tour of inspection, entered the kitchen. My friend was smoking—and the proprietor fired him on the spot, sent him forth of the camp.

"A cook—smoking! A cook smoking in his kitchen over the soup!" says he."

So my friend had gone back to Leadville to rustle another job. As he told me the story—"Funny!" said he. "I was sure an expert with pots and pans then. Some other cook was rustled promiscuous into my job; and then the mine had to shut down, for the boys went on strike. What was the trouble? 'We want Red back,' they says; 'and we don't go to work till he comes back. He can cook;

and this plug you have now can't cook worth a cent with a hole in it.' When they heard I had been fired for smoking they roared! So I was sent for. Had I got another job? Was I still open? I was open. I hadn't been to look for another job. I was looking at Leadville, and wondering how I could have ever been scared into rubber-necking under the bed in Denver. Even Leadville was sweet enough for a Christian Endeavourists' picnic."

I laughed at the way Red opened wide his eyes in astonishment at what he had been; and he went on, telling how at length (despite the great ovation on his return to the camp, and the superb gastronomic acknowledgment he made upon the day of his return, so that the tables groaned and half the camp took water-brash), cooking seemed a childish or effeminate employment; and, with an old prospector, who had come to the camp to work just long enough to gather money for a trip, he took to the hills.

"How long had you been in the west by then?" I asked.

"O, maybe a couple of years," he said, and plunged into the next link of his story, telling how he had prospected with the old man and put in assessment work on more claims than it seemed possible for two men to hold; how one had sold well—and the old man had disappeared with the entire takings.

"Just disappeared," said Red, "like a snowball in hell! Well, never mind. He left me his outfit and what he had taught me. I went back cooking for a spell, but always itching to get into the hills for myself again. It wasn't so much the dough" (money) "that might be coming to me, as the life," he explained. "The dough is good of course; and I allow that dough gets you a lot of things. But

the life in the hills!" (This from the youngster who had put a chair against the door in Denver!) So he had wandered in the Rockies, from the Mogollons to the Cariboo country.

When funds gave out for prospecting he worked at the town or camp nearest to the scene of the expiry of his last bag of flour. He had undertaken all kinds of work: bridge-building, sheep-herding, tie-cutting in the tie-camps of the Southern Pacific Railway, mining and mucking in the silver-lead camps of Idaho, gold washing on the bars of the Pend d'Oreille.

And then came to this man who had learnt insidiously to love what had given him shivers down the back—lonely camp-outs in hidden valleys, by solitary fires where he sat smoking the evening pipe, a friendly pack-horse perhaps coming in from grazing to nuzzle over his shoulder and beg salt when the owls hooted—came to this man, success, attainment.

He had learnt to love the panoramic life, with hills and valleys gliding past to the slow motion of a walk, with pack-horse astern, climbing up hill, slithering down dale—and then he had struck a lead that assayed so as to make his heart jump. He had put his claim on the market and then gone to work in a camp near by to await the sale.

Other prospects were opened nearer rail-head, were put on the market, were bought, were worked. He stayed on. The little camp boomed. It showed signs of growing to be a supply-town, a centre. The railroad was talked of. Soon it was more than talked of. The gangs of Italians and Swedes were at work clearing for the grade. The town went on with its boom. There were no women in it so far save . . .

There were a great many card-sharpers also. The bars were open both day and night. If you happened to have the toothache at two in the morning and lay till three wondering if it would be possible to get, anywhere, a thimbleful of whisky to hold in the cavity, and at last rose and slipped downstairs in the half hope that maybe there might be a bottle somewhere which you could use, and inform the proprietor about the appropriation when the breakfast hour at last arrived, you found, on descending, that you could have had the thimbleful at two—or a barrelful for that matter—and all the fun of the fair. The barmen worked four hour spells, and the bars never closed.

And underneath all the ferment the strenuous went on working, clearing lots, building houses, laying side-walks, setting up telegraph poles, teaming ore out to the smelter town and teaming in provisions, and the thud and the crunch of the stamps at the wealthy Deadwood mine over the hill could be heard when the wind was favourable, like the thud of a giant crunching giants' biscuits up there among the firs.

Then my friend Red sold his claim for twenty thousand dollars, and took the stage coach out of the camp, marking how, as he came out, the rail-laying gang was gliding in, deliberate, slow, terrible, with its two lines of gleaming steel.

Red then went to the Pride and Prejudice village and could not stand it ; passed on to New York ; then to Paris, Marseilles, Rome, Florence, smoking cigars all the time—and in one year was back in Denver, Colorado.

But he did not look under the bed ; he did not even trouble to report that the door-catch of his room was broken.

When the hotel happened to fill up on the second night and, as there was a spare bed in his room, a green-looking youth was sent up to occupy it, he remarked how the youngster looked at him. Turning about he saw the boy's eyes watching him furiously—scared.

"Shall I put the lamp out, partner?" he asked.

The boy winced and then, with a firm voice, said: "If you wish, sir."

Red remembered suddenly how he had thought, once upon a time, that all westerners were like the hold-up characters on the covers of dime novels; he went out of himself, he tried to comprehend the youth more fully—looked at him again with more precision, and noticed that he clutched something with a hand under the pillow.

"That your money you got under the pillow?" he asked, and the kid went white, and looked grim, as if he might die in the last ditch. So Red did not turn out the lamp, but sat on the edge of his bed, a man, and gave advice to the kid.

"'I was a kid once myself,' I said to him, 'and when I came west, first night in one of the hotels I looked under the bed and put a chair against the door.' The kid laughed, and said he: 'I did that last night. I had a room to myself, and the door wouldn't lock.' So we laughed together—and I felt as if I was old. Anyhow I did him good. I asked him what he meant to make of himself. 'It's very different here from back east, I suppose?' says I. 'It is that,' says he, and laughed, and then looked as he might near cry. He was just plumb young, that kid. I guess he still felt in his bed the shaking of the cars he had come west on. I told him a whole lot about how to make a man of himself, and fell asleep in the middle with a cigar in my

mouth and nearly set alight to the bed!" He paused. "But would you believe me, nothing I could do could make that kid sure about me. I came awake again, and suggested putting out the lamp. He was sure just going to feel hopeful, and at that I saw he had his thoughts about the wild figure I cut in his eyes. And when I wakened in the morning that kid was sleeping with one eye open—all same dog."

Then Red came back to the marrow of his story, from which he and I have digressed.

"I didn't go back to that lively burg at once after my trip to Urup. I couldn't. It would have made me feel too mean to go and see it; for it was still on the upward boom; and I saw that I had sold the Red Top claim too quick. If I had held on I could have sold out for fifty thousand dollars instead of twenty. The Vampire prospect, fifty mile further back, and away on a mountain top where they had to erect a bucket-tramway to get the ore down, sold for that—and it wasn't an assay like the Red Top. But after a spell, maybe a year or two, I just had to go back. That valley was sure the sweetest spot, lying there with a blue lake to one side and mountains to the other, and a creek coming down, with the wagon road taking through it at a ford where there was a bunch of cottonwoods made it as beautiful as a picture. I heard that the card men had all long since been driven out, and the red-light people had been coralled into one corner and kept in the background except when properly attired. I couldn't stand a back east village at any price. But that little burg was sweet. I reckoned on starting a store, or maybe a livery-stable, and taking a day off now and then for a bit of fishing. So I went back.

" I got a kind of welcome. Not that there was a soul there that I knew, except a man who had opened a livery stable just before I left—and was fishing every day now ; and a little old fellow that opened the first store, he was still there ; but he wasn't at the top. Other men were the mandarins in the town. Oh, but say ! What a change in the scenery ! There was a trestle bridge over the creek just at the ford. Wouldn't that rush you ? And a little ways down there was a smelter sticking up its chimneys and belching into the air, and down from the smelter was a sloping dump of slag as far as to the creek. Oh, it was sure a prosperous and ugly burg.

" I saw in the hotel-book that the man I had sold out to for his company was in the hotel. He had just arrived. I saw in the little paper (the burg had a noospaper ! Sure thing !) that he had hopes of the country, and so on. ' Mr. — of the Red Top, says——' He came into the vestibule right then when I was reading, and I reintroduced myself. We shook hands and talked of the old days. And I sat on his right hand, by special request, at a dinner the burg gave to him, and they coupled our healths in a toast. So I got into the swim.

" The dinner was all right ; but it led me beyond anything you can ever believe.

" I stayed just over one month and visited everybody and was fussed over in a kind of way, just as if I was a curiosity. But I didn't mind that because I was surely interested. Only a little spell before—and that burg was not a burg. It was only trees and a creek ; and now it was full of bungalow houses, and lawns in front of them, row below row, the way the hill sloped so steep. And you could look up from the hotels on the main street and see

them, all the same—row above row, and the married men all watering the lawns with hose-pipes in the evening just so soon as the sun slipped away off that side—in their shirt-sleeves, white shirts; and the lady in each house is lying in a hammock; and when the sun sets there's a Chinese lantern over her—one over each, in each and every bungalow. No—it wasn't the hotel whisky. It was progress. I tell you, some of the sports in that burg even carried around—what do you call 'em?—visiting tickets. Come night the windows of each bungalow house would light up and pianos would begin tinkling along the hill. And sometimes you could see all a house lit. They took turn about at that. And there would be dancing; and the boys from the banks and drug-stores would be dancing with the young ladies that lay in the hammocks by day. Oh, but say," he continued, "the afternoon At-Homes—they were the thing."

"At-Homes?"

"Yes, sir. But they called them Maeterlinck Societies."

"What!"

"That's what! Oh, I went to several!"

"What were they like?" I asked.

"I'll tell you," said Red. "You go up and say 'Mrs. So-and-So at home?' and the Chinaman says 'Yes.' You walk right in, and the lady of the house runs at you like a pigeon strutting and fanning, and holds her hand away up. You take her fingers and then she introduces you to them you don't know; and they all bow; you don't shake hands. And when any of them stares like this" (and he showed me), "the lady adds quickly: 'The discoverer of our town, you know—original owner of the Red Top mine.' Then they bows. Being a

lover of truth you say, ' Well, ma'am, if you'll pardon me, not exactly the owner——' and somebody murmurs ' How unassuming ! ' and somebody else says, ' Oh, I know ! Part owner. You would be a happy man if you owned the whole thing, would you not ? ' and then one of the boys shakes your hand and you feel better. You sit down and put your hat under your chair, and the hostess says how we know we shouldn't drink tea, and how theoretically we don't, and on principle we don't, but we drink it all the same. And in comes one Chink all in ducks and sets down a table ; and another Chink (hired for the afternoon from One Lung's laundry and posted up in the ropes of it all) comes right after the first one with a tray of little cups and saucers, and carries it round and everybody takes a cup. Then he leaves the tray on the table and they get out. Future cups you helps yourself. Then one of them Chinks comes back with a long thing made of plaited grass, in rows, one above the other, a plate in each row ; thin bread and butter in the top one, doughnuts underneath, and cake underneath that. And you get a little bit and put it in your saucer. That's what they call a Maeterlinck Society."

There was just a twinkle in his eye.

" Where does Maeterlinck come in ? " I asked.

" He's there all the time," said Red. " They talk about spooks, and how their aunt in Virginia, or somewhere, knew a woman who heard three knocks on the door when her niece's young man died. And somebody chips in that eating vegetables is good, and that on principle they eat them, but like a bit of duck on Sundays, and a change one or two days of the week. Or maybe they talk very near the bone about the relation of the sexes and

what a soft job a man has compared with a woman. And the druggists' assistants look very solemn. I've sat and listened with my eyes to the carpet, trying to make sense of it all, and a little cup of tea in my fist, and my hat under my chair, and squinted sideways sometimes and caught somebody's eye. By heck!" and he laughed, at some especial recollection, I think, and continued:

"It is only a name for these At-Homes—Maeterlinck Society. The talk need not chiefly be about ghosts and dieting; the great scheme is to speak about these matters here and there. But *the* great scheme is to talk about things you ain't sure of, or, if you are sure, to talk as if it was all mysterious and you didn't know the end of the story. But you must sure know yourself what a Maeterlinck Society is? They always come along when a town is, as you might say, getting plumb civilised."

"A sort of running to seed," I suggested.

Red turned his head.

"Well, a granger might put it that way," he admitted. "But this is still a stock-raising country, more ranchers than grangers. And so let us say, as I read in a guide-book 'in Rome be a Roman,' let us say more like a dairy-farming proposition, where they stall-feed and milk."

He turned his head and looked on me knowingly. It was a delightful eye.

FIVE CENTS CHANGE

THE high indigo rocks had a merciless sheen, and the sky, seeming more tremendous and far off than ever, had a shimmering, silky aspect, graduated in its blue tones like the polished inner shells of mussels. It was the hottest summer in the records of the white man. As for the Indians, Old Rheumatism—as these whites called a certain antique red man of the remote section—knew already what he would have to add to the “winter count” this year. He kept that winter count sedulously hid in these days of prying patronage, even shook his head and did not “savvy” when any one asked if such a thing still existed. But it did exist still, and he knew, as the drought increased, that he would have to add to the old record a drawing to the effect that in this summer the white wedges of ice and snow on the summits dwindled and dwindled until they were no more visible from below.

On the average summer they dwindled “some,” but this year you could almost see them in the act of disappearing. They shrank, narrowed, departed, and the blue ridges turned into unrelieved indigo. The long, yellow belts of the lower benches seemed to dance. Most years they merely showed through a shimmer; there was no optical illusion; on the warmest summer the effect was clear enough merely of haze between them and us. But this summer the effect was as if the benches quivered in themselves. They were like painted backgrounds in

a wild-West show seen back east when a wind blows across the arena. But there was no wind here for days, and even the quivering of the yellow benches could not make one imagine a wind.

The lake, too, was shrunken beyond knowledge of living man, red and white. It was now no longer like a great mirror for the sky and the hills. Instead, it was as a splinter of glass, blue glass, and even that suffered a daily attenuation. A pumping plant was in process of extension out to all that was left of the lake; but the people of the section told each other, in dry jest, that "she"—meaning, of course, the lake—shrank so speedily that the gang would never get up with her. She would always get ahead of them—and they were indeed liable to drink her up themselves, to judge by the way that the two water boys kept carrying pailfuls to them to keep them cool; or—this more seriously—if they did gain upon her, and eventually thrust in their great pump nozzles, she would be so low that they would pump sand and water, instead of plain water, and so choke the pipes.

Down at the railway town it was not so bad, though even there they had to import water in tank cars, the local funds of water being at low ebb. It was in the midst of this excessive and memorable weather, that Smart, the storekeeper at Sandy Bluff, fell ill.

Illness is hard to understand up there. They just won't get ill—that is the idea. And it works there better than it does in cities. The friendliness of the inhabitants toward the open air helps the bluff—makes it a deal, after all. A man may put an axe into his foot occasionally, thanks to a knotty log and a distracted attention; a man may have a rib put out of place, thanks to a vicious mount

and a distracted attention. But illness! A man is generally very bad before he admits it.

Not in three years had there been illness that could be called by the name. Then it was the hotel proprietor who was bowled over; and he hushed the whole section in awe before the possible tragedies in wait for mortal man. Three years ago he had, of all illnesses to take a man, cystitis—in the fall—and he took it well. Finding he had to yell with the pain, he went up to a lonely shack a mile back in the hills, with plenty of fuel, and kept warm there. His notion was that no man must hear him yell. The "doc" put up at the hotel for a week, during the worst of that malady, and he declared that he could distinguish Smith's voice among the coyotes during the nights.

Nobody had been ill since then. They had refused to be ill more whole-heartedly than ever, for Smith's convalescence was as woeful as his illness. He had—I must whisper this—to *keep his feet dry*.

"What!" he growled, when Doc Stetson told him that. "What! Keep my feet dry! Why, sir, we've got a saying out West—'A man that's scared o' wet feet!' That's what we say!" So he had let his feet get wet, and back he went to bed, and shouted again for two or three nights.

It would take a long time to forget that illness. If the white men had kept a "winter count," that fall would have gone down as the one in which Smith was told not to get his feet wet. It was, indeed, recalled now, in this dry summer. But here was another kind of illness—an illness full of tossings and turnings and of a voice little better than a whisper, a queer, eerie whisper, babbling incoherencies to the oppressive night—hardly less oppressive than the day. For, if a wind came at all after dark,

it was surely hot. How could it be otherwise, with no snow left in the mountains to cool it in its journey? Smart had a full voice in days of health, and this thin babble was terrible to hear by contrast.

The heat held. There were fires in the mountains. The fire wardens had their work cut out—no more sitting around at ease, with no worry in the world save an occasional wonder if they would lose their jobs, listening, satisfied and smiling, to the murmur of the rain, as they did the year before last. This year of Smart's illness was a terror. The fire wardens were up and down throughout the land, fighting flame, each calling out the neighbour warden, only to find him with a fire of his own—then each calling out the country. Up in the Pinto Range the wild creatures ran into Elk City and cowered in the main street, taking shelter there among men for dread of the devouring flames in the hills—chipmunks, squirrels, badger, deer, bear even—until the city itself took fire. Heavy smoke hung high in the air over the mountains by day; and by night weird radiances smote up on the sky—here, there, yonder.

And all the while, at Sandy Bluff, in his bedroom. Smart lay tossing and raving. The little missionary came up as well as the doctor, kept the store open—or sort of half open—and gave Smart his medicine at the times marked on the bottle, when Mrs. Smart was forced to sleep. Mrs. Smart bore up well, but her eyes were full of pain. As the smoke clouds hung over us, there hung over us, also, the knowledge that a man could be ill unto death in weather whose only fault was that it had overdone being "good weather."

One evening Doc Stetson came out into the store, that the missionary was running to the best of his ability, and shook his head.

"I'll stay here to-night," he said. "When you fellows do get ill up here, you get it badly."

Those who had come in for the last bulletins looked solemn. They were Smith, the hotel proprietor—he of the wet-feet year; Jules, fruit man; Schwelpheimer, blacksmith; Anderson, boss of the road gang. Their glances meant: "It's as bad as that, eh?"

The doc nodded in response to their looks.

"I would give a lot of money for some"—he paused—"ice!"

"Yes, it's hot for a man with fever," said Jules, taking the remark at first merely for a comment on the heat. Then he furrowed his brows and considered. "Ice!" he broke out. "Ice."

"Yap. I would pack him in it if I had some—if I had enough." The doc touched his neck. "A chunk of it laid there would help if I couldn't get any more. But I can't get it, that's all."

An old Indian woman, who had just made a purchase before Stetson's arrival, remained staring with big, black eyes, taking in the doc's words. Now she glided out baggily, and all looked after her, as if she mattered, as if she was vital to the question; but they looked like that just because she had moved, and they were up against it. That was all.

There was a gentle sound without, of a horse hoofing listlessly in the sand, more by habit than because of spirit to-night, as the old woman tied her sack of flour to the saddle. Then came the gentle flip-flap as she rode away.

"Would it be any use," asked Jules, "going up to the mountains? Snow's snow—and melts away. But there is still Bill William's glacier, and a glacier's a glacier. It would take time to go that far, but——"

The others looked sideways at him. They were doubtful of how ice could be packed so far.

"Two days to get there," he went on.

"The ice would melt coming back. You couldn't pack her," said the doctor.

But down at the reserve the old woman was talking: telling of what she had heard at Smart's store. Down there they knew all the gossip of the white folks, knew some through hearing it, knew more through seeing, not in a "rubbernecking" way, but just by plain seeing—observation. And soon, away down the waggon road to the railroad town there was the muffled, quick step of hoofs in sand, the rhythmic rub of saddle leather. A messenger was off to do what he could for Smart, the store-keeper. For there was reason for thinking of Smart, for wishing to do what could be done for him.

It was a lonely world through which the Indian rode. The wild things had emigrated. A census return of them would have left rattlesnakes easily first. The eaters of grass and leaves, departing, had caused the eaters of those that eat grass and leaves to depart, also. The rattlesnakes only remained to eat, perhaps, the few last grasshoppers.

Away down the dry road went the shadowy horse and rider at the lope a man takes who has a long way to go. Later he would be followed by a young man on horseback, with a led horse; and, later still, by another man and another led horse, these to await his return with the fresh mounts for him, or mounts at least fresher than his would be. He would have need of them in his task, if it succeeded. And succeed it did—at least in the first stage; and in big enterprises that is a thing to be thankful for, though not to whoop over.

Early in the morning, into Jerkwater, the railroad "town," came the Indian; and the operator, who was also station agent, had a faint interest in him; for even white folk, even hot and weary operators, have their eyes for gossip, as well as ears. He was bored stiff with the heat, and with his monotonous job of remembering whether a gravel train, working in the vicinity, was on the main line or on the spur. Keeping track of that gravel train worried him like heat spots. Once, already, he had fallen asleep, and had been forced to hold up the main-line train because he had, during slumber, lost track of that gravel string. It was good that he did hold up the main-line train, for the gravel string was not on the spur. That had been a lesson to him, and he had managed to keep awake ever since. But when he saw a whirl of dust in the middle of the wavering heat haze, that hung along the world as the haze hangs over a lamp, he peered and wondered. Here was one who ignored the heat—a horseman, in haste. On the instant that the Indian dismounted and threw wide the reins, the horse drooped neck, sagged legs; but then these cayuses always do that. It might not be half dead, despite the bellowslike rise and fall of its lean sides. Yet, as the swarthy and dusty rider walked to the platform, the horse raised its head, and sniffed in the direction of the siding. There stood the tank car, and the operator surmised that the Indian—whatever the cause of his hurry—was about to ask the loan of a bucket of water for his horse. It was evidently not so.

"You catchum ice?" asked the Indian, coming straight to the point.

"Ice!" groaned the operator. And again: "Ice!" Then he chuckled very feebly. "Say, this is the kind of josh you want to work off later, on

the boss in the nether regions. Guess you're practising."

"You know Doc Stetson?"

"Sure!" rather dazed.

"He say catchum ice for Smart to put against him head—maybe Smart live."

"Oho!" The operator was immediately all attention. "Smart, the storekeeper, sick?"

The Indian nodded. He thought he had already said as much.

Suddenly the operator broke out; "Say! How you going to pack the ice if you catchum?"

"Oh, I ride good, you bet."

The operator's mind woke from its lethargy, and had a plan; but he was doubtful. He scratched the back of his head, tilting his hat, in the action, over his sun-tired eyes.

"It's a problem in arithmetic," he considered. "Given a block of ice as large as you can pack, how much of it will be left when you get into Sandy again?"

"Him melt some," agreed the Indian. "I ride like hell, you bet."

"On *that*? How long do you reckon?"

"Some fellow wait for me along there," and the dusty Indian held up a finger, "one hoss, you bet; some fellow wait for me again, another hoss, you bet. You catchum ice. Passenger train packum ice. I know, you bet."

The operator picked up a bucket, and shoved it at the Indian.

"Help yourself to water in that tank," he said. "It belongs to the railway company now, but I guess it belonged to God before that, and your cayuse worries me."

The Indian caught the pail, and the operator dived

into his office for the regulation red flag. A freight train was coming along. He had already passed her from Williams Bluff. The gravel string was sizzling on the siding; the gang rested on the shady side, grateful for the delay. He came out with his flag and ambled up the line a little way to meet the train that now could be heard hooting for curves, away off in the rock cuttings. The ties gave off occasional, slight cracking sounds, audible in the quiet there, as the sun beat into them. Looking down upon them, as they now sang faintly with the approaching train, the operator considered that if a man touched them he would peel the skin off his finger doing so.

Here came the freight round the bend, and the operator gave the signal for it to halt at the little depôt. Hotly the locomotive rocked to a standstill, casting an odour of warm oil on the air, adding to the heat until it was nigh overpowering.

"Wonder how you can stay with your job," the operator hailed the engineer as the locomotive passed with brakes on. And the engineer, leaning from the cab, replied: "It ain't pleasant when we're standing still. What are you holding us up for? We want to make a breeze for ourselves——" The rest was lost as the engine slid on, and the long string went grinding past, speed decreasing—flat cars, grain cars, empty cattle cars.

The operator gazed at them thus passing in review before him, and wondered if he had held the train up in vain. No! There was a refrigerator car. The string went bump-bump-bump, and came to a standstill; the train crew hung from the caboose, or sat on the roof for coolness; the conductor dropped off, jacketless, shirt sleeves held up with elastic bands, hat on back of head, handkerchief

in hand, ready to mop when the heat should take full effect after the cessation of the wind eddies caused by the train. He had been held up on that sidetrack last trip to let a passenger go through, and he hoped the manœuvre was not to be repeated this time, for such holding up was not in his regular schedule. He felt an animosity to the passenger train, even before hearing the cause of his delay, and took it for granted she had lost time again for some reason.

"Got any ice?" asked the operator.

The conductor glared. He was a martinet of a man, and the extreme seriousness of the operator's tones told him that this was not just a preliminary greeting; this was the serious and deliberate reason for the flagging of his train. He frowned heavily. He thought this operator must be effete, and yet with some gall in his effiteness, to hold up the—nominal at least—fast freight, to ask for ice. The sun must have touched the fellow! Besides, he was worried over ice these days. Precious time was spent seeing that ice was dumped into refrigerator-car ice safes, and ice didn't last long, either. Poof!

"There's somebody ill, and the doctor says if he can get ice for him he'll pull through," explained the operator.

"Look here," growled the conductor, not for one moment believing the story, "I've got a schedule to run to. I've got to explain if I don't run to it. Where is this sick person? I guess everybody wants ice. I guess everybody wants ice. I guess you'll want a heap of ice later. Better get in training." And he made as if to give the signal to go ahead.

That jest was antiquated to the operator; he had said something of the same kind himself quite recently.

"And you call yourself an American!" he jerked out.

The conductor glared again. But the operator had got up energy at last, despite the heat, and he pointed to the Indian.

"That fellow," he said, "has ridden down from Sandy for ice—all the way—and you go and turn down——"

"It ain't for you, then?"

"Me? Was that your idea? No, siree. It's for a poor"—he paused—"woman!" he ejaculated.

That did it.

"See boys, shake a leg!" cried the conductor. "Get out the ice hooks!" And he, in person, laid hold of a side ladder, and up he went on to the refrigerator-car roof, where quickly he was joined by the crew. Up came the lid, and soon they were wrestling with the desired ice. A sound of trickling water beneath announced the ceaseless melting of the precious store.

"Ice!" said the conductor, wrists on hips, up on the roof, bossing the operation. "I'm tired of the name these here days; but I'm an American, and if there's a woman sick, and the doctor says——"

But the operator paid no heed to his grandiloquence.

"Yes, that's what. You're all right at bottom," he agreed, lending a hand below. And there, on the platform, he and the Indian lowered the precious block.

Bang! Down went the ice-safe lid. The delighted operator gave the high ball to conductor and crew. The engineer, wondering, ahead, took his signal from the conductor on the roof; the bell clanged; she started. There came the tug-tug-tug the length of the string, the bump-bump, and

muffled sounds from the refrigerator car of the ice—disturbed ice—as the blocks within clashed into new formation again. Then away went the train, the crew on the caboose roof, the conductor leaning over the chain behind, letting the eddies of wind, beginning again, fan him.

Together the two men, left on the platform, thrust the ice into a gunny sack; together they tied it securely to the saddle of the watered and grateful cayuse.

"I told him it was for a woman," said the operator, as he helped at this task.

Let no man say the Indian has no humour. This Indian shrugged, and, with a faint smile, said he: "Smart got wife. I guess him wife heap sorry if Smart pass in his checks—you bet. Oh, yes!"

The operator nodded, appreciating this explanation of his remark to the conductor.

"That's what!" he said. "Well, I hope you make it out all right." And to himself he soliloquized as the Indian mounted and wheeled away: "This sun-versus-ice problem is too stiff an arithmetical problem for me. I guess it's more than arithmetic; it would need a professor of sums from Harvard, and a weather professor from an observatory to thrash her out in figures. I hope, for Smart's sake—and Mrs. Smart's—that this Indian gets a plus and not a minus answer to it by the time he reaches Sandy."

Up at Sandy Bluff that day the inhabitants had, ever and again, raised their eyes unto the hills—the too distant hills, glaring indigo, terrible indigo, amazing, unforgettable, and, it seemed to them then, cruel. Here was a man who might live if ice could be laid about his head; and ice there was none. And away up north, on this same continent, if not

at this moment, to be sure, in another couple of months, men would be dying because of a frozen world.

The fire warden of the section, tarrying a night to rest at Sandy Bluff, told of mad deer over on the Williams Range—either from a recent fire or from heat. At any rate, they were charging to and fro, not because they had scented him, but charging to and fro meaninglessly. He asked after Smart, knowing the storekeeper was ill. They told him of the doctor's doubt of the patient.

"He's doing his best," said Smith. "But he says if he could get some ice—and pack him in it——"

The fire warden, aware of the hardness of the world as well as of its great kindness, merely said quickly:

"A bit of fire in the winter, and a bit of ice in the summer are mighty handy things—but there you are. I guess folk has got to make out." But it was spoken philosophically, not unfeelingly.

"Doc says to-night will decide," said Smith. "He's just gone over to have another look at him."

"What's the matter with going across and hearing if there's any good news?" asked the fire warden.

They rose and moved over to the store, and as they did so a horseman surged past them. The horse came to a standstill at Smart's; the rider dropped off, and they saw him wrestle with something on the saddle. They could see plainly, in the light sprayed out from the door, hands moving speedily, taking something from the cante. Then the man passed up the two steps and disappeared into the store, ahead of them.

They followed, aware of something meaningful afoot. Within was the doctor, talking seriously

to the missionary, who had stayed pat with the proposition, half his time in the store, half his time relieving Mrs. Smart at the fevered man's bedside. Every one noticed that the Indian was carrying a gunny sack; it was dripping wet, and all lumped up in his hands. He thrust it at Stetson without a word.

"Huh!" cried the doctor at the impact. "It's cold as ice."

"Yes, ice, you bet," said the Indian, and, as he pressed his hands on the soaking sack, there was evidence of some substance still within. Behind him, to the door, was a little trail of water drops. If the Jerkwater operator had been there he would have seen, without calculation, how much, or how little, was left of the original hefty block. But the answer to the problem was, at any rate, not a minus, but a plus.

The doctor stared as if a miracle had happened, but asked no questions. It was ice, and no mistake, and every aid was of value at this critical time. He departed with it in haste, and the Indian walked over, leaning against the counter, to stare before him vacantly at the shelves with their rows of tinned goods. Then he looked on the floor, and his eyes stolidly followed the trail of water drops to the door. The missionary approached him and held forth his hand. The two men shook hands.

"Where did you get it?" asked the missionary.

"Jerkwater. I ride down last night. Some fellow wait for me with fresh horses for way back. That's all right, you bet. Smart good man. Some storekeeper say to me when I say 'How much?' 'Five dollah!' and when I say 'No good,' they say 'four dollah!' and when I say 'No good!' they say 'three dollah!' Maybe I trade, and some other

fellow tell me : ' You fool ! I buy same thing one day for dollah and six bits.' Smart," he smiled his faint smile, " Smart white man. Smart say to me one day : ' Got no change. I owe you five cent.' Next time he see me he stopped me. ' Hello,' he say ; ' I think you the fellow I owe five cent.' I got ice for Smart to stop heat, you bet. I hope Smart live."

And he did. It would have been too bad, after that, if Smart had not pulled through. But he knew the Indian of that kind too well to offer to pay him for the ride or the ice, for you can't pay a man for friendship.

SHERIFF AND BAD-MAN

SHERIFF JAMIESON came down the Uintah road with a streamer of dust billowing behind him.

This was his first case, and he had to "make good." At the same time, from the word go, he had no personal sense of the sinfulness of the criminal on whose trail he sped. He had, indeed, some sympathy with him—for the villain had held up the new automobile upon its first run from Solomonsville (on the railroad) to Uintah; and Jamieson had little use for the automobile. He was young in years, younger in spirit—and the automobile spelt to him ruin, ruin of all that made the West worth living in. No more gauntlets and buckskins, no more gathering up of the ribbons, springing back of the brake, whoop and yell and splendid making of figures 8 over the heads of the whaling team of six with a long-lashed whip. Instead—a man with an unnaturally humped back, through sitting over the wheel, a man who wore a cap—think of it!—a cap with a scoop, in place of the broad Stetson with the rattlesnake band.

Jamieson was nicknamed Sheriff Baby, by his friends in fun, by his enemies in contempt. He had the face of a schoolboy, the expression, and the large blue eyes, of a Cupid. He came to the scene of the hold-up as told by the driver, but did not allow himself to be blindly prejudiced when he saw the signs of the doublings and turnings the car had made in the chauffeur's attempt to rush it off the

road, whirl it this way and that, evading trees, and get it back on the road again. It had been a wild and plucky piece of steering, but the trees had been too many for the driver—in the slang sense and the actual; and once the brake had been put on there had been nothing for it but to let the hold-up man go through the bags.

"He surely told the truth," Jamieson cogitated, as he looked at the amazing track. "He did some stunts here with his gold-darn' auto-mo-beel, his durn gasolene buggy, his nickel-played piano-organ, petrol-drinking contraption, his stinkadora gas-works! He is sure some lizard of a driver. Guess it's true he did all these turns without lowering speed to speak of. Well—I don't like his hat, and I don't like his derailed locomotive skally-hootin' through the woods, but he surely handled her—and I got to find this criminal!"

He dismounted and led his horse round the scene of the show-down of the gasolene buggy, presently mounted and sitting loose and bent in the saddle, sometimes riding very slow, sometimes increasing speed to a lope, rode on, eyes to the ground. Jamieson knew Uintah county, having ridden the range in the land of the sage for many years. Not only its roads he knew, but its coulees and "draws," and gulches, the intricacies of its bench-lands, and the "bad lands" beyond; also the lower reaches of those blue sierras that showed their serrated ridge seventy miles off, above the heat haze that trembled over the land. But it was to no mountain camp that his quarry was heading.

"Guess he's making for Jacobsville," said Jamieson.

The real name of the place was Jacobsville; but

it was usually called Yacobsville in tribute to the number of Swedes who vegetated there—much as Rock Creek, the washed-out placer camp up yonder in the mountains, is called Lock Click (especially by labour agitators on their speechifying itineraries through the country) as a hint that there are more Chinamen than white men in its census return.

"Yap! Yacobsville, sure thing," said Sheriff Baby to his pinto pony. "The driver said the hold-up had got away with a bunch of bills, and might be liable to run chances 'on getting them changed prompt, seeing there was more bills than golden eagles in the plunder. He could fetch Yacobsville in three and a half hours, hitting it good across here—if he knew the trail."

Jamieson knew the draws that were worth using—and those that, instead of being short cuts, were culs-de-sac. For a moment he hesitated at the crest of a ridge. If his quarry was actually going to Yacobsville he should have held on along the top here; but then perhaps he did not know the country so well as the Sheriff did. Jamieson hesitated. With his short legs out-thrust he pressed inwards, and the pony stopped.

"On the other hand," he considered, "he might not be headin' there. Anyhow he ain't got far. He would have been wise if he had bust that cyar before he left it. I guess the driver whizzed her up to Uintah hittin' only the high places in the road. I'm closer on him than he reckoned on. Guess I'll stick to his trail. I would look pretty sick if I fluttered into Yacobsville ahead of him, and waited for his comin', and he didn't ever come! No! I ain't throwing any dice in this racket. Click!" The pinto shot forward, and Sheriff Baby stuck to the trail.

"All the same," he thought, riding up the next rise slowly, to save the pony, "all the same, if he gets into Yacobsville ahead of me, and by any chance the citizens of Yacobsville go wise to him and incarcerate him, it will be bully for law and order in this progressive state, but no fourth of July for me! Only—I ain't gambling on this."

He came to the crest, rode up, head, shoulders, horse and all—and there he stood; for on the mesa below was a spot of a rider tittuping in his direction, and fanned out behind him at intervals were four riders—five—six.

"Gee-whiz!" cried Sheriff Baby. "Now, is this my auto-mo-beel despiser, or has there been somebody holding up on the Yacobsville trail and figuring on cashing it in Uintah, same as my sport, I guess, figures on doing in Yacobsville?" He rode gently down so that he would not be monumental against the sky. "Don't see how it can be my hold-up, for I don't think the telegraph line is finished from Uintah to Yacobsville, but——"

He went further down, to the end of the spur, and halted, as still as the boulders that lay around—boulders that the Indians had a myth about, as some prying professor from back East had found out. He had written about the stones and the myth in one of the magazines—a copy of which, by some chance, had come to Uintah and astonished the inhabitants, most of whom did not know that the Indians had any of "these here myths."

Jamieson must have grown somewhat excited as the pursued rider drew nearer, for his pony began to tremble. The quiverings recalled him to a sense of his position. He was not watching a race from the grand stand at the Denver annual sports, with money on the result. He was looking at something

in which he might have to take a hand. He was, as it were, at one of the gates, ready to go into the arena; and he must go in cool. He watched the approaching rider and noticed how he began to urge his pony—and drew his conclusions.

"Gee whizz! He's going to work a stand-off! He wouldn't quirt like that if he had much further to go. He would be saving some." He looked at the pursuers. "And he could afford to save—and that's whatever. He's working up for this here bunch of rocks to get in cover and open on them at a range that will give him a show to get one or two before the whole bunch gets—steady, you pinto! You'll draw his eye, you spotted animal!"

Jamieson put up his hand, and removing his badge of office from the outside of his coat, pinned it on the inside—so that the coat would have to be opened and held back before his aim in life—the arrest of law-breakers—became evident. Up came the rider, glancing over his shoulder as he came, threw off his pony—and Sheriff Baby, looking like a grim little boy facing an ogre, sang out: "Don't pull your gun!"

His voice made the man's hand spring to his weapon instinctively.

"Don't you!" cautioned the Sheriff. The man looked at him. "Come right up, I want to speak to you," said Baby. "I have been watchin' your ride."

The fugitive led his horse forward. Its sides went energetically like bellows.

"Well," he asked, "what are you doing? Playing at bein' a rock?" and his eyes smiled, a smile so cool as to spell danger; for a man who can smile in such a position is gritty.

"What's the trouble?" asked Baby. "Don't

you flicker to your gun none, now. I don't want to *have* to. This here is only a or'nary precaution of mine. What's this racing and chasing on Canobic Lea, anyhow?"

The newcomer, thin, grim, long-nosed, smiled more easily at him. Then, with an expression as of considering, he hesitated, puckered his mouth, half closed his eyes, and looked over his shoulder in a slow and easy fashion.

"Plenty of sand," thought Sheriff Baby.

"Hold-up!" said the lean man, looking back at Jamieson again.

The Sheriff's blue eyes shone.

"Whereabouts?" he asked.

The bad man puckered his eyes at him, head slightly on side; then, gruffly:—"Uintah road!" he snapped.

"And what are them fellows? Yacobsville sports?" asked Baby.

There seemed, to the ears of the lean man, contempt in the accent of the last two words. He nodded and gave his insouciant smile again—looked over his shoulder, became grim, and broke out: "Say! Where do you figure in this? Am I up against it, or what? I guess this don't vex you any—and them fellows are liable to draw a bead soon—excited."

"Not if I know it!" said Baby, and he slipped from the saddle, throwing the reins over his pinto's head in the way that is known as "typing to the ground" and is generally sufficient to keep a pony from straying far; most ponies, indeed, with the lines hanging so, stand stock-still till further orders. He stepped up to the hold-up man, with his Forty-five in hand, in the light and accustomed style of the marksman; for you can tell a gun-man by the

way he handles a weapon even before a target presents itself.

"It's like this," said Baby, and he spoke sharp and meaningful, for the first of the pursuers was near enough for trouble. "Will you be lifted by a lone sheriff or by a posse of Yacobsville pot-hunters?" and he held back his coat so that the star twinkled in the lean man's eyes. Even as it shone, Jamieson, looking at him keenly as a doctor reading an eye for sickness, stretched his left hand deliberately and unhurriedly forth—his right, as the West says, bending the Forty-five—and appropriated the tall man's six-shooter, which he thrust under his belt; then he felt his prisoner upon the hip and sides to be certain that there was no other weapon concealed, a weapon that might be less of the heavy artillery order than the long-nosed Colt, but none the less a worry.

"Get back," he cried now, and held up his disengaged hand toward the advancing rider. The man pulled up and looked round to his companions for support. Up they came and clustered in an undecided knot.

Sheriff Baby felt it was a great moment of his life. He felt intensely keen, and yet in a blurred world. What he saw he saw clearly; but all else was mirage.

"What do you want this fellow for?" he hailed.

"Held up the Uintah mail!" one called. "What you want?"

"You ain't a sheriff's posse, are you?" called Jamieson.

"No—but there's a——" began the man, but the others said: "Shut up!" Wits work quickly at such times, and it flashed through Jamieson's mind that the new wire spoken of

recently in the local press as in process of completion must be actually in operation. Uintah must have telegraphed Solomonsville—and the mail people at Solomonsville had telegraphed over the State offering a reward. He opened his coat again and let the sunlight glitter on his badge.

"I got him!" he said. "You can go home. He's coming along with me to Uintah."

"Huh! You the new Sheriff?"

"All right, Jamieson," said another, who evidently knew him. "You better have us along anyhow. He's slippery."

If he was slippery he knew when he was "up against it." He stood now leaning against one of the boulders, smoking a cigarette, observing the proceedings.

"Don't you let them work up too close, Sheriff," he counselled. "They're liable to call your hand."

Jamieson thought he perceived the "true inwardness" of this game. It was not law and order these men were interested in. He did not believe it was even the reward offered. It was too early yet for the proclamation of a reward, he thought. Hearing of the hold-up they had put their heads together, he hazarded (they were an ugly bunch), to hunt the outlaw for his wad. "It's possible," he mused, "to find points to admire in the hold-up; but a bunch that holds up a hold-up man for his plunder, instead of for the sake of general law-and-orderliness, seem to me as mean as coyotes hanging round at calving time."

"You fellows get back," Baby repeated. "I don't need you."

Their horses milled a little, turning this way and that. Then abruptly one of the disappointed pursuers flicked up his right hand and fired. The

shot went into the pinto's head and it crashed down on its knees; and even as it fell the six riders fanned out and flash—flash—went their guns.

Jamieson, feet on ground on either side of his pony, threw up and down his right hand and a dart of fire leapt from the Colt.

"Let me in on this, Sheriff," the prisoner whooped. "You and me could hold off the whole burg of Yacobsville!"

Almost all in one gesture the sheriff raised his right hand again and, with his left, tossed the six-shooter from his belt to the road agent, who caught it dexterously—and it cracked twice with extreme celerity. A man went down in the hopeless, limp, and quite-finished manner that told of a broken spine; another acted as if he had been given a blow of tremendous force on his right shoulder, a blow of such impact as to spin him in the saddle like a teetotum, and whirl him clean off. The right arm of the one that Jamieson had aimed at hung loose at his side, and with his left hand he grabbed his biceps, distorting his face with pain and rage. One of the others, too crazy with the excitement of "scrap" to know to stop, fired again, and the lean man beside Jamieson said: "Ahhhhh!" and then let forth a string of expletives that told of wide experience with humanity—talkers of English—talkers of United States (United States is a dialect all its own!)—talkers of Mexican. He called out the same sort of thing in three tongues. And his gun coughed again as he talked—and the man who had so nearly winged him as to slit his sleeve and send a burn over his forearm went forward on his pony's neck as if he was a jockey instead of a rider of a high western saddle. The remaining two had a unanimous thought and threw their reins over

their ponies' heads and held their hands high over their own, dropping their "Gatling guns."

Jamieson stared at the long lean cause of all this trouble, his head turned oddly, his gun in hand. The hold-up man looked him in the eye a long time. They gazed at each other for ages it seemed to them, admiring each the other in the scrutiny—becoming friends. The road-agent smiled at last, tossed his gun up like one tossing a flap-jack, caught it by the barrel as it fell, and stepping over to the Sheriff held it out to him. Jamieson took it, thrust it into his belt and walked over to the men who sat like that prophet who won a victory by holding up his hands—as you may read in the old history.

"All right," he said, as he looked at one. "I'll remember you." He turned to the other. "You two fellows can look after your three friends and get them back to Yacobsville—Yacobsville!" he snarled. Then he turned to the man with the shattered arm.

"You shot my pinto, you," he said very gently. "You opened these proceedings, you! You come with me. You might vamoose if I told you to go back to Yacobsville with the invalids and wait for me. You might vamoose and I might have a long hunt for you. I'll tote you along right now."

He walked over to the horse of the first man the hold-up had hit, caught the reins, and swung to the saddle.

"All right, mister," he said cheerily to the road-agent. "Just you disgorge the contents of them saddlebags of yours into mine, and then we hit out."

The bad man complied, slow and thoughtful, Jamieson eyeing him like a boy who has been left in charge of the class in the schoolmaster's absence.

"Don't you touch my pinto," he called over his

shoulder. "Get your own push into Yacobsville and tell the mayor that Sheriff Jamieson will come over and see him. Up you go!" this to the hold-up man.

Then the three "hit out" for Uintah, across country, in stony silence. At last: "Say! You can ride ahead a step," said Baby to the man who had ended his pinto's career, a man who looked a good deal of a tough himself; and when a few yards separated them he turned and spoke to the road-agent.

"You didn't know they had a wire to Yacobsville?" he suggested gently.

"Nope!" said the hold-up. "Didn't know. Is that how they laid for me?"

"Guess so. I figures it out so. Wire to Solomonsville from Uintah. Wire finished yesterday from Solomonsville to Yacobsville."

"My luck! Guess they thought to celebrate the opening of their wire with me."

They rode in silence till they came in sight of the Uintah road twining below, like a long rattlesnake, in the last ethereal light of day that was ebbing from the valley.

"Them modern things—telephones, telegraphs, automo-beels are hell," said the hold-up man.

His voice recalled Baby.

"Yap," he said. "Ask that hoss-killer in front how they heard about you if you like."

"No. They heard of it anyhow. I ain't curious. I ain't eager to talk friendly with him. The son of a coyote!" He looked at the man's back angrily. "They tried to circle me outside Yacobsville—I saw their game—tried to circle me when they saw me comin'; wanted to corral me before I got to town. That was good enough warning for me.

I don't want to make friends with no son of a coyote like that, anyhow. He's liable to boast of havin' been a friend of mine when the Sunday papers put my effigy up to the public view."

Hold-up man and hold-up man's captor looked each to each and smiled.

"Say," asked Baby, "did you ever think of doing anything as a sheriff—or a marshal, or anything of that kind?"

"Sure!" said the prisoner and laughed. "Most men that turn to robbin' a bank, or a stage, or a train, have only tossed up for it—road-agent, or sheriff; and it fell for sheriff, so they robbed a bank to show they were no slaves to this y'ere blind chance."

"Gee!" ruminated the Sheriff. "I shall be lettin' this fellow go if he gets under my fifth rib on the left side much deeper." But he did not say these things aloud, nor did he lose his alertness. If this man should suddenly change his mind and snatch for his gun and make a bid for freedom he would only be doing what others of his calling had done in such circumstances before.

"Look at him," said the bad man.

"Him" was the man with the shattered arm. He was sagging in the saddle—faint with pain.

"Uh-hu!" growled Jamieson. "I don't have much sympathy for him, but I guess I got to get him fixed up so soon's we hit town. And here she comes growin' up to meet us. Them ponies are tired—his and mine; poor bunch. I'll leave you with my deputy when we hit town."

"What's that for? Tired o' me?"

"And go on with this fellow to the doc."

"Who is the deputy now? Wonder if I know the son of a gun."

"Barker's his name. I'll leave you in his charge

till I see to this fellow here, and then I'll have two hours' sleep and come and ride herd on you myself for a spell."

The deputy's house was the first, and there they stopped. Barker was on the verandah, a dim figure with the glow of a cigar in its face.

"Say," hailed Baby, "I want you to look after this here prisoner. I'm going on with the other to the doc. I guess it's urgent."

"Say! It's you. Gee-whiz," said Barker. He advanced on them with agility.

"Give me your gun then," said he.

"Give you *his* gun," said Baby, and handed it over.

Barker looked at it, looked close, for night was falling. The last weird light seemed as if evaporating out of the sandy rolls. Far off the mountains were a deep, terrible blue—and would soon be lost in night.

"Three shells in it," he said, peering at the six-shooter that was like a young rifle. "It's a smart gun all right."

Sheriff Baby rode across lots to Doc Peter's bungalow by the side of the heavy speechless prisoner of the broken arm. He had not a word for him, for his pinto had been his friend—but he would not let the man's agony continue longer than necessary.

"Come down then," Barker's voice rasped as the Sheriff and his invalid raised the dust again, riding off.

The hold-up man dismounted, and as he came to earth he smiled his sweet, jack-easy, dangerous smile. He was only a kid—about twenty-five, if that. Then he made a sudden movement, and the little city of one main street complete, and half-a-dozen streets with houses scattered at choice spots

here and there, was startled by the crack of a six-shooter.

There followed the sound of a dozen chairs being pushed back, feet hammering, voices calling. Everybody poured out. The census return, according to the sanguine pamphlets, seemed less like a lie in that moment. It was too late for target practice. This cough of a Colt meant action. Sheriff Baby, outside the doctor's house, turned in his saddle and saw a dim horseman whaling away out of town in a drab dust-storm raised by the ploughing hoofs of his pony.

"I brought you a man here to fix up," he called to the doctor who was on his verandah. "Guess I'll stay with him. He's my prisoner."

Over at the Sheriff's calaboose a group clustered round a fallen man. Barker lay wounded in the sand and over him, like a blue halo, breaking and being made nebulous, was the smoke of a Colt's forty-five.

It was too dark to pursue the escaped prisoner that night—and the hunt of the next days failed to find him. He had "lit out." He had travelled at a rate that is spoken of as "burning the trail," and the fact that Baby had recovered the stolen wad made the chase, at any rate in other parts, outside Jamieson's scope, not very eager.

The man who had killed Baby's beloved pinto got a stretch in the State penitentiary with two of his friends for attempting to handicap a sheriff in the execution of justice. The others "vamoosed" as Jamieson thought they might. Sheriff Baby, if you ask him about this (and he is quite the sweet-faced kind of man to allow of you asking him), will only smile and say: "Why sure! Didn't you ever

hear about it? That man was Colorado Joe—and he was a lizard on the draw. Barker wasn't wide enough awake. I should have rode herd on Joe myself—but I had to see to the other fellow."

The latest news of the hold-up man is that he is in that wild bit of country around the big bend of the Rio Grande, close on the border. Since 1901 he has been ranching there; and old friends, among them Ex-Sheriff Jamieson, are eager to verify the rumour of his existence in that secluded part, to procure a pardon for his early days, his last exploit having been so far back in history as the first arrival of the "auto-mo-beel—the darn stinkadora—the nickel-plated gasolene-drinking contraption—the derailed locomotive that skallyhoots through the woods and over the prairies." It is an old story now, so quickly does the West (despite its expansiveness) hustle along. In all probability when you are reading this Colorado Joe will be reading his pardon, and the next mail will as like as not bring him an offer of Sherifffdom from some district that desires to eliminate the remaining "bad men" within its borders, and knows that an ex-hold-up man is "wise to the game."

“—AND SETTLED”

In a railway gang of the Dry Belt (Idaho) I first met him ; and his accent betrayed him as no born “shovel stiff.” There were about a score of us in the gang, and all day we tore down hillsides and loaded them in a string of dump cars to be taken away and tipped into dry gulches spanned by trestle bridges. Thus did we widen the track and fill in culverts, decreasing the number of bridges to be looked after. Our distinguishing name was “Extra Gang”—as apart from “Section Gang,” “Construction Gang,” and so forth.

There was no doubt about it that we were in the Dry Belt ; our water was brought to us in a tank car that was shunted into our side track. And you may be sure that we not only switched off from the main line, but lifted the line clear. Main line trains have been known, in the dark hours, to jump into such side tracks and smash up a gang sleeping in their bunks. Picture us there at work, in a land of yellow sand, blue rocks, sage-brush, silence, dry invigorating air, shovelling, picking, and blasting.

Shorty—otherwise Shorty Smith, to distinguish him from another Shorty in the gang—was one of the sons of a man of great, and recently-acquired, wealth—and he used, when he found me sympathetic,

to tell me of the curious life of his back east kindred. Letters were now and then thrown at us from a passing train, or brought up by the bridge-looker, or by the section gang, and they were generally for Shorty Smith. They were always handed over with a waggish look.

One evening Shorty turned to me, one of these letters in his hand.

"I forgot all about my birthday anniversary," he said. "It was a month ago. I've had a letter from home to tell me they didn't forget. They gave a garden party. And they tell me they had a lot of fairy lamps arranged on a trellis, and when night came the lamps were lit up. Those lamps spelt out my name——" he lowered his voice, and put the back of his hand to his mouth, whispering over it—"Augustus! Augustus!" he jeered. "There's a name! Don't let any of the boys know it. I wonder how long the section boss and the bridge man will keep their thumbs on it? I prefer Shorty. Shorty would have been easier on fairy lamps than Augustus——" the rest he spelt—"C-h-e-l-s-e-n-t-e-r-n, pronounced Chestern, don't ask me why; it's a sign of being in what is called Society to know how to pronounce it. Augustus Chestern Smith! Shorty Smith suits me better."

He was a queer fellow. Of course so may I have seemed to him. We were, however, always good friends. I suppose we had one thing in common, and had it strongly enough to allow of us letting other things slide; we both wanted to see the world. We both had endured hardships to be able to see at least some of it. He showed me, one day, with great disgust, a piece of paper, elegantly printed in silver, which read as follows:

MR. AND MRS. BROWN-BROWN
Request the pleasure of your company
At the marriage of their daughter,

HEATHER,

With

MR. CLAUDE CHELSETERN-SMITH,

On June Twenty-eighth,

at

The Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul,
Sackville, at two-thirty o'clock,
and afterwards at the
Hotel St. Lawrence,
Sackville.

R.S.V.P.

“ What’s this ? ” I asked.

“ Brother of mine getting married,” he explained.
“ Look at it ! I guess it’s *his* marriage, is it not ?
His marriage, and his girl’s. But where does he
come in ? Fourth place ! Why, he doesn’t rightly
come in at all ! He’s an *also van*. That’s what he
is. Pah ! ” and he spurned the invitation. “ What
we want is men—men who won’t have this sort of
thing, and women who refuse to be *given away*.
Eh ? Why, it’s they who work it all ! They and
their mammas do it—and then they call papa in
after all else is seen to, just to enquire into his
banking account. Not in mine ! When I marry
my invitation card is going to read like this :

MISS SO-AND-SO has married,
SHORTY SMITH,
They were in Love,
By Heck ! ”

I quite appreciated his sentiments and his inten-
tion.

“ No side-show at my marriage,” he assured me.
I appreciated his point of view. But I understood

how it was that one of our bunch christened him The Babe, in preference to Shorty Smith. It was eventually shortened to Baby, and the name stuck. Augustus accepted it, smiling like one. His stories that he told us in the hour that we called the Dorcas Society—when we sat in the twilight, on the butts of the ties, mending our shirts, or patching our pants—indicated his joyful, effervescent, youthful mind. The kind of stories that stuck in his memory, and were considered by him worth re-telling, will help you to understand him. Here is one, or rather the synopsis of one as I recall it :—

In a mining camp above Helena a bully of brawny build insults a Small Pale Youth. Small Pale Youth says : " Be careful ! " Bully slaps S.P.Y.'s face. The Small Pale Youth pulls off his coat, rolls up sleeve. Behold a muscle that makes Bully wilt ! Then—before Bully can recover from surprise, he is knocked down and out by S.P.Y. Bully sits up eventually. S.P.Y. shakes his hand, and says magnanimously : " I hit the same eye each time, partner, so that you could have one to see your way around." How's that ?

Here is another : Scene, a restaurant in Boston. Dark-skinned Youth at one table—alone. At next table three men. One of them says loudly : " I can't stand foreigners." Dark-skinned Youth looks at finger nails meditatively. Other man (he who declaimed he couldn't stand foreigners) says louder : " This restaurant is getting a different class of custom. It will soon be on the bum." Darkish Youth rises and walking over to the threesome party says : " Pardon me, do you refer to me ? " The Loud Man measures him and says : " Well, as a matter of fact I do." Darkish Youth stretches across table, pulls Loud Big Man across by his necktie—

with one hand—takes him by coat collar, and runs him out into the street; then returns to astonished diners and management, and says: “Gentlemen, allow me an explanation. I do not object to aliens myself. But I object to being called an alien. I am one of the oldest families in America. My people were here before the Mayflower. I am a native of this land, descendant of Massasoit, chief Sagamore of the Wampanoags, who was head chief over the confederated tribes in what you call Massachusetts and Connecticut. He gave hand-outs to the Pilgrim Fathers when they hit the New World on their uppers.” And the Americans present rose in a body and toasted him. Splendid tableau!

Stories of that kind he revelled in and regaled us with them.

“Where did you say this happened?” asked one of the gang, I remember, after that yarn.

“Read it in a Sunday paper,” explained Shorty.

“Guess you did,” was the reply.

“What do you mean?” shouted Augustus.

“Isn’t it a good yarn?”

“Oh, it’s a bully yarn all right!”

Soon after that the coyotes bayed up in the hills back of us, and the tremendous sunset faded, the cold night came, and we turned into the bunk-car and our bunks.

Shorty was a good deal of a favourite. Most of the men liked him. The elders were paternal to him. He was a good worker, a strong-set fellow. His five foot seven was a sturdy five foot seven. He looked, seen from behind, like two squares, the lower one split in two to make legs. Above the upper square a fair head was carried jauntily. He was a crack shot. The boss of the gang had a rifle

which he lent him, after seeing an exhibition he gave on the .44 of one of the gang. He also had medals for saving people from drowning—but there was no water around where we were for him to give us an exhibition of that skill. So much of an athlete was he that ten hours' work in the burning gravel hillsides was not enough exercise for him. He had to rig up a trapeze in the door of the bunk car and do stunts on it in under-vest and pants.

The boom at Wild Horse Creek, B.C., lured me away. I said "so-long" to Augustus and the rest who were not sanguine of Wild Horse Creek or else were saving up to go elsewhere. The day before I left I remember Shorty had a letter from his father, part of which he read me. It seemed to be a pretty fierce letter, showing Augustus the error of his ways in staying away from a good position in his father's office.

"He wants to shape me!" sneered Smith. "And I won't be shaped by him."

Soon, in the excitement of Wild Horse Creek, and "taking it all in," the gang at the gravel hills in high Idaho was an old story in my life, an old, faded story, lived briefly under a dying sunset—a dream, a vapour.

II

THREE years later I was in the Milk River Country, in Alberta, down near the Montana Border, dollars from the dust of Wild Horse Creek in my pocket, enjoying a rest in new scenes. I love that land—the land of long rolls that seem ocean-rolls suddenly transformed into solid earth. An evanescent light was along the jumble of these green undulations, as I sat there, with my new-earned money in my

pocket, beside a sun-scorched shack, over the door of which was the word *Hotel*. I looked at the far-off blue and white of the Rocky Mountain peaks that, after a day's hard travel westward, would seem hardly any nearer. I sat and thought how ages ago the Apaches, as their myths (and their language) tell, migrated down this way from the extreme north—and was brought abruptly to the present by a swirl of dust rushing upon me and making a final vortex before the hotel. In the middle of that dust-storm was a horse being reared up like the conventional unicorn. And throwing off that horse, before it came down on all fours was a large wild man in broad hat, woolly chaps and sagging belt—from which he flicked forth a Colt. He waved the gun at me and called loudly that he was Montana Boy, and stated that he was no Hobo.

"I'm Montana Boy! I ain't no Hobo!" he yelled again.

This was, clearly, what is known as "whisky talking." The odour around him was almost asphyxiating. He had the aroma of a coal-oil can. He gave the suggestion that if one lit a match within a dozen yards of him he would be as an ignited petroleum well. He was a wild and woolly person with waving walrus-tusk moustaches and a demented expression. For a third time he informed me of his name—and then he stuck his Colt in my face. I was unarmed (perhaps it was as well!) and my breath caught for a moment. But I recalled stories I had read, and experiences narrated to me by men who had been in such positions; and I looked into the barrel of that Colt—and smiled! I make no brag about this. I am willing to believe it was a peculiar smile. I understood then the conduct of the pursued ostrich. I smiled; I continued to

smile, and Montana Boy left me with a whoop and plunged into the bar-room.

I dried my forehead, then dried my hat inside, around the front. Within the hotel he was announcing: "I'm Montana Boy! I ain't no Hobo!" Some people came out and walked circumspectly away. The members of the R.N.W.M.P. who, in the natural order of things, would have attended to this hectic visitor in the little border burg, had gone off after whisky smugglers reported as seen travelling on the jump up toward the Blood Indian Reserve. We had to be our own police for the day; and, despite pictures of the West of that period (fifteen years ago), men did not walk about, even in such little "towns" as that, with guns on their hips; but no doubt some of these men who made quiet and furtive exits, and drifted away so stealthily, were going to their shacks for their own armaments.

Evidently I had got over my scare by now, for when something impelled me to "rubberneck" in at the bar and survey what was going on inside, I followed the impulse. There, his back to me, was Montana Boy spraddled in the middle of the saloon, waving his gun and repeating his bourdon. Beyond him, leaning his back against the bar, was a little baby-faced youth of five-seven or so. The effect of his pose would have been better if he had been taller, for the bar was high, and he had almost to elevate his elbows as he struck the attitude of ease, head back, cigar jauntily tilted. I stared at this plucky poseur. I stared hard. Yes! It was Augustus What's-His-Name Smith. It was Shorty Smith of the Extra Gang in the high Dry Belt.

As I looked in he removed his cigar, blew a great blue ring of smoke, and watched it waver upwards to the ceiling. He seemed to be idly meditating. He

did not even seem to see Montana Boy. The raucous and belligerent entrance of that terror of the Border had not disturbed the balance of the insouciant young man who leant his back against the bar.

“ I’m Montana Boy! I ain’t no Hobo! ” declaimed the Terror—and shot a hole in the roof.

Augustus seemed to become aware of him. His head slowly turned. His eyes lackadaisically surveyed the shooter.

“ Been in the sun ? ” he asked pleasantly.

“ I’m Montana Boy! ” was the response. “ And there ain’t no Canuk red-coat can arrest me. ”

“ There ain’t a red-coat in town to-day, ” Augustus remarked. “ There’s only three of them stationed here. One’s riding his line, the other two are gone off to find a whisky pedlar, ” he paused. “ They’re liable to be back before long. A little job like that don’t detain them long. ”

“ I’m Montana Boy! ” said the Terror, bringing down his gun hand. There followed a dart of fire and a bottle went to smithereens on the bar. One of the flying fragments hit Augustus in the cheek, and stuck. His eyes opened wide—and blazed.

He plucked out the little bit of glass from his cheek and held it forth. He held it toward the demented Montana Boy and advanced slowly, holding it out as if for inspection—holding it as if it were a gold nugget to be examined.

“ See what you put in my jaw with that last, ” he said.

Montana Boy was evidently reaching the stupid stage, for he bent forward, chuckling, to look at the splinter of glass. Adroit and agile, Augustus grabbed at his gun-wrist and yanked the arm forward, at the same time kicking out and sending Montana Boy’s feet up in the air. Down came the

disturber of the peace on his face, with a jar that shook the shack, and made the bottles dance. Gentlemen who had sat tight in their corners leapt forward, but Augustus shouted: "Leave him to me! Stand clear!"

There he stood, Montana Boy's gun in hand now, bidding him to arise. And Montana arose, looking dazed and foolish.

"Quick march!" said Augustus. "Look busy. Shake a leg and get outside."

Montana Boy rolled out.

"Go ahead!" said Augustus, and marched him across to the shack of the R.N.W.M.-P. It was closed, but Shorty bade his prisoner to sit down on the rough bench in front of it. He did so, on one end, and Augustus sat down sidewise at the other end, wrist on knee, Colt in hand lightly. There he considered Montana Boy thoughtfully, and with experienced eyes. Montana Boy looked at him, shook his head, then laid his head back, even with his hat on, against the wall. His eyes closed. He fell asleep. Slowly he slid down to the ground, and there lay snoring in the attitude of what everybody who looked on agreed was "a disgusting drunk—a pathetic jag."

Augustus, free from his charge, glanced round—and saw me.

"Hu—lo, Kid!" he cried. "You here! Come and have something on me to celebrate—" he paused—"our meeting. Perhaps," he turned to the others, "some of these gentlemen will ride herd on this Montana Boy, if I caught his name aright, till one of the police boys comes in again. By the way, gentlemen all, I want to tell you that I come from across the line myself." He struck an attitude. He really should have had a flag in his hand—one

with a long pole—or his foot on the fallen man's chest, so that it could have been a perfect picture. “ That's why I took it on myself to make this arrest. I can stand for no drunk cow-puncher coming from my side of the line and trying to haze Canada. It ain't neighbourly. As a compatriot of this arrangement of loose neck, stove-in-Stetson, limp chaps, and tangled spurs, I'm going to run him in. While I liquidate with my friend—here's his gun for whoever will be good enough to ride herd on him.”

Several hands stretched for the captured Colt, and he relinquished it to the nearest. There was a murmur of appreciation and a suggestion that the drinks should be “ set up ” to us, that everybody should celebrate—but Augustus begged to be excused.

“ Afterwards, gentlemen,” he said. “ I have just met an old friend. We have to shoot off our bazoo at each other.”

So, in token of appreciation, they let us depart alone. The bar-room we found empty, save for the barman who had come up again from the floor behind the counter. He served us our two mixtures and our cigars in his grandest manner, with great deference to Shorty Smith. But he would not let us pay. He assured us that to press payment would be to pain the house.

We sat down at a corner table. I could see the dancing light in Augustus's eyes, token of interior exuberance hardly contained.

“ I couldn't have stood these fellows coming in to congratulate me,” he said. “ I feel too good. I feel I should bu'st if any of them spoke. Shake my hand here—at the side of the table,” he whispered, “ where the bar-keep won't see. I don't

want anybody to think I have done anything out of my usual. Oh, say! This is life, old friend."

He felt in his pocket and drew forth a letter.

"Just received this from home. Want to know what I'll have for a birthday present. They *do* think a lot of birthdays. They want to know if I would like a brand new swell kind of travelling trunk, with a couple of clothes-presses in it, and a division for stiff shirts, or if I would prefer a smoker's cabinet. My father is determined, he says, for me to come home and go into the business. Say—I can never go home again. What a life! One grey blanket, one change of undervest and pants, a toothbrush and a slicker—that's me. What would I do with a trunk—and a swell trunk at that? A cow-pony ain't a camel."

He leant towards me, casting a glance first toward the barman, as though fearing his voice had been too loud. He held up his hand to his mouth, palm toward me, and in a hoarse whisper over it, he said, "Say! Wasn't I great leaning against that bar? It's the kind of thing you read about. No East for me—no smoker's cabinet and pressed pants. And say! My mother writes to me, 'when are you going to get married and settled?' Married is all right once in a life. I'm no woman hater. But married *and* settled! Why? It beats me."

III

SOME fifteen years later (just the other day, in fact), in a city back east, I visited a rich relative. My relatives (for the most part) objected to me when I took up my pen for a living. All the arts, to them, were a delusion and a snare. They assured me it

was a precarious business—as if that would deter ! Nor did they try to encourage me to it, once I had embarked and showed no sign of giving in. At last some began to see announcements of me in the Press, and, once or twice, photographs of me. Then they cut out the reproductions and stuck them in their albums, and boasted of having a “ literary man ” in the family. I suppose blood is thicker than water. I stood that, just as I stood the earlier manifestations.

I had been visiting one of these relatives. He made his money on steel pens. His wife has albums of all shapes and sizes, all over the place. With one of these she entertained me. It contained things presumably of interest—and seemed to be designed to show what Society she moved in. On one page my eye encountered this :

MR. AND MRS. MONTAGUE SIMPKINS

Request the pleasure of your company

At the marriage of their daughter,

HYACINTH,

With

MR. AUGUSTUS CHELSENTERN-SMITH,

on

August seventeenth,

at

The Carslake Hotel,

Sackville, at seven-thirty o'clock.

R.S.V.P.

“ What’s this ? ” I said.

“ That ? Oh, that I just stuck in for a souvenir. *She* is one of our oldest families. *He* is a charming man. They’ve been married some years now.”

“ I seem to know the name,” said I, “ of the person who takes last place. Do you know if he was ever in Idaho ? ”

"Of whom? Oh, the bridegroom. How witty! No. I never heard him mention Idaho," she answered.

"Is he a crack shot?"

"I really don't know."

"Has he ever told you of a little episode in Alberta with a cowboy with a jag on?"

"With a what on?"

"Is he a fair, boyish-looking, alert——"

"Oh, dear no! He is a little, worried-looking man, bald and——"

"It can't be he," I said. "But the name! It must be a relative. One of the despised relatives I expect. I wonder what *my* Augustus would say to this."

But we turned the pages to see other things—menu cards of cafés in Paris, Vienna, Cairo, invitations to receptions at the town-hall; dance-cards; fancy dress ball programmes, and other kindred souvenirs.

On my way home my mind ran far from these splendid and glittering homes into the grounds of which, and out of the gates of which, soft-purring electric broughams and motors glided, driven by smart chauffeurs. The houses were all of the kind that most of us, if we had the Mystic Bottle (of Stevenson's "Bottle Imp") in our hands, would wish for—at least I am afraid so. But I was picturing the slow, quiet rolls far west, the low hills, with elusive light on them, rolling and jumbling up into the distant soaring blue of the Rockies.

"Where," I wondered, "is Shorty Smith? What was the date on that card of invitation? Tut! I did not notice. Just like me! And yet it can't be! It must be his father married again. What will Shorty Smith—away up on the Yukon,

or away down in Chihuahua—think of it when he receives it? What will he think of it, be he in sub-Arctic cabin or in sub-tropic 'dobe?”

And, so thinking, and not looking where I was going, I received a violent knock on the head from a ladder that two men were taking down from a magnificent entrance that they had been embellishing with new gold leaf on the tip of its wrought iron. I saw a Milky Way of golden stars and—heard somebody say: “O—h! O—h!” and seemed to recognise the voice. It was, as the story-books say, oddly, or strangely, familiar. It was my own.

What had happened? Something tingled in my nose. It was smelling salts. I brushed the bottle away and then a glass came to my lips out of nothingness and some nectar was poured down my throat. Then I wondered if it was nectar, or if half of my delight in that draught was due to the queer feeling that had come over me after getting that bang on the head.

I sat up in a great saddlebag chair and—just as I should in any story of a stun—found a rustling dame in silk beside me, feeding me the amazing tanglefoot.

“Oh dear!” I sighed.

She began to apologise. I explained it was all right. I took hold of myself—for all my inclination was to ask for more; but my early training forbade, and my early training was right. There stood the old dame; there also stood the little table with the tumbler, twinkling and brimming.

“I'm all right,” I said.

The door opened and a bald-headed, short, alert man entered. It was to be observed, however, that he looked woefully distressed—and I did not flatter myself that I was the object of all his grief.

"How is he?" he asked.

"He's better," said the lady. "And *she*—how is she?"

"All right. All right. It's over, thank God."

"Boy or girl?" my ministering angel asked.

"Girl."

I stretched my hand (while this private conversation was going on) for the glass, and an attentive man in plain coloured livery abruptly materialised and tended me. I had one more swig—and the dream was over. I sat up—my normal self.

"You will excuse me," said the rustling lady of the taper fingers; and she glided away with a sound like some one putting up a parcel in tissue-paper.

The short man advanced on me. Suddenly his eyes puckered and his mouth opened. He turned to his man.

"You can go," he said.

The man bowed and retired.

"Slim!" said the little man, and held out his hand.

"You!" I gasped. "Just before I was knocked out by two men with a ladder I was thinking of you. I pictured you in the Yukon, with a fur cap; I thought of you in Chihuahua with a high straw, happy amidst—"

"Don't!" he said, "don't! I must feed myself a drink. I'm all in." He "fed" himself the drink and sat down beside me.

"You will understand," he said. "I have had nobody to understand in fifteen years. I came home. I married and settled! *Settled!*" he moaned. "And I've just been presented with another girl. I have one boy. He was the first. He—he is an idiot."

"Oh," I said, "I am very, very sorry!"

“ Not the kind you mean,” he answered quickly. “ This fellow is a walking encyclopaedia, he’s not a man. He’s a library. He makes me tired. He took all the prizes at school last year. He’ll take them all at college. But he doesn’t do anything, Slim—he doesn’t do anything. I’ve tried to interest him in life. I’ve told him stories I’ve read that interest me, and should interest any youth, and he just sits and looks at me like an octopus. I’ve even tried to tell him about running out that Montana Boy—that was the last time I saw you, you remember ? ”

“ Sure ! ”

“ Do you know—I break down on it. It’s like telling a live story to the Sphinx. One of the greatest moments of my life doesn’t move my own son ! What do you think of that, Slim ? I gave him rope, and more rope—and look what he is—a kind of a prize-winner. That’s all ! That’s him ! I was hoping that this new kid would be a boy—just born while you were carried in. It’s gone back on me too. It’s a girl. They’ve all been girls since the prize-winner. I wanted another boy so that I could do what I should have done with the prize-winner. I’m wise to it now. I had the boxing gloves ready—a kid’s pair—a dinky little pair to get a start on him young. I intended to start in with him as soon as he could hold up a fist. I was so sure he would be a boy. A damn crystal gazer I gave twenty dollars to, to gaze for me, last week told me it was to be a boy. If I may say so, of a lady—she was a liar. She was a bogus gazer. I was going to make this one into an open air man.”

“ Perhaps,” said I, “ it is better, after all, for both father and offspring, that it is a girl.”

He took my meaning and nodded his head slowly.

"I say," he said. "You will understand *this*—this that I am going to tell you. I have never breathed it to a soul." He leaned forward and raised his hand to his mouth, palm out; and over it, in a hoarse whisper he began: "My wife is——"

The door clicked and the elderly lady rustled in.

"Oh, Augustus!" she cried. "That gesture! Why *do* you make that vulgar gesture——" and she glared at me as if I was vulgar company undermining her son and bringing out his disreputable side. She looked at me and said: "Ah! You are better now—not a bit the worse."

I rose. Augustus rose. I bowed to her; for I felt it in the air that I was ordained to go now, and that Augustus thought I might as well go too. He accompanied me to the door, through a palatial hall, all of inlaid work. It was a very different home from a tent on the plains, or a bunk-car in Idaho.

"Well—you are on velvet," I said. "Some of the boys would envy you if they saw you now."

He looked at me and smiled.

"Yes—that's what they would say—on velvet! But, say!" he talked low, "I didn't want it. It's narrow gauge! It's narrow gauge, Slim."

I'm not generally materially minded. Now I was.

"I expect not one of the shovel stiffs you worked with," I said, "not one of the punchers you herded with, but would call this heaven, and as for what they would think of your booze——"

"Alkali water, man!" he cried. "I wish it had been a boy. I'd have made him go and live where I left off."

"Well, so long," I said, holding out my hand. "So long, Shorty."

"Good God!" he moaned; I was on the step

in the porch. He shut the door gently. I saw it closing upon a face suddenly smitten full of agony.

I went down the tessellated pathway to the wrought-iron gates with the gold-leaf tips, feeling a culprit. It was as if I had stuck a knife in him—and I was sorry, very sorry. For he was just the same old Babe as of yore.

MAKING AN EXAMPLE

YES, gentlemen all, there is sure grit in the redskin. And the man who denies it either don't know an Injun from a coon, or he's so crooked that he couldn't lie straight in bed. In the old days right here in Wyoming, where we are sitting around this here fire like a lot of toads, there was great racings and chasings of Injuns and troopers fit to beat Canobie Lea sure. But an Injun wasn't a soldier all his twenty-four hours out of the twelve all same the dime novel would make you believe. He was huntin' and fishin' and worshipping the sun, and praying to his unseen gods for more buffalo, or more rain, or for the rain to take off—and he did sure have to get a snatch of sleep sometimes. The dime-novel life is too strenuous for Roosevelt, and yet it's what most men think was the life of the Indian.

If you want to know an Indian you want to see him to home. You want to be good to his kids and make friends with his dogs—which nobody does to speak of—and then maybe he'll tell you about himself, which is better than dime-novel talk. If you want to know a man you want to know him quiet as well as when he's got a jag on and is scouting around looking for trouble. And the Injuns, though they don't bow to stocks and stones, and although they ain't got no God you can see in the flesh any more than we have, have a right smart of deities they pray to—and one big thing they pray for is courage.

They used to pray for it not for five minutes and then Amen ; but they'd lie up on a bluff and starve for a week, and pray right along the line, harder than a spiritualistic séance, or a roving preacher on the far side of a penitent form.

In the fall of 1890 I see some Indian courage. I was working for an outfit on the Tongue River. The Indians about there was Cheyennes. When you sit down in Wyoming and say Indians have no sand except when acting in a bunch, you do sure strike the worst place for defending your statements. Right here the Cheyennes were hunted that winter, not because they were troublesome—but because the Sioux over to the Dakotas was restless. They was hunted considerable and shot and sabred, and their fragments sent off to Oklahoma.

They hiked back from Oklahoma with three divisions of the Boys in Blue out trying to head them, and one camping on their trail. They came right back, they did, and told the old ranchers they struck on the way that they would a heap rather die on their own land fighting Uncle Sam than die down to Oklahoma of fever. And Uncle Sam took them at their word a whole lot.

It was in the fall of '90 that Head Chief and Young Mule let America see if an Indian had sand when up against numbers—let alone proving the point to a disbelieving and perverse generation that was to come along later and surmise an Injun was only a kind of dead beat tradin' buffalo horns to towerists.

Cheyennes used to come into the ranch, times, quiet, friendly, and we used to drop in at their camps. But not in the year '90. Visits had been getting fewer come the year '90—for cattle was

getting more plentiful in the Powder River County, and the grafters had an eye on Wyoming. They didn't think Wyoming big enough for white and red, and the papers took care to keep up reports of "discontent" and "dissatisfaction" and so on. Then there were traders, too, that found business slack when there was no powder burning—and one way and another it burnt a heap in 1890.

In that fall we were riding the range like soldiers and often enough there was shots passed between our boys and bunches of Indians when we met up accidental. Nothing to speak of, you know. A stampede now and then—a few head disappeared, a kind of lack of mothers for calves. Then one day we hear that a man Boyle had been shot up by Cheyennes and the Government was going to make a lesson of it.

Troops rode into the Lame Deer Agency, and runners were sent out to call in the people to talk about it. The Injuns rode in. They didn't deny that a Cheyenne had lit out Mr. Boyle on the Eternal Trail. But they couldn't understand the eye-for-an-eye and tooth-for-a-tooth doctrine of this Christian nation nohow, whose motto to them was surely: "Get off the face of the earth." A big powwow took place.

"This has got to stop. We've got to make an example of you for killing Mr. Boyle," says the commissioners.

"Well—we'll give you a bunch of horse for Mr. Boyle and call it square," said the chiefs. That was Injun way. But the commissioners behaved so that the Cheyennes thought they wanted them to raise her some. They couldn't understand all this fuss about Mr. Boyle. But they confess and says: "Sure we killed him, but you must think

a power of him," they says—and they offers more hosses.

Come the end of a week or a two weeks' powwow they had offered all the ponies in the tribe and half the blankets and robes. They was sure going to be paupers over Mr. Boyle ; but they was not going to split on who had elevated him into the company of saints.

Then at last the Injuns had another sit-out to consider like a jury, and comes back again, and squats in the circle round Lame Deer Agency, and their orator gets up on his legs, and strikes an attitude and says he :

" Good ! The two braves that killed Mr. Boyle will let the white man see how a Cheyenne can die. No, you don't ! Don't get excited ! You ain't going to hang them—for when you hang a man the rope strangles his soul, and he don't get away good and strong for the happy hunting grounds. You can have the two young men, but you can have them only in one way. You can line up your soldiers and let them meet—the whole troop of you and the two Cheyennes--and then let her rip till they fall."

There was a kind of air of finality about the way the chief twitched his blanket after this here tremendous suggestion ; and so the commissioners, and the colonel, and the agent, and all retired to consider. They were up against the Cheyennes' last word they reckoned. They reckoned they had to come and go a little, after all, in the way of seeing things. It looked to them that here was where they had to do the stepping down and stooping to conquer. So they stoops. Otherwise, the Cheyennes, feeling so tired of all these here conventions, might start crowing and call the whites

poltroons—a whole army scared of two men! That would never do. So as I say the white man stoops to conquer.

"All right," says the talker for the commission.

This is the news that come to us on the Tongue River outfit. And you can gamble we all rides over to the agency hell bent for election, to see the great spectacle.

You know Lame Deer. It lies on the flats. The Injuns was camped on the bluffs to west. The cavalry was drawing up when we rode over the bluffs. You could see the thin blue line along by the agency, and the squad of Indian Agency police alongside of them with their badges on their arms. Over on the bluffs to east and south was the agency employees, and cow-punchers ridden in to turn that there combat into a kind of grand-stand show. The wind was running in the grass. The sun was up near noon. The hosses came and went, stirring here, stirring there. Fellows came over the hills whooping it up into Lame Deer to see how a Cheyenne could die.

Gentlemen all! They died game. But I reckon I shall never, till God totes all men up on the trail, and the Boss of the Riders comes along a-sifting, see anything like that sight. It stopped the whoop-ups. You could hear the grasshoppers clicking across America when them two hosses shows off west with the dust at their heels sweeping away behind them, and when the war bonnets showed swaying we gulps a breath, every man on the bluffs.

Then comes the high sound of the death chants them two little riders were chanting. And then comes flash! flash! They had started. And then the ping! ping! of it comes wafted to us. Did we

shout? Shout nothing, gentlemen all. We held our breaths and watched the little flashes below there and waited for the reports and hears the war cries them two bucks explodes in the middle of their singing. They sang high and exulting all the time, and rode magnificent.

They whales clean past the troops and the police once—and the whole line let bang, and no one was hit. Maybe they fired high—kind of ashamed till they got whetted up. I don't know. The two bucks wheels at the end of the line, yelling outrageous, and glad, and wild, and rides back so smart that the whirl of dust behind them raises like a dust storm. They turns on a dollar. Back they goes firing, and then one of them goes down.

We forgot we was white! There was one fellow alone with his war bonnet wavering terrible and his painted hoss flying like mad, and his left hand, upholding his rifle, and his cheek to the stock, surging down the line and splashing lead into the American army. The Indians over across the valley was all keening up now for the one that had gone down, and I could have gone down and run amuck in front of the American army myself. We had our eyes on the fellow that was left, and suddenly his horse was down and him over its head, him and his war bonnet looking like a dropped buzzard. But from the middle of the feathers we sees a flash again. And all the troops and the police let bang at him and he rolls over.

Up on the bluff none of us could look at each other. We all turns about and rides back to our several outfits, staring between our hosses' ears. And behind us we could hear the tribe coming down into the flats to carry away the two boys.

If you go up to Lame Deer to-day you can spot the place where they fell by watching the Indians coming in and going out. They always circles around that spot—and they don't like to see white men ridin' over it neither.

A PROSPECTOR TOLD ME

It was after I lost Jack ; Jack was the wisest thing on four legs in America. He was a horse ; but he was sure intelligent—more so than some men I've met. I can say this to you—I felt the loss of that hoss more than I felt the loss of my brother when I heard of it. My brother and I had nothing in common at all, except that we were brothers. There are people might think that a queer thing to say, but I believe that relationship like that can often be far less the kind of thing to bring people together than the other relationships people make for themselves. A man and his wife, for example, are usually far more partners than a man and his mother. I seen it often.

I'm not speaking from experience. Never married. Hardly remember my mother. I know that when we were kids she went away from us suddenly—and later on we heard she had gone crazy. But I was telling you about Jack. All alone with Jack in them eternal hills I used to talk to him. One day for fun I tried to whinny the way he did when he wanted to camp. I had been so long alone with him that I had got on to it that he had one kind of whinny meaning he could smell other horses around ; and another when he wanted grass ; another when he wanted water ; and another when he thought it was near enough sundown to be making camp and quitting our day's roaming

on the hills. He had another note in his voice for welcoming me back on days when I had a fixed camp and left him, prospecting around alone.

I imitated that one day and got it near enough to please him ; I could tell that by the way he came loping to meet me. But a day or two later, when I tried it again, I felt that I missed it. What I did get I didn't know, but he just stood and stared at me, and then hiked away as if I had told him to pull out—and he hated to do it. I had to call him back in my own language powerful before he understood that what I had said in hoss-talk was an error due to my fancying myself as a linguist. After that I let him talk his language to me, and I talked mine to him ; that was good enough.

We were the best of friends that way, and then he went and died. Everybody dies. But that thought didn't ease me any for a long time after he was dead. I don't mind telling you I got all-fired melancholy after Jack lay down and wasn't Jack no more, although it was sure his skin and hair and his hoofs that I saw there. I buried him, and maybe you think it was foolish—but I cut a heap of natural-dried grass to line the grave. I says to myself : " There may be a kind of spirit-grass all same spirit-men. There may be a spirit-land for hosses too." Being fond of Jack I ran no chances. These here obsequies was what I would have called plumb foolishness and blasphemous before Jack pulled out.

A friend in town told me of a hoss that was liable to suit me, so I hiked away to see him. Jack was a sorrel. So was this here animal. Couldn't do it ! It was the same colour, but it wasn't Jack. It was just a hoss of Jack's colour, and I was scared, looking at him, that I might take him for Jack, forgetful-like, some evening up in the mountains

getting back to camp—and have it rubbed into me away up there in them almighty hills that Jack couldn't ever hike along behind me again.

I turned that sorrel hoss down without giving reasons ; but I knew from the way that the livery-man looked at me he thought me crazy. I went back again up in the mountains packing on my own back. But one day, up there, there passes my camp, coming over from the west side into Montana, a bunch of Kootenai Indians on a visit to the Blackfeet on this side. They sees my camp with no hoss around ; so they comes up and asks me do I want to buy a hoss. I allow the hoss I got from them was a good hoss. They had a sorrel or two, but I never looked at them. Them Indians, with their slumbering faces, you can't tell what they think unless you know them ; but they saw I didn't so much as look at the sorrels. Guess they thought sorrels, for some medicine reason, was barred to me. *They* wouldn't think me crazy ; Indians are different from livery-stable proprietors.

I trades with them for a pinto. Said pinto at times would remind me of Jack, kind of beginning to open up friendship, and I was glad at such times he was no sorrel. That would have reminded me too much. There was sure friendship eventually between that pinto and me, but he was always just a hoss—if you know what I mean. It was never like Jack ; Jack was Jack ; Jack was not just the hoss. That there way I felt over Jack made me less inclined than ever to go dabbling in life. Say, when I see a man with a kid I thinks to myself what it would be like to lose a kid. I mentions this to a man once, and he says to me : " Ain't this here emotion, if you don't object, and will allow me to say it, a kind of cowardice ? "—" No, sir," I

says, "a man that can go projectin' to the tops of mountains hanging on by his fingers and toes when need be, a man that can stay with the hills month in, month out, ain't no coward."

I was still melancholy over that poor Jack, even after I got the pinto to help me pack around. And being melancholy one Sunday in town, like a fool-kid, I went into a church, and the title of the sermon was Eternity, and the text was: "The spirit of man that goeth upward—the spirit of beast that goeth downward." Say, that parson had never exchanged any remarks with so much as a gopher. I stayed with it to the end, having butted into his edifice of my own free will, and not caring to rise and pull out while he was in the midst of his oration. That oration preyed on my mind, for I believe in a hereafter. Some fellow said to me once if he didn't believe in a hereafter, he would straight-away go on a jamboree and whoop it up, and paint things red till he wore out from loss of voice and paint. Foolish I call that. Hereafter, or no hereafter, a man may as well make the best of this world and look around, take things in. It is surely an interesting place to be in for a little while, whether one goes somewhere else afterwards or not.

This question I once discussed with a Dago; he called himself Smith, Lincoln Smith. He gave me his views, and it seemed to me his notion of the hereafter was founded on imaginings set a-going by the swellest soft-drink and candy-store of his experience. He ought to have had some other ideas of the possible scenery, considering he was a fire-warden in the Elk Range. Gilt mirrors are sure ordinary after them lakes away up on the top; and mirrors with flowers painted on them would sure be obnoxious after seeing lilies a-floating on said

lakes in August. I regrets opening the discussion with that man. Sure there ain't many men I can say much more than "It's a cold day!" to, or, "It's a warm day!"; and I've got that ways that if they say: "Oh, 'tain't as cold as yesterday!" or: "'Tain't as warm as yesterday!" I say: "No, sure." You take me? Anything to agree with them. They are all liable to jar me, and make me feel more lonesome than ever with talking gilt-edged mirrors and such-like. Maybe gilt-edged mirrors *are* the goods, if you follow my argument; but it makes me more lonesome to hear that kind of thing. A man like you I can talk to, and feel as easy talkin' to as if I was in one of my old camps with Jack lookin' around to see how I'm makin' out. I got that way even birds seemed easier to me than most men-folk, although most birds ain't got much brains; they do things by instinct instead of by thought, and if a little hitch takes place they can't figure out a way of meeting it.

Two years ago in the fall—you remember the dry year?—I had a strange experience with a bird; and all the old thoughts of Jack comes a-surgin' back with said bird. But he was a crow, and crows are wiser than some other species. It was sure a dry year. The fire-wardens went farther up and down on the waggon-road than ever I see them before, sticking their notices on the trees warning folks against throwing matches and cigar-ends away negligent, and cautioning the sedulous putting-out of camp-fires. Some places I guess more bears would stare enquiring at them bills in one season than humans would. There was a heap of fires. One of them helped me powerful in a bit of country I wanted to examine—cleared her up good.

I got a claim up there now. I must show you

the assay. She'll sell when they run the spur up from Missoula. But that's got nothing to do with this here I got to tell you. I'm fixed all right, anyhow. I sometimes think to myself that I keep on at the prospecting game so's to be in them mountains, same as some folk go out with a fishin' rod so's to evade their fellow towerists courteous. What I was going to tell you was about that crow, and how he made me feel easy about Jack.

I was coming down to camp in a valley up there one night. It was getting on nigh sun-down, and the bottom of the valley was in shadow, though the east side was lit high up with what you might call that there transient and elusive glow. Suddenly I heard a crow squawk, and there he was waddling along on the ground. Now, if I hadn't spoken to that bird I guess he might have got up and flown away. "The crows," thinks I, "are beginning to come back to scout out if their old trees are all right after that fire."

Kind of absent-like I said to that bird: "Hullo, you're all right if you belong at the trees at the top of Number One Creek."

I believe it was me speaking did it. I had that feeling a moment later—that if I had walked on, he would just have flapped up and winged off. It was me speaking, and the way I did it, I guess, that struck, accidental, the one way to perform this here miracle. But everything's a miracle, ain't it? That crow came a couple of steps nearer and it spoke to me. Yes, sir!

"You're the man that talked to the hoss, ain't you," said that crow to me in my language, "the sorrel hoss?"

"Poor Jack," says I. And it never struck me as queer that the crow should know about me speaking

to Jack any more than it struck me as queer that the bird should speak to me that-a-ways. "The parson down in town says that Jack's dead and gone," says I to that black crow.

"Oh, the sky-scout!" says the crow, contumelious. "Don't let him vex you," says the crow. He made a sort of indignant step forward. "I prefer the ideas in these matters that the Indians have," says he, speaking wonderful well, his voice just a little horny if you know what I mean—very little foreign accent to speak of.

"You do?" I asked.

"Sure!" he bills at me some definite, and looking up with his head on the side, so's to fix me with one eye. "If you men would only talk more to all the creatures you call the lower animals we would all learn in time a better way of thinking all round," he says. "I can't understand why men should be so wise in many ways, and yet so—" he bends his head, and scratches it with a careful claw above the beak—"imbecile in many other ways," he says.

"How's that?" I asked, mighty interested.

"Oh," said he, "you have men so wise that they can tell when a comet is to come back—and it comes. And you have men so foolish that they think when a comet comes, it means that disaster will visit them unless they makes some incantations. How's that?" he squawks at me, almost falling back into his own crow-voice, kind of carried away.

I said to that crow: "Mr. Crow," says I, "you may tell me you are in need of improvement, but I'd rather talk to you than to—" and I paused right there for a comparison.

"Than to the sky-scout you mentioned, for example," he suggested.

"Sure!" said I.

"Let me get up on this bush nearer you," he says, "I get a burning pain in my neck looking up at you so," and he flutters up to a leafless limb of a scorched bush and takes holt with his claws. He sways for a bit, saggin' forward, and paddlin' air with his tail to keep from saggin' back. "He was wrong anyhow, that sky-scout." Then he looks puzzled, so that his forehead feathers sort of ruffle out over his beak and his eyes go kind of intent. "What was I going to say?" he murmurs, husky. "We are not like you men; only now and then can we think and talk as I am doing. To-morrow I'll forget the whole thing; nearly forgetting now. Yes! I've got it!" and his forehead smooths back. "I really wanted to tell you about Jack. He's all right."

"What do you mean?" said I, and I don't mind telling you I was some scared then. This here seemed beyond me.

"Oh," says the crow, "on days when we do get a big sense of the spirit in us, it goes further than it goes as yet with you men who have knowledge of it every day, and then——"

"Then you get in touch with all these things beyond, that I often sits a-wonderin' about in camp alone?" says I.

"That's what," says he. "I was in touch with Jack, and he's all right. I talked to him, and he told me if I saw you when the mood was on to tell you he didn't need the grass—but all the same he knew you meant well, same as always."

"I'm glad of that!" I responded. "I worried sometimes over these there occasions when I kind of overworked him maybe. Once I gave him a whaling for sliding down a cañon, I was that wild over a whole sack of flour went up and down like

snow. I can sleep in peace now," says I. "He is all right, you say?"

"He's all right," says the bird.

And I guess I was so much centring my thoughts on that last thing the crow tells me that I only dimly recalls him flying away. Guess he lost the gift sudden. The last I remember is only his ordinary crow squawk as he began to sway on that charred branch again, spreading his tail and fanning with it to try and keep steady. I guess something happened to my mind after that there unusual interview. I remembers very faintly getting back to camp and then I guess I got the fever working on me, and it came to a head, for the next I recollect was folk speaking to me. It was some folk going through the hills. With the woods being thinned out by that there recent fire they saw my camp from the trail and turned aside to visit me.

They toted me down into town. You see I had been kind of careless for a man who knew as much of them almighty hills as me, and had gone drinking in them shallow creeks when there wasn't no more than a trickle at the bottom and it hardly moving. Dead sheep, maybe, up above. Seems I was powerful bad, delirious. Lookin' back on it, all same, I think there's some men would have gone delirious about that there crow, let alone ketchin' fever through drinkin' bad water.

I never told nobody about that there message I got from Jack except the doctor. He seemed to me about as sympathising a man as you, and broad-gauge enough to believe a thing like that; I sized him up that way anyhow. So I told him. But he overdid it. He kept on saying he believed it all too eager. You see I knew it was an amazing thing—unprecedented is the word; so I kind of apologised

for it here and there. Yes, he overdid his protestations that he believed. He told me he had heard of such things before. He was too anxious to make out I didn't tell him anything out of the ordinary. I took a brain-wave to it that the doc thought I was crazy, and was trying to humour me till my head would clear. So I dried up, right there. I hate folks to think I'm crazy.

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“GRAND LARCENY OF LIVE STOCK”

CAL HOVEY told me this—which is an opportunity for the tenderfoot valuator, of a certain type, aiming at the Ciceronian or the Attic, to attain the insular and say: “A character of the name of Cal Hovey ostensibly tells one of the stories.” There seems something of lip-curling (reminiscent of coyotes sitting round a camp making faces at the men they see) and of *arrière pensée* about such phrases; but perhaps—just perhaps—it is not the insular they attain; perhaps it is only the platitudinous, the obvious. There will also be opportunity to remark: “Those who care for Western slang and Western ethics have here a chance to wallow in them”: for Cal Hovey of Uintah did not (culpable though that may have been) speak like a character in an East London novel, nor (surprising though it may seem) did he talk about Jack Manson and the doings of the sagebrush folk as Pater wrote of Leonardo da Vinci and the Lady Lisa. Yet had he ideals as a raconteur. They demanded that he tell a story with some kind of grand-manner, or high-falutin, which he culled from the classics or from the Sunday papers. I have seen him tracking down small rewards with much agony in cheap grey editions of Fenimore Cooper, Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, Mayne Reid, when the dog days were upon us, and

leisure was ours. He believed that he should not tell a story as he talked politics, or horses, or what-not, should have a manner less conversational—a belief shared by many. In his own way he was, as well as Pater, a Stylist, and as for his ethics, they were his own, like his name. He thought that "what you might call the legal tariff or schedule" (he pronounced it skiddle) "is kind of difficult for plain folks, that don't think like attorneys, to get the steps of." It was a chat on the relative demerits of crimes in the estimation of the country, and in the eyes of the law-courts that set him agoing about Jack Manson. This is the story he told; and as I too, like Pater and Cal Hovey, have ideals regarding how a thing should be done, I set it down as nearly as I possibly can in the way it was told to me:

If you ask how it was possible for Jack Manson to be a kind of king of the castle up in the Uintah Mountains in the year of grace 1910, when everybody was of opinion that the "bad man" was no longer to be found out west, but only in the great cities—with sand-bag and Thug's cord—the explanation is simple. It is the same explanation that accounted for Rob Roy Macgregor in the little expanse of Western Scotland—a country that could be dropped into one of these Uintah valleys and, in that process, only level up the plain and make the mountains on either side seem a little less tall. The trouble then was that if the Duke of Argyll pointed out a bunch of his Campbells to Rob Roy's cave on the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond (as I've heard Scotty of the Bar C singing) some of Rob Roy's confederates would give him news of it, and a considerable bunch of the

Duke's woolly highland cattle would disappear—and Rob would perhaps not be caught to square the bill, for Rob was slippery.

So it was with the notorious Jack Manson, too hundred years later, in a far bigger country. The cattle men whose ranges bordered the Uintah Mountains preferred not to see Jack when he came and went from "these there natural fastnesses," as L. T. Strang called them. There was a mutual understanding that if the boys of L. T. Strang's outfit, and Tim Smith's, did not butt in then, the round-up counts of their bosses would not look feeble. There was other intimidation too. Neither Strang nor Smith was the kind of man to make things so that his boundary riders would never know, when they went out of a morning, whether they were liable to come back within whiff of the cook's hot bread again at sundown.

Manson was organised. It was not advisable for any man to invent a plan for busting his outfit, and lay it on the table. For Manson had men in league with him all over the State—"Manson's sleeping partners" men called them, with a shrug. Manson was looked upon as all in the day's work, like the heat, and the cold, rattlesnakes, blizzards, 'skeeters, or cloud-bursts. It was a big stretch of country. The irrigated lands people had, so far, not come in and spoiled it for cattle; sheep were there—but not outrageously; there was understanding regarding the dead line for the woollies; and in three years there had only been three altercations between wool and hide.

There was a fellow on Strang's push called Gay—by name or by soubriquet I don't know. He was what is called "struck on his job," hadn't been long enough tending cattle in sun and rain and blizzard

to begin to count romance against rheumatism and the other tough adjuncts of the life. My private opinion of any man who does figure things out that ways is that he ain't much worth—but that's side issue. Being a youngster at the game, Gay didn't know it before the days when the cow-man turned to and raised alfalfa in the bottoms for fattening stock. He saw nothing sedentary, nor nothing agriculchooral in his life, and took as much interest in it as a writing sharp in the pursuit of the right word.

One day as he was out upon his duty on the high top of America, and seeing a steady dust rising and travelling across his vision, he rode on to the edge of a butte, and reined up there to scrutinise it. It was a bunch of twenty head that raised this here arresting dust-cloud, with two fellows punching them along; and what does the bold youth do but amble down and rubber-neck at the bunch, quite obvious and open, as if he was a State ranger with permission from Government to peer and pry, or a sheriff with a tag upon his breast as a sign of legal right to be so curious. The two fellows that were driving those doggies slacked up and scrutinised him in return, just like that, as the saying is—well, who are you? or who do you think you are?—or an expression to that effect.

The brands were strangers to this district of the association, and were mixed a bit too—but never a road-mark was run on one of them animals. One of the fellows rode up slowly to Gay and commented:

"Well, there's none of your lot in this bunch, are there?"

"No," Gay admitted, "none of mine."

"All right," said the fellow. "I guess you haven't

been in this country long, by the complexion of your leggins, so I'll quote you an adage that dots the scanty pastures back east, and which maybe you have observed—which is '*Citizens, keep off the grass.*' "

That ended the interview. The two fellows rode forward and got a move on the bunch that had started grazing during this brief eye to eye study.

Now, if Gay had met nothing but the winds of heaven till he unsaddled that night, he might have saved himself some unpleasant trouble that followed ; but he ran into a roamin' ranger on the way, and reported to the ranger about them conflicting brands and no road-marks on so much as a hide of them. The ranger ambled off and got on to the end of a lone wire that comes wangling into this country over many miles. It's the loneliest wire you ever saw. Most of the insulators are the necks of broken bottles picked up by the linesman on route. It drops at last into a little wickieup where dwells what is called a "brass-pounder." We have the convenience of civilisation, if not at our doors, at least not a long lope away anyhow.

The ranger got the brass-pounder to manipulate and send questions roaming around over the State, and sat there eating tobacco, as they say, and spitting at the 'skeeters till the owners of the stock—which was surely stolen—and some other rangers arrived. They trailed up that bunch and fired off a lot of fusillades in the bad lands where Manson lived. They got some of the cattle back, but they didn't get Manson, nor a single prisoner. The result of that war-party was mainly to deject us that rode the range up near the hills—because young Gay admitted that he had been the child who had begun rolling this snowball, seemed rather perky on the

subject. And if Manson looked at it the same as we did we would all be in that cattle-rustler's black books. Manson had no discrimination that way.

But time passed and it looked as if Manson was "shut down." There were rumours of a new hold-up man practising his living down in the Mogollons, and some folk surmised he was Manson. There was some hot talk at the annual meeting of the Stock Raisers Association, all the same, about us up here letting such a band of cattle-lifters make a robbers' roost next door to us. It was plumb ridiculous; for everybody knew that the geography and topography of these there hills was a sheer invitation to cattle-rustlers to come up and make their base there. Strang and Smith got hot, and asked what any other ranchman would do if he had a labyrinth of bad lands bounding his view on one side, and a nest of hold-up men in it? Were their cowmen hired to go pirouetting up into the hills shooting up cattle-rustlers that lifted stock from who knew where?

But later on Gay had a story to tell that he was less eager to tell. I mentioned to you how he was "struck on his job." He showed it in various ways, and one way was his saddle—a thoroughbred Mexican, with silver mountings. One day he and a little sawed-off cuss called Stub, were pursuing their avocation on the lonely plateau of America, when a fellow came ambling alongside and said: "How do."

They said: "How do."

"Dandy saddle that you have," he said.

Gay allowed it was, turning his head to look at the fellow who rode neck and neck with them now. Gay seemed to know his face, but couldn't place it.

"I'll trade you saddle for saddle," the stranger said.

Gay evil-eyed the fellow's saddle.

"Guess I don't want it," he rejoined and stuck his chin out a bit at this here affable and sinister stranger—who promptly let him look into the portentous barrel of a Colt, and reined up, and ordered an immediate unsaddling. Gay looked into the gun. He had never looked into one before—not outside a motion-picture show back east. He looked at Stub for a suggestion, making a kind of mute enquiry for the stage directions in such an unexpected play. But Stub was foaled in Flagstaff, Arizona, and consequently Stub shrugged his shoulders for an answer, suggesting that the exchange should be made, and might as well be made peacefully, for—in old-time parlance—this was "the drop" on Gay.

Gay dismounted and unsaddled; and then the hold-up man slid off his own pony, still with the Colt to the fore. The trade was made. But that wasn't the end of it; for the hold-up man, getting into his new saddle, said:

"I guess you boys are hungry."

They didn't know just where they stood.

"Reckon we're all right," said Stub, looking some dubiously at him.

"Oh come," said the fellow, with a mock sociable air. "I'm just going over this rise here into camp. It's past noon. Guess you would like a bit of grub," and with that he waves his gun at them and gives an affable grin. "Over this way," he says, and intimidates them into acquiescence.

I don't know what you would do—I don't know what I would have done—for I've never been invited to any free lunch in such terms. I can only tell

you that Stub and Gay, mighty silent, and eyeing that Colt, rode along with this fellow—who led them down a draw to where a whole bunch of his friends were camped. Gay recognised him then—for in the bunch was the man who had told him about keeping off the grass. This one was the plug who had sat looking on, on that occasion when Gay got the word of advice. And it was evident that he was king bull of that bunch.

Once again I don't know what you would have done—or what I would have done; but the facts of what happened are some revolting: this grinning tough made Gay take and eat a pan full of molasses and sand instead of molasses and flapjack, to the depraved amusement of the crowd. It's a wonder it didn't kill him. His inside must have been like a bird's—and what victuals he didn't masticate with his teeth, for the rest of his life I guess he had enough gravel in his crop to rub down all same pigeon. They made Stub do likewise, and then sent them off, the two sorrowfullest and meanest men in America.

"This," says Stub to Gay, after they had rode two hours in sun-scorching silence, "is what comes of you butting in."

"Why in heck," says Gay, wiping his mouth and expectorating for the fiftieth time, "didn't you knock up his gun when I was unsaddling at the beginning?"

"Because I know my west," says Stub, fierce, and sticking his face out at Gay, craning from the saddle all same as one of these there ostriches they've started raising in place of cattle in the Utah desert. "I don't butt in," he says, twisting his face round energetic, "and I don't play with firearms!"

I often wonder why they didn't make a treaty, before they hit the ranch, to keep mum about this horrible scene and come to an understanding to invent a plausible story if any comments were made about the plain saddle in the place of the fandango one. But they didn't. They set forth the story to the boys, each in his own way—and it was received, as you can surmise, with blent emotions. There were consternation, amazement, amusement, derision, anger, sympathy—every blame emotion in the whole herd of emotionalism.

But what stuck in Gay's throat, worse than the sand and the molasses even, was the derision. Now that derision wasn't nearly as bitter and deep-seated as it sounded to his sensitive ears. Only he was that on edge with the disgusting lunch and the contumely of it that his ears were cocking up same as a locoed cow's for fresh trouble. It was plumb unfair to keep dropping talk about free lunches and so forth. Still—there you are. They would have their josh, despite the fact that no man who has not been asked to lunch in the same fashion can consider himself in a position to be sure that he would not have raised the necessary appetite.

The derision stuck; and Stub and Gay were as quiet to each other, and distant, and reserved, as a Crow chief and a Blackfoot chief coming into Fort Benton to trade simultaneous in the old days. They were sure two black clouds in camp, and when they met there was liable to be lightning and thunder and all manner of cloud-bursts imminent; we all were prepared for trouble. But we were wrong in such prognostication—if not in our diagnosis of the trouble, at least in our perspicacity as to how the thing would end.

II

THERE had been a time of peace after the posse that I told you about went up into the hills, although they took no scalps. It looked as if the mere demonstration of hostility had served. But this sand and molasses episode told us that Manson's gang had not pulled out of the country. Also it made every plain man in the country eager to see him pay the penalty of his cattle-lifting. That was how we saw it. In the law-court that episode would have been a side-issue, only deserving weeks or months where meddling with cattle deserves months or years. But folks and attorneys often see things differently, as I said. We considered that mean episode flagrant beyond any daring or brazen cattle-lifting. And next we had news from a fellow, who had been in town with a rig for some truck, that a bunch of rustlers had been corralled south, and they were Manson's gang all right. For, contrary to the dime novel cover, it ain't often that a freebooter dons a mask; and several of them were already known in toto—brand, earmarks, baptismal name, and all. But Manson was not there. The bunch had numbered eight. Five had been rounded up, and surrendered, and were now in the Uintah round-house. None of them was Manson. And of the three that got off, none of the outfit that had been in the round-up of these criminals thought Manson was one of them. Active members of the band, it was believed, were not more than a dozen, Manson included. I say *active*, for you know that with cattle-lifting, like this here, there are always a whole lot of confederates that never appear on the stage.

Gay and Stub listened to this account of the

decimation of the gang some meditative. It was remembered subsequently that Gay looked at Stub thoughtfully and long. Next day they were not around when the cook hit the bottom of his frying-pan with the iron cooking-spoon—which is cattle-country for a gong. Wherever were they? Their bunks were cold—they had skedaddled in the night; and, as this ain't no detective narrative of suspense and guess again, you may as well know right now that they were away up north, ki-yi-ing a bunch of our own steers straight up into the mountains.

The trail was easy enough, for Manson had run a heap of bunches up into his sequestered pocket there, and the trail had no need of any blaze. There they went—them two shorthorns, Gay and Stub, carrying out a reckless idea that had taken shape in Gay's simmering mind when he heard that Manson was liable to be lurking with only one or two partners in his roost.

The first thing any bandit would see from the foothills would be a waving of dust coming up his way, and the two riders mozeying along with it.

The cattle went along good, Stub and Gay keeping close in the dust for fear of binoculars being levelled upon them from one of the sentinel buttes in that tough mountain maze. Up they went snaking and turning, up and up till they were right into the big pocket where Manson used to do his brand-faking before driving out again and shipping. Manson was a plumb combine. He had men at the back of him in the stock-yards, and a fat sinner in Chicago, with a gold chain across his waist taking the lion's share, you can bet your life.

Seeing but two fellows with this bunch he came whaling down all on his lonesome to see what had

come to the others. It was a successful ruse all right; for when Manson got close enough to see that these two fellows in the dust were none of his push—and for them to recognise the affable gent who had traded the silver saddle and intimidated them into a disgusting device for spoiling an appetite for life—he was close enough to make a target.

That was surely the end of Manson. Another fellow started riding down the slope when the firing began, the kind of neck and neck firing you couldn't tell which was first—more a case of everybody speaking at once than of repartee. But when he saw Manson go down he changed his mind. Stub took a long shot at him, but he was out of range.

They reckoned they had done enough then, and they drove back that bunch of steers some urgent, because they were liable to meet the three fellows who had got away in the *melée* down below. Maybe they came back to roost, or maybe they didn't. Anyway Gay and Stub didn't encounter them—just got their bunch out on to the range and spraddled them loose and free again. And you can bet your life they reported the demise of Manson to the boss before they explained the scheme that had led up to it. He would be liable to get so excited about the crazy notion of driving a bunch of doggies into a rustler's camp that he would be unfitted, by blind rage, for hearing of the splendid *dénouement*.

A posse went up into the hills when Gay and Stub told their story, and they saw where the branding used to be done, and they scouted out the dug-outs of the gang on the hillside, in a place where they could have stood off a troop of cavalry if they'd

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wanted to. Buzzards had picked Manson clean. There was nothing left of him but a Waltham watch, some buttons, six bits, a clasp knife, and such things beyond a buzzard's appetite—and the Colt that he hadn't handled lively enough that time.

THE LEGEND OF CLAYHOWYA

MOUNTAINS soaring up and lying backward from a deep inlet ; a sense of heaviness, and moss, and damp airs ; mosquitoes and buzzing black-flies, and shuttling dragon-flies, criss-crossing in the beams of sunlight that cleave down between the moss-laden trees.

Among the trees, close to the beach, is the village of Clayhowya.

If you passed up the inlet on one of the steamers that ply between the far-scattered logging-camps, the canoes drawn up on the shore would likely announce the presence of the village to you, even before you saw haze and smoke of cooking-fires drifting among the lower trees. The trees soar high and rank after rank, above the huts, and the smoke trickles away inland and uphill, blending with the blue of the forest deeps. Mists also have a way of gliding stately down out of the sky and catching on the tallest firs, so that they seem to be affixed there by a frail end ; they float in the air flimsily, like the money-spiders' tickling but almost invisible meshes which, if you go ashore and walk in the forest, you are certain to find all over hat and face.

The natives will probably call to your mind (if you have chanced to read the book) phrases out of Washington Irving's *Astoria* :

"The effect of different modes of life upon the human frame and human character is strikingly instanced in the contrast between the hunting Indians of the prairies and the piscatory Indians of the sea-coast. The former, continually on horseback, scouring the plains, gaining their food by hardy exercise, and subsisting chiefly on flesh, are generally tall, sinewy, meagre, but well-formed, and of bold and fierce deportment; the latter, lounging about the river banks, or squatting and curved up in their canoes, are generally low in stature, ill-shaped, with crooked legs, thick ankles, and broad flat feet."

I share Washington Irving's prejudice—or let me say I share his preference, his preference for what he calls the equestrian tribes. I prefer the sun worshippers to the worshippers of the mystic sea-bird, these carvers of toads and crabs and beaked terrors. To this squat people came a missionary. In the first year he did nothing—and yet did much, for he won the confidence of the people. The second year found him being listened to in matters of health—the destruction of fish-entrails, stopping of expectation on the cabin floors, and the like. He preached cleanliness and decency instead of God. He interested himself in the life of Clayhowya and forgot all about the views of the old ladies who subscribe to the missionary funds at home.

The wiser spirits of the village were with him when he hastened off one day with three swift paddlers, in a cedar canoe, to summon a policeman from fifty miles away, and request him to be good enough to come to the village with handcuffs to arrest some whisky traders who were stealing down the coast from village to village, leaving so many little hells

under the high glaciers, and pines, and cedars ; for your " Siwash " cannot " take a glass and leave it," and the nominal whisky of these traders, besides, is discovered, on analysis, to be the kind of concoction that only to the very strongest stomach is not poison.

The wiser spirits were with the lone missionary in an altercation he had with two whisky-pedlars, directly, personally, without any policeman in the neighbourhood. Such altercations necessitate what is called " sand " in a man, when they are conducted fifty miles from the policeman. A sense of the immensity of the land comes at such times. He can hardly give himself courage by remembering that, vast though the country is, the law is there, and that, if a man is killed, his murderer is generally found. It is easier to believe stories giving proof to that fact when sitting in a saddlebag chair in a Victoria hotel smoking-room, than when actually confronted by two tough whisky-peddars (and they half-drunk, and " heeled ") hundreds of miles up the coast from the high seat of justice. Such stories seem different then, with the primitive clucking speech all round, and the screaming of fish-hawks, and the oily whirl and sweep of dangerous eddies sucking past, and the eternal conflict even of the trees.

The missionary at Clayhowya became known up and down the coast. He was a darn good man said even those who had been worsted by him in their nefarious designs. He was " skookum tum-tum." I suppose he faced his " troubles " with an implicit faith in the Almighty. I expect it was faith in God that sustained him, even as faith in Manitou sustained that Sioux Indian in Dakota who, in the ghost dance Trouble, wearing a

sacred shirt, rode forth before a troop of cavalry to prove to his doubting fellows that Manitou had made the shirt bullet-proof. The missionary at Clayhowya was very compelling to six men who came over from Camp Tyas, splendidly (what some people call) "healthy," anxious to, as the phrase is upon the coast, "raise hell" at Clayhowya. It was not with a Bible, but with a six-gun, that he held them up, and sent them back to camp, the object of that tramp through the bush to Clayhowya unaccomplished.

Men of the coast (when they met in Seattle or Vancouver hotel rotundas, or foregathered on some coasting steamboat) talked of how these revellers were sent back crestfallen, and contradicted themselves in the talking.

"These missionaries make the Indians, too, you know—well, you know what I mean, they have the women under their thumbs. Did you hear of that man at Clayhowya when some fellows went down from Tyas—yes, they are working up there now—no, I don't know who the foreman is—did you hear how that missionary came along and told them to hike? Yes, that's right. They quit all right. He had the drop on them—and two Siwashes at his heels looking along their sights too. Well, he must be a good man. Plenty of sand—Oh yes, when you look at it that way, sure, he is in the right, too."

Government men, surveyors, meeting in their clubs in Victoria and talking with restrained voices of the coast—of lumber and game, and bogus town-sites, and real town-sites, also touched upon him:

"But that man at Clayhowya! I met Gilroy's foreman in Duck Inlet. He was laughing over a

thing that happened up there. It seems he had a pretty tough outfit on the making of the skid-way at Tyas. He met with an accident to his ankle that kept him laid up three days, and some of his men went down to Clayhowya. The missionary turned them about face. Converted? Oh, no! It wasn't a sermon. It was a case of cartridges. That sky-scout is certainly making big improvements up there. He has got them to build decently healthy outhouses and dig offal-pits. Pits are the thing. I looked in at Clayhowya last trip, and it's sanitary—yes, sir—sanitary. It's cleaner than ever I saw it. *Cum grano*—"

"No, no! You mean *Mens sana in*—"

"Not he! He means *Mens sibi conscia recti*."

And then somebody touched the bell for drinks, and the Clayhowya missionary gave place to some other character of the coast.

It was all true, all this that was told of him by meeting travellers. He had improved the health of the people at Clayhowya; he had made their lives cleaner. But (and here is the crux of the story) he had never administered Holy Sacrament to any of his flock. An ecclesiastical letter came to him asking why, in his reports, he had made no mention of the Ordinance of the Last Supper. He replied that he had not administered Sacrament because the Clayhowya Indians had a legend of their own about a man who was lost in the woods for three days, sought for, and his lifeless body found by the one who went out to seek for him. He described how, once a year, a ceremony to record this legend took place; how one medicine man, painted and masked and bedizened, took to the woods; how, three days later, another went forth in search of him, and,

returning, brought with him a bundle that, it was purported, contained the veritable flesh of the lost man. The first medicine man, he explained, was not really dead. It was not really a dead man's flesh that was eaten. Actually the first medicine man was back in the village, his mask and robes discarded, and looking on while the second medicine man ate his flesh.

The missionary explained that the people of Clayhowya, keen symbolists, would confuse the Lord's Supper with this ceremony, and that he thought it advisable to go on inculcating cleanliness and decency in the way he had been doing, and to allow the Last Supper to wait—because, in the ceremony of the-man-who-was-lost-in-the-woods, there were many revolting items by no means conducive to the betterment of the people. You might think that the board or committee, or whatever it is called, would have understood. But consider how often you expect people to understand—and discover that they are damn' fools.

Another missionary was sent to Clayhowya. And he ousted the first one—he who had made the village sanitary. From the second missionary's first report to headquarters it was evident that he had been sent to the village none too soon; the first missionary had, actually, so wrote he (and truthfully wrote) in his initial report, a drum in the log church to summon worshippers, instead of a bell. A drum instead of a bell! Why, the thought was appalling. Pagan! Pagan! It was enough to bu'st the missionary society and give all the subscribers the creeps.

There was a scene, when the new missionary took possession, reminiscent of that scene in the Garden, over the brook Cedron, of which Saint

John tells. For when the new missionary, on his arrival, went into the church, one of the Indians, he whose privilege it was to beat the drum, hit the usurper over the head with the drumstick ; and the missionary who was about to depart lifted up the usurper's hat and returned it to him and told the drum-beater to desist.

“ Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, ' Put up thy sword into the sheath ; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ? ' ”

So now, if you go to Clayhowya, you will find the place as of yore, ofal decaying before the doors, black flies walking over babies on the floors ; and in these little houses that the surveyor who was interested in sanitation, when he dropped in at Clayhowya on his way down the coast, saw built over the pits, you can see cooking being done. And now do the people of Clayhowya know that if they get drunk there is pardon, and that it really does not matter. And one can sin and find grace all the time ; and the second missionary writes of “ conversions ” in every report. On Sundays the Holy Sacrament is distributed to the faithful. The missionary tells them it is the Real Body of Christ ; but they know that that is only his white-man twist, and that it is really the body of the-man-who-was-lost-in-the-woods. And missionary number one is now attached to no body, admits no creed ; but at another village that had no missionary he teaches sanitation, and the advisability, for health reasons, of not peddling one's body to drunk white men, or getting stupefied

with ammonia and blue-stone water and wood-alcohol (even if it is called "whisky"), and that one should love one's neighbour as oneself. Many of the people from the village of his first charge have migrated thither, to be near him, loving more that unworthy servant of the missionary society than the palaver of the righteous one ; and with them doubtless, would the Christ agree, since 'twas He, and none other, who commented that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life—though the missionary society did not see it that way.

THE QUEER PLACE

THE celebrated speech of Hamlet to Horatio, beginning "There are more things in heaven and earth," came into the mind of Bill Davies, of Ridge, Montana, when he arrived at the end of the sequence of events that circled round the Queer Place, on the road to Spring Lake.

From Ridge to Midway is easy going, as a rule, and at Midway the freighters camp. There are not always freighters there, of course; but since the Spring Lake mines opened up, to work steadily day and night, the chances are in favour of seeing, dotting the little pocket valley at Midway, the twinkling camp fires of the freighters outspanned for the night. Sometimes the only light in the valley is the dropped yellow star of Buck Flannigan's "hotel"—the only one between Ridge and Spring Lake.

Buck built it when the placer miners were tearing out the gravel at Midway, thirty years ago. He stayed on after the creek bed had been despoiled, the pocket desecrated, and the banks on either hand were left looking as if a mad giant with a rake had been at work there. Unshaven and bleary, he pottered about his paintless hotel, while year by year nature tried to cover over the signs of havoc, and the shacks of what was once Midway fell log by log. You could never say he had a jag on. He was just soaked, yet always coherent.

Flannigan's was thirty miles from Ridge, and two and thirty from Spring Lake, and it looked very lonely, and Flannigan was the split double of a dime-novel cover of Bad Man Plummer—and there, mark you, were the holes in the floor that told of dancing tenderfeet, and there was Flannigan, smiling, as the Chink put down your plate of steak and onions, and Flannigan's voice huskily inquired: "What do you drink with it?"

Most of the freighters did not go near Flannigan's after they hauled into the meadow; just got the horses out, the nose-bags on, the frying-pan on the fire, the blankets spread. They might, in the morning, "have one" at Flannigan's, but that was about the extent of their visits; for Flannigan's depressed everybody. It wasn't a hotel; it was a relic. That checkerboard on the table in the corner of the bar-room was the most tragic of checkerboards. The most stolid man would turn, with a shudder, from the checkerboard. And yet it was the only amusement in sixty-two miles.

It used to haunt and fascinate Bill Davies on the infrequent occasions that loneliness, or drizzle, prompted him to go over to Flannigan's after having made camp. Perched on the high seat of his wagon, wagging through the mountains, the impression of the lone bar-room with the lone checkerboard on the corner table used to stay with him even more poignantly than the impression of Flannigan. When Flannigan was talking to him—when Flannigan's bulging, washed-out eyes made him look away, as one looks away from a cuttlefish—Bill used to look at that checker-board; then back to Flannigan he would turn, to find Flannigan's eyes queerer still.

Something queer about that checkerboard! They

didn't play checkers in the old days, when Flannigan's was open day and night. The cards slipped on the table then; the balls ran, or the little horses; the dice rattled. In those days, if you wanted to shake for a drink with a friend at Flannigan's you could, by wagging your hand in air for a sign as you advanced to the bar, have the dicebox clapped down there for you. It used to stand on a shelf behind the bar, a dicebox big as a large pepper pot, with dice half an inch square. But it was hidden away when the gold seekers departed, and nature encroached again on Midway—and there was only the checkerboard.

“ Queer ! ”

So thought Davies, haunted by the checkerboard, as he waggled through the soundless, red-black woods on his high wagon perch. It was morning, dewy and fragrant in the mountains. Behind him, and below, lay the meadow—Midway Meadow—with its black marks of old fires, its torn river bed, its mouldering shacks, and Flannigan's. The horses' hoofs fell muffled, the wheels rolled silently in the foot of dust that was the road. The only noise of his progress was the squeak of cargo rubbing, box against box, and an occasional clink of chains when the whiffle swung.

“ Queer about that checkerboard ! ”

It suddenly struck him that there was, perhaps, a game a man could play by himself on a checkerboard.

“ Maybe Flannigan plays with the Chink ! ” he considered, and smiled to himself.

No ! Flannigan sat all day playing a solitary card game, staring at the cards, setting them out, rearranging them, now this way, now that way, while, outside, the trees stood bolt upright round

the little bit of pocket of grass, and the shacks fell into decay, and nothing happened but morning, noon, night, and the crawling hours between—nothing sounded but the creek, the crackle of grasshoppers, the occasional howl of coyote, or scream of bald-headed eagle.

Davies dismissed the sense of queerness and depression caused by the place, where he usually did dismiss it—dismissed Flannigan's codfish eyes, the furtive, half-frightened looking Chink, and the memory of that barren interior with the checker-board on the corner table. He dismissed Flannigan's on arrival at a spot where the horses always shied, or tried to bolt, or tried to wheel aside. The same thing always happened at this bend of the road, and he supposed that some former driver had beaten the animals here—overbeaten them, too. Somehow or other, it did not strike him to wonder if both horses had been beaten there, if they had been partners for years. He didn't delve as deep as that. But he knew that about two miles above Flannigan's, going toward Spring Lake, he never failed to have trouble with them.

To-day, just after he passed that place, coaxing them sensible again, he saw ahead, coming toward him, two riders. They couldn't have come from Spring Lake, unless they had started after supper last night. It was still early in the day, and Bill had been up with the sunrise. Then he recognised them. One was Captain Moyes, of the Moyes Mines; the other, he believed, was a back-East engineer connected with some syndicate—a man with a double-barrelled name, he had heard. Thompson-Smith, he thought it was. Anyhow, this man, Thompson-Smith—or Johnson-Smith, he wasn't sure which—was in the country looking at various pros-

pects that the success of the Spring Lake vein had brought to the attention of the speculators again. So the boys said, at any rate. Davies gave them "How-do!" in passing, and, interested in horse-flesh, as well as in the long, lean Easterner, who looked as if he should have been a Westerner, he looked round after them.

"Can ride all right!" he thought, as he observed a sudden trembling and side dancing and general cavorting of the young engineer's horse at the bend of the road. It seemed to upset Moyes' pony, but Bill knew that Moyes was a horseman, and merely watched the Easterner. He laughed as he saw that long, lean man dwindle down the road, "staying with it" excellently. Down the aisle in the wood—for thus the slit of waggon road seemed—a pennon of dust wavered after the riders had vanished round the bend.

A joggling of his wagon caused Bill to look ahead once more, and caution his horses with: "Steady, now; don't you know the road by this time?" But it was not fright with them again. Perhaps in turning round to see how the engineer fellow rode he had pulled a rein by accident.

"Steady, you! Steady!"

And they plodded on demurely in the even and blameless plod into which they always settled soon after having passed that bend.

II

ABOUT noon, Bill halted at Saskatoon Creek, hauling aside from the road, as was the usage with most who came there, whether others were expected or not. Some would not haul aside until they heard

the squeak of harness, or joggle of load, that announced another team on trek; but Bill was not of those. He got out bits there, and nose-bags on, ran a careful eye and a massaging hand over his big beasts, rinsed his hands in the creek, and sat down to enjoy his own lunch during the half-hour rest.

He had just got through the rinsing when from the direction of his travel came the intermittent squeaks that announce an advancing wagon. And here it was, swaying through the woods on the deep-rutted road, Jim Conyers drowsy on high, wrist on knee, lines in hand, humming some plaintive and catchy song. They waved forefinger and second finger of a hand to each other; and then Conyers reined in, throwing a leg negligently over the high seat, to chat at ease, punctuating his remarks with: "Steady, Molly!" "What you doin', Sorrel?" "Oh, stand still, Molly! Can't you flick a fly off without turning the rig over?"

"That syndicate fellow's still up in the hills with Moyes," he said, as a piece of chatter, reins over hooked elbow now, enjoying his noon snack. "They say Moyes is liable to sell him the Nellie Moyes prospect up on this here spur. More haulin' then, eh?" And he looked up the precipitous hill that sheered away with the trees standing straight at acute angles to it.

"That's where they've been, is it?" answered Bill. "I met them on the road a bit back, going toward Flannigan's. Wondered what they had been at to be so early on the road, and so far from Spring Lake."

"Did you? Moyes has an interest in some other location on the other side. I suppose they were crossing to it. If they ain't at Flannigan's when I get there, I guess that's where they'll be—up on the

other side. They say that long fellow—I forget his name—something-Smith—represents enough dough to open up all the claims in the country. He's seen the ore to Spring Lake in Moyes' office, and now he's looking where it comes from, so I guess he has intentions."

"Well, he's some rider!" said Bill. "His horse went bughouse as sudden as knife, just after we met, and he gave an exhibition good enough to get honourable mention at Pendleton."

"Where was this?" asked Conyers, interested.

"Back some ways—you know that bend where there's the roots of a cedar?"

"Sure—kind of wobble up and down. About two miles this side of Flannigan's?"

"Sure!"

"Huh!" Conyers jerked a thumb at his horses. "They'll do the same at that bend—fierce. I never whale them for it; guess they were whaled there for something once. Goin' along light with them I sometimes wish I was carrying a jag on the wagon to stop a team of six, let alone two."

Bill merely nodded, but his face was full of thought.

"Sure," said Conyers. "I always begin a-talkin' comfortin' to them a bit ahead. As a matter of fact, I don't like the place myself."

"Neither do I," answered Bill, and nodded again. For some reason, he seemed to see Flannigan again, and that drab bar-room, with the mocking checkerboard in the corner, the disconsolate, rejected, dejected, inviting, and repellent checkerboard.

"Well, guess I'd better be pulling out," said Conyers—and did so, toward Midway, while Bill hauled on to the road once more and continued his joggle and swing to Spring Lake.

But what Conyers had said about his horses turning

restive at that place two miles above Flannigan's stayed with Bill, and brought him back to the depression that he had generally left far behind by this time. It struck him that the whole way was oppressive—the quiet, hushed forest, the winding, muffled road, grim and terrible, as if something queer might happen anywhere. He was in a mood to quit the job and pull out for a brighter bit of country, more open, more coloured; but anon the mood departed.

"Something at that bend, I guess, is unpleasant for horses," he thought.

He did not admit that it was particularly unpleasant for at least one human being—namely Bill Davies. An open-air man, he felt, without being consciously introspective.

III

It happened that on his return trip from Spring Lake to Ridge he had occasion to walk that bit of road alone, not even in the company of horses. With the end of the sunset he had come to the place the horses did not like, wrestled with them, coaxed them, and had just sighted, from the hillside, the camping ground at Midway, when he noticed that there had happened to him what had never happened before: his big sack of feed, from which he filled the nose-bags of his hefty Montanas, had joggled off.

Back went his thoughts over the road, and he guessed he knew where it lay. It had fallen off when he wrestled with the animals at their place of fears and sweats. Well, he would drive down to the meadow and then return for it, for the load was

heavy, the horses were tired, and the meadow was in sight. So down he drove to his wonted camp place and there unhitched. The horses looked round for their nose-bags, wondering what had come to their human partner of the road.

"All right," said Bill Davies. "I guess I dropped the grub. There! You stop there; I'll hike back and fetch it."

A plainsman would have spraddled over even a draft horse for that couple of miles on the road, but Bill, feeling stiff in the limbs after his day on the elevated seat, thought to stretch his legs. Away he went uphill again, the two beasts turning their heads, puzzled, to look after him. He swung off stiffly, but soon fell into a plodding stride, and dissipated his exasperation at himself for having dropped the bag in the exercise of walking to find it.

Hints of night were all around. It would be here soon. At this place, on the hill up from Midway, there were generally many chipmunks disporting; now but one or two chirped and ran and again chirped thinly, knowing that night was near. On Bill trudged, enjoying his walk still, though to be sure he was pleased to hear the silver notes of a bobolink, as if addressed to him. They were antidote to the dark-red, dark-green infestivity of the slopes.

Up on the hillside, in the forest, he turned and looked down between the trees. He could still see the wagon, with the horses at the tail, waiting for their oats. They looked small from here, but he could even make out that they were still turned toward him—or turned in the direction in which he had departed—by the white of their foreheads. The meadow was going drab, the green fading. A shadow was drifting across it. The horses moved from the wagon to make shift on grass, as

if they were unpampered cayuses instead of oat-suppered heavyweights. No light yet showed where Flannigan's stood to one side, backed by trees—but perhaps it was not yet time for lights. Away up on high a peak showed over the trees with a sullen glow still on it. In the woods, however, night was fast getting to business. Bushes merged in darkness, a drifting, subtle darkness; they did not stand forth—they merely bulked, deeper glooms.

And then, just before he reached the bend, something suddenly happened to Bill Davies in his inner parts; and there were little shivers came over him—for he felt that he was being looked at.

He pshawed aside this inexplicable feeling, told himself that night was falling a bit cold, and puckered his eyes more keenly to see where the dropped sack lay. These shivers he had not felt since childhood, in the dark of a little loft over a farm in Indiana where he had been "raised." He told himself again that the night was going to be chilly. He could still see ahead, though the cleared cut of the road had a very lonesome appearance now, with the woods so darkened.

Say! He must get over this feeling of being looked at! He was nearly at that bend where his horses had doubtless been walloped once by a former teamster. Somebody was looking at him! And, say, not only *his* horses were like that here! What was it Conyers had said to him about the place? He peered left and right as he walked. It occurred to him that it would be dark before he could get back to the meadow. He should have brought a lanp. A man might—well, a man might stub a toe, for instance.

Pshaw! There was nothing to stub a toe on. A man had only to keep walking in the deep dust of the road. He looked left and right, and hiked on.

He was at the bend ; some one *was* looking at him—and then his foot, in stepping out, impinged on something soft that yielded ; and he leaped aside.

The breath jumped out of him. He thought it was a body he had blundered on to ; but it was only what he had come for, the sack of horse feed ! He took it up. He flung it over his shoulder. He started incontinently to hike back. He wanted to run, and, of course, would not ; but he was being looked at—and from behind now.

Night had fallen, and up in the mountains a long howl wavered—a coyote saluting the black hours. The shivers ran again in Bill Davies' spine, and he could explain them to himself this time—not with utter conviction, however—as being caused by that unwarned and dismal cry. Any fellow feels the melancholy unpleasantness of coyotes' howls, be he lean or fat, town bred or mountain bred

He was being looked at ! No, no, he was not ! He told himself he was not—and believed that he was. Here was the meadow glimmering gray, and mighty glad he was to see it. He had never known two such unpleasant miles. There were a few stars beginning to show. Here was the meadow with a sense of openness, and here were the white faces of his horses ; here was their whinnying greeting ; and a little later there was the sound of their munching, the sound of the crackling camp fire, the sizzling bacon, and the appetising odour of it.

Across the meadow, Flannigan's light now showed. Nearer, there was another wavering light coming into being. Evidently some other teamster had outspanned there, on the way to Spring Lake from Ridge. Bill wanted lots of dancing light that night, and he flung on much wood after supper. If all the teamsters in the Rockies outspanned in the meadow at

Midway, each with his own fire, Bill Davies would welcome them. Soon he heard gentle whistling. Men advancing on another camp are wont to come with noise, a sneeze or a cough, a deliberate tramping on a fallen branch, a whistling or humming of a bar of song. Bill shaded his eyes from the firelight and stared into the darkness.

"Hello, Jim!" he cried, at hazard.

Jim Conyers roamed into view.

"Well, it's you, Bill," he said. "I guessed it would be. How you makin' out? You look lonesome," and he filled his pipe.

Bill was lonesome. He had never been so glad of a companion at the Midway camp in all his journeying through the country. He put on another can of tea for hospitality's sake—and as he was measuring out the leaves a shot rang sharply in the night.

"What's that?" snapped Jim; and, leaping up, he peered in the direction of the little sparkle and twinkle that showed where his own camp lay across the pocket.

"It was at Flannigan's," said Bill; and wondered why his voice sounded thick. But though his voice was thick, he felt he must find out what the shot meant. Both men knew that a shot from Flannigan's at this time of night was not right.

"Better go over," said Bill.

"Maybe cleanin' his gun and it loaded," said Jim. "Maybe shot himself," he added.

"Better go over," said Bill again.

They hit across the meadow to the sparkle of light in the window, and then suddenly the door of Flannigan's flung back, and there was a dancing dervish of a figure in the light, waving its hands. It was before the days when Chinks cut off their cues,

and the cue of this figure let them know that it was Flannigan's Chink, agitated, in the doorway. He seemed to be in flight, then spun round, halted, retreated back into the light; then the light was shut off abruptly; the door had closed again.

"Huh!" a perplexed grunt came from each of the men, and they strode smartly across the meadow. When they came to the old hotel they walked to the window, of one accord, walked stealthily now, and looked in. What they saw was the Chink wringing his hands on the hither side of the bar; and on the other side were two men stooping as if to lift something.

"It's a hold-up!" whispered Jim. "You ain't heefed by any chance, Billy?"

"No."

"Might run a bluff, if we do it properly, but——"

The two men who were lifting the burden were suddenly revealed as they rose, humped up.

"It's Captain Moyes!" Jim broke out.

"And the young engineer from the East that's looking at them prospects," said Bill.

They were lifting Flannigan. They raised him to the bar; they felt his heart, looked at him, looked at each other. The engineer, frowning, spoke a lot, as if hurriedly.

"We'll go in," said Bill.

They opened the door and entered—and the first thing that Bill noticed was the checkerboard lying on the floor face downward, and the men, black and white, scattered broadcast. The three living inmates swept round at their entrance. Flannigan's hotel seldom saw boys dropping in long after dark now. Twenty-five years ago it was different. Even Captain Moyes started.

"Hello, boys!" said he, recovering. "Pity you didn't come in sooner—for witnesses."

"Oh, it's clear enough," said the tall man. "Look at the way he grabbed his gun. And we have one witness in the Chinaman."

"It was the Chink I was thinking of," replied Moyes in low tones. "He might swear you did it."

"What's the racket?" asked Bill. He had a feeling that everything was going to be explained when he saw the chekerboard upside down at last, the squares hidden, the men scattered. He no longer felt that queer, haunting sense in the place.

Moyes turned to Thompson-Smith, as if expecting him to reply to Bill's question, and that gentleman said:

"It is only the end of a long job. There was a man came into this country over a year ago, and was lost sight of—my brother. I never thought we were like each other, but other people did——"

"He did," broke in Moyes, meaningfully. They all knew that "he" meant Flannigan.

"How's that?" said Conyers.

"He says that because of what happened just now," answered Smith. "You see, my brother didn't show up again, and he had no reason, that I knew, for disappearing. He wrote to me once or twice from Ridge. He was going up in the mountains prospecting. Then I never heard from him again. I came West a month or two ago to see if I could trace him. They knew of him at the assay office, in Ridge, and he had registered a claim on Palliser Creek, up there. Then I got hold of Captain Moyes. He had met my brother in the hills, and thought he could find me a location he had been doing some work in. We visited the registered claim. He hadn't been there for a long time. Then we hunted over the hills where Captain Moyes knew he had been working last year. We

found his camp, all right, and a bit of a tunnel. It looked as if he had intended to come back to it. Of course, a man might have a reason for cutting off from his family, and all old friends, a reason that his own people didn't know ; but when we saw that camp, Captain Moyes and I made sure that my brother had intended to come back to it. Of course, men do go into the hills, and never come back ; men have accidents as——"

"Plenty men have," said Moyes ; "but all the same——"

"All the same," went on Smith, "we argued from the look of that camp that he intended to come back to it. He hadn't run away from anything, I thought. That camp let me know that it was worth while making inquiries for him. Captain Moyes suggested that he got his supplies from Flannigan, not from Spring Lake. This is so much nearer, you see. His last camp was just up there," and Smith waved a hand. Bill noticed that he looked white and tired. "Anyhow, we rode down here this evening. We didn't see Flannigan——"

"Sleeping off his tanglefoot," put in Moyes.

"We had supper, and as there was nothing to do but checkers, we sat down to play. Flannigan evidently thought fit to get up for the evening, then, just half an hour ago. He came in to the bar, and—— Well, I never saw anything like it!"

"How's that?" said Bill, in a strained voice.

"Oh," answered Moyes, "he just stared at Mr. Smith, here, and then went crazy. That man was sodden with tanglefoot, only needed a shock to put him off his balance. He started cackling: 'What you doing there? What you doing there—when I not only shot you, but buried you!' Up jumps Mr. Smith at that. I thought he was done

for. Yes, sir"—he turned to Smith—"I thought you were done for when he grabbed under the bar. I knew that meant gun!"

"What happened?" Bill heard Conyers ask.

Smith inclined his head toward Moyes.

"We both jumped at him. Captain Moyes grabbed at his wrist——"

"Shot himself?" said Conyers.

Smith nodded.

"That's what!" answered Captain Moyes.

"But what I want to know is why and how he killed your brother? And what did he mean about burying him?"

The Chinaman, now calmed down, was thinking of his own skin. He came a little nearer to the group.

"I tell you," he said. "Misa Flannig' he shoot him one night because this man he kill come in and eat suppah. I give him suppah. Misa Flannig' say, 'What you dlink?' This man he kill look at him, and say nothing at all. He look at him alle same he think Mr. Flannig' lude to him. Misa Flannig' say, 'What you dlink?' again one time moah, moah lude, and this man say, 'Dlink nothing,' he say, 'when you look at me like that.' Misa Flannig' him clazy. He come round and say he bleak this man head. This man say he guess not bleak, and he jump up—all same you did. They fight. This man knock Misa Flannig' back against ba'. Misa Flannig' reach over for gun, and shoot him."

The Chinaman paused and Captain Moyes spoke hard and keen.

"Why in thunder didn't you tell the marshal?" he asked. "You've been in Melica long enough to know that, eh?"

"Oh, I scale—I scale—Misa Flannig' say if I

tell he say I shoot the man. He say he shoot me. He say if I tly to go 'way any time he follow me. He give me money evely month. I wait for Misa Flannig' die—go back China, eh?" and he smiled a sickly and terrified smile.

"That's scare, all right—to the limit," said Moyes. "Where did he bury this man you tell me about?"

"Oh, I don' know."

"Come now. Guess you helped him. Guess he scared you to help him, too."

"Yes, he scale me. He made me help cally him up on mountain side—some way along, and thlow him back from wagon load. He say: 'Now, if bymbly somebody catchum they think somebody hold him up on wagon load and shoot!'"

"Where was this then?"

"Up on hill west," answered the Chinaman. "You no allest me! You no allest me!"

Moyes and Smith looked at each other.

"If he shows us, that's all, now, I suppose," said Smith, in a heavy voice. "I expect he was terrified. Anyhow, he didn't do it."

"I show you—I show you now. I take lamp and show you—not far, two mile up, off the road, in place all same gulch."

Bill Davies wet his lips, and then looked at Conyers. Conyers did not seem to associate his experiences two miles up with this story at all.

"We'll go up in the morning," said Captain Moyes.

"I show you—and you not have me allest?" whined the Chink.

They turned from him thoughtful.

"I don't want to sleep here to-night," said Moyes.

"How about sleeping at you fellows' camp?"

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"We ain't camped together," said Billy. "You come to my camp. You come over, too, Conyers. You go and fetch your blankets. We'll all camp together." There was a note of something like sombre hilarity in his voice.

He was not "scaled," but this business was different from anything that had ever happened in his life. To Jim Conyers there might seem no association between that disposal of the murdered man and the funk of the horses up there; but to him there was. And he was further silenced over the way in which the whole thing had come out.

He was a quiet man that night, pondering two themes: First, the way the horses felt and the way he had felt up at the bend, that very night; second, the way that checkerboard had been mixed up in the affair. Had he, as well as a keen sense to the presence of that body up there, also the gift of second-sight? Did he, subconsciously, every time he saw that checkerboard, have a knowledge that through it would come the exposal? It was all too deep for him. But he felt, assuredly, that he had been mixed up not superficially, but deeply, with a side of things that could not be seen, touched, bumped into.

In the morning he did not go up with Moyes and Smith to "look see" with the Chinaman. He waited at the meadow till they and Conyers returned. And then he did not need to ask. He read it on their faces. Only when he climbed his seat to pull out for Ridge, and Conyers gathered his reins to pull out for Spring Lake, did Bill say to Jim: "Was it at the place where the horses get scared?"

"Yes," said Conyers. "Just off the road there. There's a kind of gulch back a few yards, a sudden drop. There was nothing left—the coyotes had

seen to that. Yes, sir, I guess the horses are wise to that crack there. Horses have a sense we don't have about some things, I guess. They're scared of getting off the wagon road and down that bit of precipice we can't see for bush. Never knew it was there myself."

Though Bill thought Conyers' explanation very lame, compared with his own, he did not think that Conyers was exactly fruitful soil for his nebulous theory, so he left it unspoken. But he took special note that the next time he passed the bend the horses seemed hardly to know they had arrived at the spot of their terrors. They fidgeted a little, but went on easily; and on the way back, a day or two after still, they passed, unheeding, with no shivers, no veerings at all, no signs of funk.

THE TOWERS OF ILIUM

"THERE is nothing to it," said Jimmy Browne, "but to get a move on and find some boss job, seeing they don't think me fit for any menial occupation."

He had been looking for work for six weeks in that mood, advocated by many, of "willing to do anything"—in a country where work was rumoured to be plentiful. The result was a hole in the sole of one shoe and a faint sign of a crack in the upper of the other, just a faint sign, but it spurred Jimmy to a calm and determined consideration of "chances."

He took up *The Ledger* and looked at the advertisements.

"Wanted: Foreman to oversee the erection of a line of towers for bucket tramway. Only experienced men need apply."

"What is a bucket tramway?" he wondered, for he came not from a mining neighbourhood, but from a region of oranges, tomatoes, and alfalfa. He turned to a man near by and said: "Wonderful things these bucket tramways."

The man addressed removed his cigar and expectorated in the tall brass spittoon.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess we are used to them now. Time was they used to raw-hide the ore down from the mines, but nowadays we don't think much even of the trams——" he paused and blew

smoke, and smiled drily. " You see, if things go on this way we'll be bringing ore down by flying machine ! "

Evidently the contraption was for bringing ore down from the mines. Jimmy loafed over to the table where the papers lay ; and where free papers were thrown by people every now and then—tracts by religious folk ; prospectuses of companies by their promoters, who used the table as a free advertisement hoarding ; cards of hotels in neighbouring towns. A copy of a mining journal lay there. Jimmy turned the pages over, and luck was with him. There was a reproduction of a photograph of a bucket tramway. He studied it. He saw that towers of woodwork were built up every fifty yards, here and there, along a cleared swathe through the country, and that from them wires ran—tower to tower—passing over pulleys ; and depending from the wires, by a kind of elbow, were buckets.

" I see," he mused, " all same belt—one side hauls up the empties, one side runs down the full ones."

He considered the advertisement again :—

" Wanted : Foreman to oversee the erection of a line of towers for bucket tramway. Only experienced man need apply."

He walked over to the coloured gentleman whose aim in life was to give shoes something of the same sheen that his countenance showed, sat down in the big chair, and put his feet on the rests.

" Polish 'em good, Washington Lincoln Roosevelt," he said. " Put a shine on 'em that will atone for the crack in the side there, same as a plain damsel puts a dab of powder over a wart."

And presently, with shoes like an advertisement for What-you-call-it Polish, he strolled into the office of the contractor whose advertisement had come under his notice just after he had meditated on the wisdom of aiming high. The office youth looked superciliously at him, so he produced a cigar and bit the end off.

"What do you want?" snapped the youth, with the oiled hair.

"Just you tell them I've come to take over the construction of the trestles," said Jimmy.

"Oh!"

The young man disappeared into an inner room, feeling aggrieved that things had gone so far without his being aware. In a few seconds he reappeared, with two men at his heels. They craned over his head in puzzlement, wearing mixed expressions. They seemed to be thinking of booting Jimmy out. They seemed to be thinking of asking him to step right in and run their office for them. They seemed indignant and pleased; angry and amazed. They were like men who, when flattered, know they are flattered, feel they should refuse kindness to the flatterers—and yet are tickled to death, as the saying is. One of them advanced to the counter.

"What does this mean?" he said in a rasping tone, wanting to see whether the new arrival was a jester, or serious; a leader of men, or a person who could be turned down. "We didn't make an appointment with you."

"You want a foreman for the erection of trestle towers, don't you?" asked Jimmy. "And I'm free to-day—"

"What in thunder do you mean by sending in such a message?"

"I wanted to get you out here where you are," Browne explained. "I want the job—and I guess you'll find that you want me. My names is James Browne—Jimmy Browne among the bridge-builders."

"You're a bridge-builder?"

"I'm Jimmy Browne among bridge-builders—Mr. James Browne with my employers—and The Boss with the gangs."

"Bring him in," said the man in the doorway of the room labelled "Private."

Inside was a map of the United States from ocean to ocean, with a bit of Mexico (about as far as Chihuahua) and a bit of Canada (about up to Saskatoon). Jimmy walked up to it. It was really wanderfret that lured him to the map that way. Then suddenly he saw what he was doing—remembered that he had not come here to look at a luring map—and turned round.

"What experience have you had, Mr. Browne?" asked one of the men, he who had played the part of looker-on in the preliminary talk outside, a fattish, cheery fellow, with a close-cropped moustache and grey-blue eyes.

Jimmy turned back to the map and found the places marked in yellow, indicated mining country. He put his finger on one spot, and said: "That for one." Then he happened to see a place called *Troy*—and that reminded him of his school days. He struck an idea, and swept round. It moved him—as it moved his hearers.

"It was me," said he, "that built the towers of Ilium. I'm some disappointed that you don't know my name."

The two men glanced at each other. After all, Mr. James Browne seemed to be a man who could

not be rattled easily ; they decided to give him the job—in that glance—if he was at all suitable.

“ As a matter of form,” said the lean man who had rasped at him in the outer office, an upright young man, with large mouth but thin lips that he pressed together, and kept working over a cigar that he rolled from one side of his face to the other, “ I suppose you could tell us of some contractors you’ve worked for ? ”

“ Well,” said Jimmy, “ I’ve been my own contractor ; but I know more about towers and bridges than town-lot buying, or I wouldn’t be here to-day—that’s whatever. I thought at first you knew me and were saving me the annoyance of telling you that I made my pile building bridges and towers in this country to let these real-estate sharps come in—and they came over my bridges and skinned me. Of course you are new in this section. The Towers of Ilium were my handful of aces. I guess your board will know about them. Mention the Towers of Ilium to them. That will be enough. I’m at the Occidental any time you want me.”

Now there was no board to consult at all. These two young men were fluttering into the business all on their own behalf, on the strength of a little money they had made in that precarious business that Jimmy said had “ busted ” him. One was simply a sharp-eyed American of the lean, Michigan-face variety ; the other a surveyor, who turned his hand to anything that spelt dollars. They didn’t argue much whether Jimmy was all he said ; but they had seen that he was an individual. Besides, they knew perfectly well what the Towers of Ilium were. Lee, the lean one, had pages of Marlowe by heart and when Jimmy was gone he spouted :

"Is this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

"Well, what do you think?" he asked his partner.

"Ah!" said the rotund young man. "Of course! That's the Towers of Ilium. Darn! I knew the name. It was familiar. I didn't want to give myself away. Say! He's a bluffer."

"Maybe; but he's a bluffer worth giving a show—on the strength of the Towers of Ilium," and with his lips puckered together Lee chuckled with deep laughter.

It was the old story again. Here was not a case of flattery, and the flattered one knowing he was flattered, but succumbing. Here was a case of two men seeing that they were being bluffed, but giving the bluffer a job for the sake of his bluff—offering him a chance to "make good."

They rang him up in the morning, asked him to call, and (believing as observers of humanity in his capacity to make things hum, if not in his alleged experience) with few words they told him the job was his, and asked when he would start.

"Right now," said Jimmy, "if you'll just give me details of what has already been done and let me cast an eye over your plans." That afternoon he rode out to Camp One, and found the sticks piled, and the first bunch of carpenters, sent up by Lee and Smith, through an employment agent in town, ready to start work.

"All right," he said. "Start right in," and rode on to where the next timber lay.

The bush had already been cleared, and logs lay at most of the selected stations. Half a mile farther on he came to another tent, and half

a dozen men enjoying their leisure in plunking stones at chipmunks. He rode up to one of them and said :

" You carpenters ? "

" Yap."

" Well, you'd best get right into it," said Jimmy. " I'll be back to-morrow morning, and I want to see what you can do by then."

One of them began to ask a lot of unintelligible questions. They tumbled out one after the other, but all were equally hazy to Jimmy. He sat on his cayuse and stared stonily at the speaker. Then he drawled :

" Say! Did you hire on to this job as a carpenter? And do you have the face to ask me to get off my horse and do your work for you? I'll give you a hint when I see you can do the first thing about it; but if you think I'm on this job to ride around and instruct you as if you was at a Practical Experience College, you'd better say it right now, and I'll give you your walking ticket. Get a move on. I'm going up the cañon a bit. I'll see you on the way back."

He rode on till sunset. The " shovel stiffs " had followed the " swamper " and done their work well. Jimmie could see that, by sheer common sense. He found them about twelve miles out, beside their tents and wickieups, just knocking off for the day. Their boss seemed " all right "—the kind of man who could keep a gang of Square-heads and Dagoes doing something, and doing it well.

Then he turned and rode back in the late light, to the last carpenter's camp. The " carpenters " had vamoosed, " lit out," not waiting for his return. Thoughtfully he rode back to the first camp and

found the men there at supper, but nothing done. The straw-boss advanced on Jimmy the moment he saw him. He looked as if he had a grievance against him.

"It's no good," he fired off, without so much as "good-evening"—"if you're the boss of this line you got to send me carpenters. I don't want a bunch of fellows that maybe have caulked a log shack with moss in a hard winter, and called that carpentering!"

"That's right!" said Jimmy. "I give you authority to fire everybody here."

They were near enough for the men to hear, and some of them began to demand their time-checks and swear they wouldn't be seen in such an outfit. Jimmy had been given a list of the men already sent up. He produced his little book. He took out another notebook and gave each man his "time" and waited until they had packed their blankets and were on the trot downhill.

Next day he had a string of new carpenters heading into the bush, and rode after them, later on, to find the first tower going up well. The straw-boss hailed him.

"This is better," he said. "But I don't know about the next camp. I took the pick out of the push you sent up."

Browne rode on, and when he came to Camp Two he found everybody arguing and discussing how to do things. His arrival was looked upon with joy. Several voices spoke at once. He took out his pocket-book and wrote, just as many times as there were men: "Give this man his time. N.G." tore the pages out and distributed them. One of the men, who had been sitting disgusted on a log, looking at the others, when Jimmy came, watched

all this with folded hands and expression of: "I knew it!" Jimmy looked at him now.

"Do you want to say anything, mister?" he asked.

The man smiled at this method of address.

"I do," he said, rising. "This is my business, you know. I've been trestle-working ten years. You had better send up some sure-thing carpenters, and I'll straw-boss this camp for you!"

Jimmy considered him keenly.

"All right," he said grimly. "You shall have them," and he hung around until the others had packed their blankets and were strung out on the way down hill to town again. The cook eyed them, from his tent with the stove-pipe sticking through the top.

"Well, boss," he cried, "you'd better eat here to-day. I've got twelve men's chuck half ready now." So Jimmy ate there, and did not talk shop. Dinner over he headed for town again and made up on the "fired" gang just as they were thinking of stopping to watch Camp One at work, and to growl about the outfit. The straw-boss there, Jimmy observed, gave them a cold shoulder. Browne arrived just in time to hear him say to the malcontents: "No—it ain't a hand-out place for hoboos; you're quite right!"

Jimmy passed by without comment, and, once in town, made a bee-line to the employment agent that had *not* sent up these men. They sat in council for ten minutes. At the end of that time they shook hands, the employment agent giving a small bow of admiration. And next day came out a bunch of men with carpenters' sacks in hand and blankets on shoulder—men that Jimmy, waiting for them at Camp One, knew were The Real Thing. He had

them spraddled out at once, and at work, under his straw-bosses—of whom he was quite certain.

Thereafter he spent his time watching the work, learning all that a pair of watchful eyes could. As he sat so, upon the third day of his bossing, Lee rode up with a fine overseering air—the kind of air that makes a man who knows his business do his best, and causes the man who doesn't to do something to give the game away—through sheer nervousness.

"Well, Mr. Browne," he said, "how does it go?"

"Pretty good for a start," answered Jimmy. "I haven't got the full complement of men yet. That employment agent of yours sent up a lot of *stiffs*. I'm just seeing what these new fellows can do first. The way shovel-stiffs try to get in on work they don't know the first thing about makes me tired."

"What was wrong with them? I came up to see about that wholesale firing."

The straw-boss had recently made some comment to Jimmy about "tension" and "compression," to which he had replied with a nod. Now he turned to his employer.

"Why! They didn't savvy me when I used the most ordinary expressions. Didn't know what I meant when I casually mentioned 'tension'—and I had to play dictionary to them! But when they scratched their heads over a simple statement about 'compression' I asked them plumb direct: 'Say—did you ever build anything since the day you had a box of bricks and sucked the paint off them?' This fellow is all right. I made him straw-boss. I'm just taking a look to make sure of him."

"Yes, he knows his business—and I think you

do, Mr. Browne. I think your knowledge gained in building the Towers of Ilium will stand you in good stead, and I don't need to come up again. What I want is to see these towers all up by August 30—that's the contract. Do it your own way. How many more men do you want?"

"I've just been figuring," said Jimmy. Really, he had been figuring not by any past experience, for his past experience was *nil*, but he had made a computation on the speed with which one tower went up. As he had ridden the length of the line, clear up to the mine dump, with furrowed brow and occasional pauses to calculate in his notebook, he was able to say he wanted twenty men more.

"Well, I can stand for that," said the junior partner.

It was so imperative for Jimmy to get "sure thing" men that he went into town in person to see the employment agent again, and impressed upon him that he wanted twenty more men who would run no bluff or *guess* they could do it. They had to be *IT*.

When the twenty came up Browne met them and told them to go in and eat lunch, and after that get up to the top of the next grade and "start right in." But he did not follow them that day. He delayed till next morning, and then came riding slowly up, and sat looking at them without a word, then drew out his pocket-book, and wrote on five pages: "Give this man his time—N.G. Jimmy Browne," said: "Hey—you!" very quietly, here, there, yonder, and distributed his five papers. He was grim and silent as a railway magnate reading *The Man with the Hoe*.

Then he rode into town again, and saw the agent once more, and talked very quietly and

forcefully. Next day one man came up and set to work, instead of five altogether. The following day another man arrived; the day after, two. The next morning, one walked in. Jimmy argued that the agent was doing the sifting in town, instead of trying to get as many fifty cents as possible from any man at all who came along and said he was a carpenter.

He saw now that he had Carpenters—with a capital—and fewer than his employer said he could “stand for.” He made some more calculations in his little black book, and that very evening sat on a hillock above the main camp-tent with his most reliable straw-boss, chatting quietly. He had been calculating his own wages and considering it would be worth while, out of his ten dollars a day, to allow fifty cents a day each to the four straw-bosses he had now appointed, if they could see to it that the towers were up, and “up good,” as the phrase is, by August 14. He had what is called a “heart-to-heart” talk with these men, each alone.

“I’m going to give you straight goods,” he said to them, “and my confidence. It is up to me to show what can be done here, and if these towers are up by the 14th, I’ll give you, in addition to your wages, fifty cents a day extra, over all the time of the job. There’s a proposition. Can you do it?”

They reckoned they could—to oblige him. He said he would be obliged. He explained that he was in the running for another job of the same kind after this was “through,” and it was worth that small outlay, by way of incentive, to show what he could do on this little piece of work.

It astonished him somewhat that neither of his employees troubled to come up again. Occasional

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notes came to him from them, regarding commissariat; and he consulted the cooks and responded that all was going well.

"We're feeding them good, Mr. Browne," he read in one note. "You get the rest out of them. You can't say we didn't give you every show to make good."

Another note, later on, when there was sign that soon half the gang could be paid off, was: "Dear Mr. Browne,—Thanks for your note on progress. Keep it at that. Remember the Towers of Ilium."

This Jimmy read twice and smiled.

"By heck!" he mused. "I believe they know."

He rode from tower to tower looking on, sitting with puckered lips. He knew he had good men—for his arrival never made one of them accelerate speed. They were working at a steady plod all the way along. They were "sure thing" carpenters, and he knew they were.

On July 31 Jimmy had the sad duty of telling the straw-bosses that they could tell half the men that that would do, as the work was so far on that they would only crowd now.

"I guess they know that," was the reply.

He left it to them to talk over the gangs and decide on who should go, who remain. In the evening he turned out to give time-checks to those who had been laid off. He sent them off with kindly words—a brief comment of: "Any time you want a reference, say you were in on this contract, boys."

They smiled and answered: "That's what! So-long boss."

"You don't need to rush," he said. "Tell the cook to put you all up a lunch for the trail down. Cook!"

"Yap?"

"You might make up lunch for all this push that quit to-day."

"All right, boss."

They departed to town, and next morning the junior partner rode up. There was a twinkle in his eyes for sign of intense hilarity, as he reined up beside Jimmy.

"I paid off that bunch this morning," he said.

"I hear they are to draw lots at the Occidental."

"Draw lots?"

"Yes—wasn't it your idea?"

"I don't tumble."

"They seem kind of dark about it themselves. But they say around town that there was a jack-pot for them if they speeded up."

Jimmy smiled.

"I guess that's the straw-bosses' idea," said he.

Evidently they had conspired together to set apart a proportion of their fifty cents per day perquisite, wherewith to appeal to the sporting instinct of the workers. Too small a sum, maybe, to divide, it would yet be pleasant enough purse for each to look forward to speculatively. A day or two less to their names, for stipulated day's wage, in the time-keeper's books, would be a trifling consideration compared with the fun of hoping to be the winner of the celerity sweepstake—and perchance having the hope crowned. Wherefore—speed her up! That the lucky winner of the "jack-pot" might, or might not, "blow it in" on the crowd, as unearned increment, on spirituous liquors and cigars, is another matter, and maybe irrelevant to the story.

Messrs. Lee and Smith had their own surmise as to why Jimmy Browne should believe that his

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lieutenants had evolved that "idea." But they let the subject drop. Results, not methods, interested them at the moment.

"There's nothing to be gained by rubber-necking at these fellows," said the junior partner. "Let us lope along."

On August 31 Jimmy sat in the private room, smoking a large cigar. His two employers looked very happy. After a little chat over the work there fell a silence, and then the lean-faced man remarked: "We got a bonus on the job, Mr. Browne. We got a thousand dollars for putting her in a month ahead of time."

"A month ahead? You told me August 30 was the final date," said Jimmy.

"Do you think you're the only bluffer in Idaho?" asked Lee. "That was safer. September 14 was the date. We told you August 30, and you made it August 14. Here's five hundred dollars to you, and your last month's pay," and he pushed an envelope over.

"Thank you," said Jimmy. "Say! This is very white of you. I don't mind telling you that I gave two dollars a day out of my ten to the four straw-bosses to hustle the job. This'll put me square again. Say!" he broke out, "I didn't know the first thing about it myself. I had to have men who did, and it struck me, after I got my hand in, I might as well make a record for time as well as workmanship."

The two partners looked at each other.

"This is the Towers of Ilium skinned, I guess, for speed," said Smith, grinning like a cherub. Lee chuckled.

"Can you tell me?" said Jimmy. "The name

came into my head somehow when I saw *Troy* on the map, but I can't recollect clear—can you tell me where and what was the Towers of Ilium anyhow ? ”

The two young men who had given the bluffer a chance to “ make good ” sat back and laughed, deep and hearty.

And Jimmy bosses their contracts for them still.

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