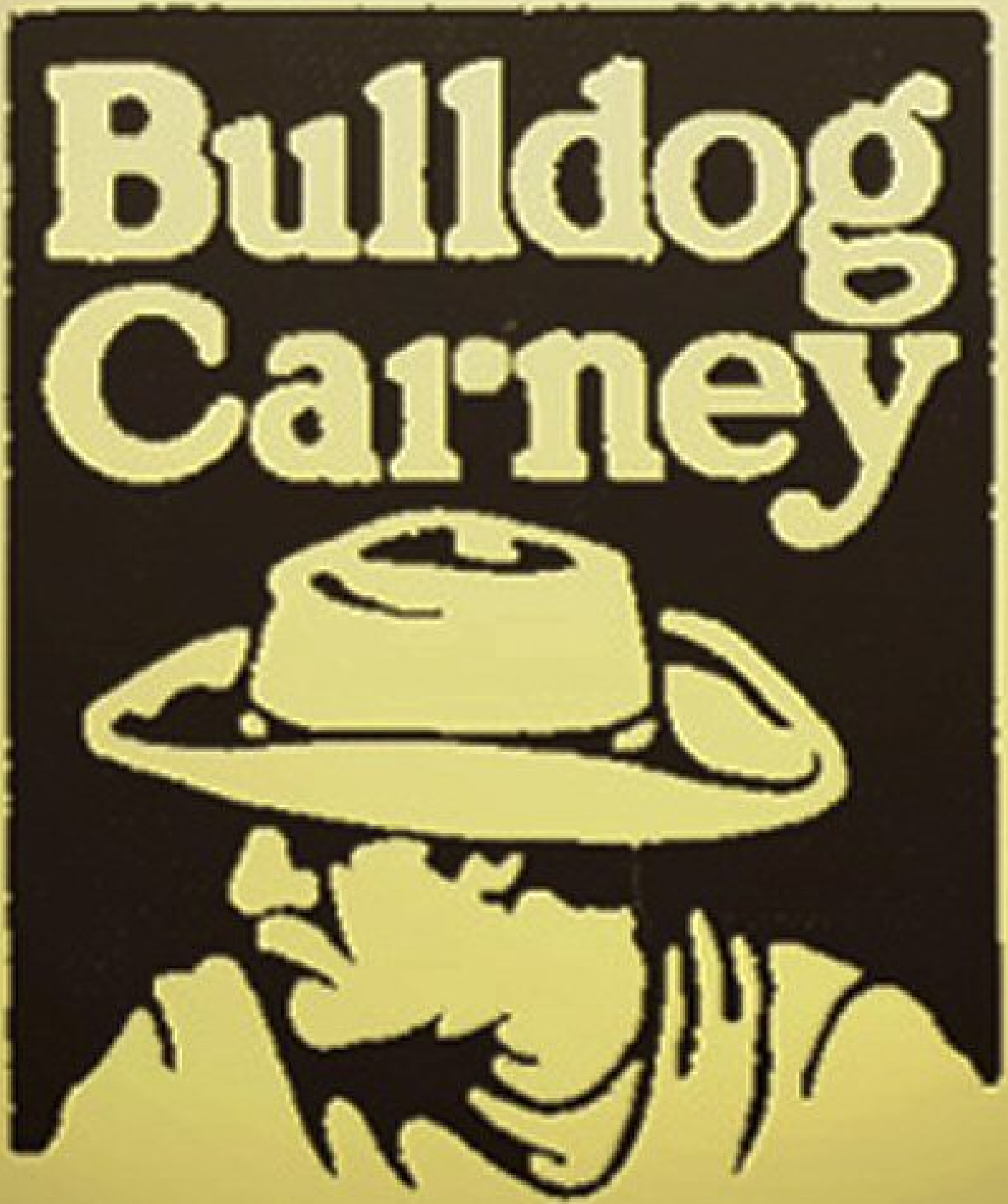
Bulldog Carney



W. A. Fraser

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I'VE thought it over many ways and I'm going to tell this story as it happened, for I believe the reader will feel he is getting a true picture of things as they were but will not be again. A little padding up of the love interest, a little spilling of blood, would, perhaps, make it stronger technically, but would it lessen his faith that the curious thing happened? It's beyond me to know--I write it as it was.

To begin at the beginning, Cameron was peeved. He was rather a diffident chap, never merging harmoniously into the western atmosphere; what saved him from rude knocks was the fact that he was lean of speech. He stood on the board sidewalk in front of the Alberta Hotel and gazed dejectedly across a trench of black mud that represented the main street. He hated the sight of squalid, ramshackle Edmonton, but still more did he dislike the turmoil that was within the hotel.

A lean-faced man, with small piercing gray eyes, had ridden his buckskin cayuse into the bar and was buying. Nagel's furtrading men, topping off their spree in town before the long trip to Great Slave Lake, were enthusiastically, vociferously naming their tipple. A freighter, Billy the Piper, was playing the "Arkansaw Traveller" on a tin whistle.

When the gray-eyed man on the buckskin pushed his way into the bar, the whistle had almost clattered to the floor from the piper's hand; then he gasped, so low that no one heard him, "By cripes! Bulldog Carney!" There was apprehension trembling in his hushed

voice. Well he knew that if he had clarioned the name something would have happened Billy the Piper. A quick furtive look darting over the faces of his companions told him that no one else had recognized the horseman.

Outside, Cameron, irritated by the rasping tin whistle groaned, "My God! a land of bums!" Three days he had waited to pick up a man to replace a member of his gang down at Fort Victor who had taken a sudden chill through intercepting a plug of cold lead.

Diagonally across the lane of ooze two men waded and clambered to the board sidewalk just beside Cameron to stamp the muck from their boots. One of the two, Cayuse Gray, spoke:

"This feller'll pull his freight with you, boss, if terms is right; he's a hell of a worker."

Half turning, Cameron's Scotch eyes took keen cognizance of the "feller": a shudder twitched his shoulders. He had never seen a more wolfish face set atop a man's neck. It was a sinister face; not the thin, vulpine sneak visage of a thief, but lowering; black sullen eyes peered boldly up from under shaggy brows that almost met a mop of black hair, the forehead was so low. It was a hungry face, as if its owner had a standing account against the world. But Cameron wanted a strong worker, and his business instinct found strength and endurance in that heavy-shouldered frame, and strong, wide-set legs.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Jack Wolf," the man answered.

The questioner shivered; it was as if the speaker had named the thought that was in his mind.

Cayuse Gray tongued a chew of tobacco into his cheek, spat, and added, "Jack the Wolf is what he gets most oftenest."

"From damn broncho-headed fools," Wolf retorted angrily.

At that instant a strangling Salvation Army band tramped around the corner into Jasper Avenue, and, forming a circle, cut loose with brass and tambourine. As the wail from the instruments went up the men in the bar, led by Billy the Piper, swarmed out.

A half-breed roared out a profane parody on the Salvation hymn:--

"There are flies on you, and there're flies on me,
But there ain't no flies on Je-e-e-sus."

This crude humor appealed to the men who had issued from the bar; they shouted in delight.

A girl who had started forward with her tambourine to collect stood aghast at the profanity, her blue eyes wide in horror.

The breed broke into a drunken laugh: "That's damn fine new songs for de Army bums, Miss," he jeered.

The buckskin cayuse, whose mouse-colored muzzle had been sticking through the door, now pushed to the sidewalk, and his rider, stooping his lithe figure, took the right ear of the breed in lean bony fingers with a grip that suggested he was squeezing a lemon. "You dirty swine!" he snarled; "you're insulting the two greatest things on earth--God and a woman. Apologize, you hound!"

Probably the breed would have capitulated readily, but his river-mates' ears were not in a death grip, and they were bellicose with bad liquor. There was an angry yell of defiance; events moved with alacrity. Profanity, the passionate profanity of anger, smote the air; a

beer bottle hurtled through the open door, missed its mark,--the man on the buckskin,--but, end on, found a bull's-eye between the Wolf's shoulder blades, and that gentleman dove parabolically into the black mud of Jasper Avenue.

A silence smote the Salvation Army band. Like the Arab it folded its instruments and stole away.

A Mounted Policeman, attracted by the clamour, reined his horse to the sidewalk to quiet with a few words of admonition this bar-room row. He slipped from the saddle; but at the second step forward he checked as the thin face of the horseman turned and the steel-gray eyes met his own. "Get down off that cayuse, Bulldog Carney,--I want you!" he commanded in sharp clicking tones.

Happenings followed this. There was the bark of a 6-gun, a flash, the Policeman's horse jerked his head spasmodically, a little jet of red spurted from his forehead, and he collapsed, his knees burrowing into the black mud and as the buckskin cleared the sidewalk in a leap, the half-breed, two steel-like fingers in his shirt band, was swung behind the rider.

With a spring like a panther the policeman reached his fallen horse, but as he swung his gun from its holster he held it poised silent; to shoot was to kill the breed.

Fifty yards down the street Carney dumped his burden into a deep puddle, and with a ringing cry of defiance sped away. Half-a-dozen guns were out and barking vainly after the escaping man.

Carney cut down the bush-road that wound its sinuous way to the river flat, some two hundred feet below the town level. The ferry, swinging from the steel hawser, that stretched across the river, was snuggling the bank.

"Some luck," the rider of the buckskin chuckled. To the ferryman he said in a crisp voice: "Cut her out; I'm in a hurry!"

The ferryman grinned. "For one passenger, eh? Might you happen to be the Gov'nor General, by any chanct?"

Carney's handy gun held its ominous eye on the boatman, and its owner answered, "I happen to be a man in a hell of a hurry. If you want to travel with me get busy."

The thin lips of the speaker had puckered till they resembled a slit in a dried orange. The small gray eyes were barely discernible between the half-closed lids; there was something devilish compelling in that lean parchment face; it told of demoniac concentration in the brain behind.

The ferryman knew. With a pole he swung the stern of the flat barge down stream, the iron pulleys on the cable whined a screeching protest, the hawsers creaked, the swift current wedged against the tangented side of the ferry, and swiftly Bulldog Carney and his buckskin were shot across the muddy old Saskatchewan.

On the other side he handed the boatman a five-dollar bill, and with a grim smile said: "Take a little stroll with me to the top of the hill; there's some drunken bums across there whose company I don't want."

At the top of the south bank Carney mounted his buckskin and Melted away into the poplar-covered landscape; stepped out of the story for the time being.

Back at the Alberta the general assembly was rearranging itself. The Mounted Policeman, now set afoot by the death of his horse, had hurried down to the barracks to report; possibly to follow up Carney's

trail with a new mount.

The half-breed had come back from the puddle a thing of black ooze and profanity.

Jack the Wolf, having dug the mud from his eyes, and ears, and neck band, was in the hotel making terms with Cameron for the summer's work at Fort Victor.

Billy the Piper was revealing intimate history of Bulldog Carney. From said narrative it appeared that Bulldog was as humorous a bandit as ever slit a throat. Billy had freighted whisky for Carney when that gentleman was king of the booze runners.

"Why didn't you spill the beans, Billy?" Nagel queried; "there's a thousand on Carney's head all the time. We'd 've tied him horn and hoof and cropped the dough."

"Dif'rent here," the Piper growled; "I've saw a man flick his gun and pot at Carney when Bulldog told him to throw up his hands, and all that cuss did was laugh and thrown his own gun up coverin' the other broncho; but it was enough--the other guy's hands went up too quick. If I'd set the pack on him, havin' so to speak no just cause, well, Nagel, you'd been lookin' round for another freighter. He's the queerest cuss I ever stacked up agen. It kinder seems as if jokes is his religion; an' when he's out to play he's plumb hostile. Don't monkey none with his game, is my advice to you fellers."

Nagel stepped to the door, thrust his swarthy face though it, and, seeing that the policeman had gone, came back to the bar and said: "Boys, the drinks is on me cause I see a man, a real man."

He poured whisky into a glass and waited with it held high till the others had done likewise; then he said in a voice that vibrated with

admiration:

"Here's to Bulldog Carney! Gad, I love a man! When that damn trooper calls him, what does he do? You or me would 've quit cold or plugged Mister Khaki-jacket--we'd had to. Not so Bulldog. He thinks with his nut, and both hands, and both feet; I don't need to tell you boys what happened; you see it, and it were done pretty. Here's to Bulldog Carney!" Nagel held his hand out to the Piper: "Shake, Billy. If you'd give that cuss away I'd 've kicked you into kingdom come, knowin' him as I do now."

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The population of Fort Victor, drawing the color line, was four people: the Hudson's Bay Factor, a missionary minister and his wife, and a school teacher, Lucy Black. Half-breeds and Indians came and went, constituting a floating population; Cameron and his men were temporary citizens.

Lucy Black was lathy of construction, several years past her girlhood, and not an animated girl. She was a professional religionist. If there were seeming voids in her life they were filled with this dominating passion of moral reclamation; if she worked without enthusiasm she made up for it in insistent persistence. It was as if a diluted strain of the old Inquisition had percolated down through the blood of centuries and found a subdued existence in this pale-haired, blue-eyed woman.

When Cameron brought Jack the Wolf to Fort Victor it was evident to the little teacher that he was morally an Augean stable: a man who wandered in mental darkness; his soul was dying for want of spiritual nourishment.

On the seventy-mile ride in the Red River buckboard from Edmonton

to Fort Victor the morose wolf had punctuated every remark with virile oaths, their original angularity suggesting that his meditative moments were spent in coining appropriate expressions for his perfervid view of life. Twice Cameron's blood had surged hot as the Wolf, at some trifling perversity of the horses, had struck viciously.

Perhaps it was the very soullessness of the Wolf that roused the religious fanaticism of the little school teacher; or perhaps it was that strange contrariness in nature that causes the widely divergent to lean eachotherward. At any rate a miracle grew in Fort Victor. Jack the Wolf and the little teacher strolled together in the evening as the great sun swept down over the rolling prairie to the west; and sometimes the full-faced moon, topping the poplar bluffs to the east, found Jack slouching at Lucy's feet while she, sitting on a camp stool, talked Bible to him.

At first Cameron rubbed his eyes as if his Scotch vision had somehow gone agley; but, gradually, whatever incongruity had manifested at first died away.

As a worker Wolf was wonderful; his thirst for toil was like his thirst for moral betterment--insatiable. The missionary in a chat with Cameron explained it very succinctly: "Wolf, like many other Westerners, had never had a chance to know the difference between right and wrong; but the One who missed not the sparrow's fall had led him to the port of salvation, Fort Victor--Glory to God! The poor fellow's very wickedness was but the result of neglect. Lucy was the worker in the Lord's vineyard who had been chosen to lead this man into a better life.

It did seem very simple, very all right. Tough characters were always being saved all over the world--regenerated, metamorphosed, and who was Jack the Wolf that he should be excluded from salvation.

At any rate Cameron's survey gang, vitalized by the abnormal energy of Wolf, became a high-powered machine.

The half-breeds, when couraged by bad liquor, shed their religion and became barbaric, vulgarly vicious. The missionary had always waited until this condition had passed, then remonstrance and a gift of bacon with, perhaps, a bag of flour, had brought repentance. This method Jack the Wolf declared was all wrong; the breeds were like traindogs, he affirmed, and should be taught respect for God's agents in a proper muscular manner. So the first time three French half-breeds, enthusiastically drunk, invaded the little log schoolhouse and declared school was out, sending the teacher home with tears of shame in her blue eyes, Jack reestablished the dignity of the church by generously walloping the three backsliders.

It is wonderful how the solitude of waste places will blossom the most ordinary woman into a flower of delight to the masculine eye; and the lean, anaemic, scrawny-haired school teacher had held as admirers all of Cameron's gang, and one Sergeant Heath of the Mounted Police whom she had known in the Klondike, and who had lately come to Edmonton. With her negative nature she had appreciated them pretty much equally; but when the business of salvaging this prairie derelict came to hand the others were practically ignored.

For two months Fort Victor was thus; the Wolf always the willing worker and well on the way, seemingly, to redemption.

Cameron's foreman, Bill Slade, a much-whiskered, wise old man, was the only one of little faith. Once he said to Cameron: "I don't like it none too much; it takes no end of worry to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; Jack has blossomed too quick; he's a booze fighter, and that kind always laps up mental stimulants to keep the blue devils away."

"You're doing the lad an injustice, I think," Cameron said. "I was prejudiced myself at first."

Slade pulled a heavy hand three times down his big beard, spat a shaft of tobacco juice, took his hat off, straightened out a couple of dents in it, and put it back on his head:

"You best stick to that prejudice feeling, Boss--first guesses about a feller most gener'ly pans out pretty fair. And I'd keep an eye kinder skinned if you have any fuss with Jack; I see him look at you once or twice when you corrected his way of doin' things."

Cameron laughed.

"'Tain't no laughin' matter, Boss. When a feller's been used to cussin' like hell he can't keep healthy bottlin' it up. And all that dirtiness that's in the Wolf 'll bust out some day same's you touched a match to a tin of powder; he'll throw back."

"There's nobody to worry about except the little school teacher," Cameron said meditatively.

This time it was Slade who chuckled. "The schoolmam's as safe as houses. She ain't got a pint of red blood in 'em blue veins of hers, 'tain't nothin' but vinegar. Jack's just tryin' to sober up on her religion, that's all; it kind of makes him forget horse stealin' an' such while he makes a stake workin' here."

Then one morning Jack had passed into perihelion.

Cameron took his double-barreled shot gun, meaning to pick up some prairie chicken while he was out looking over his men's work. As he passed the shack where his men bunked he noticed the door open. This was careless, for train dogs were always prowling about for just such a chance for loot. He stepped through the door and took

a peep into the other room. There sat the Wolf at a pine table playing solitaire.

"What's the matter?" the Scotchman asked.

"I've quit," the Wolf answered surlily.

"Quit?" Cameron queried. "The gang can't carry on without a chain man."

"I don't care a damn. It don't make no dif'rence to me. I'm sick of that tough bunch--swearin' and cussin', and tellin' smutty stories all day; a man can't keep decent in that outfit."

"Ma God!" Startled by this, Cameron harked back to his most expressive Scotch.

"You needn't swear 'bout it, Boss; you yourself ain't never give me no square deal; you've treated me like a breed."

This palpable lie fired Cameron's Scotch blood; also the malignant look that Slade had seen was now in the wolfish eyes. It was a murder look, enhanced by the hypocritical attitude Jack had taken.

"You're a scoundrel!" Cameron blurted; "I wouldn't keep you on the work. The sooner Fort Victor is shut of you the better for all hands, especially the women folks. You're a scoundrel."

Jack sprang to his feet; his hand went back to a hip pocket; but his blazing wolfish eyes were looking into the muzzle of the double-barrel gun that Cameron had swung straight from his hip, both fingers on the triggers.

"Put your hands flat on the table, you blackguard," Cameron commanded. "If I weren't a married man I'd blow the top of your head

off; you're no good on earth; you'd be better dead, but my wife would worry because I did the deed."

The Wolf's empty hand had come forward and was placed, palm downward, on the table.

"Now, you hound, you're just a bluffer. I'll show you what I think of you. I'm going to turn my back, walk out, and send a breed up to Fort Saskatchewan for a policeman to gather you in."

Cameron dropped the muzzle of his gun, turned on his heel and started out.

"Come back and settle with me," the Wolf demanded.

"I'll settle with you in jail, you blackguard!" Cameron threw over his shoulder, stalking on.

Plodding along, not without nervous twitchings of apprehension, the Scotchman heard behind him the voice of the Wolf saying. "Don't do that, Mr. Cameron; I flew off the handle and so did you, but I didn't mean nothin'."

Cameron, ignoring the Wolf's plea, went along to his shack and wrote a note, the ugly visage of the Wolf hovering at the open door. He was humbled, beaten. Gun-play in Montana, where the Wolf had left a bad record, was one thing, but with a cordon of Mounted Police between him and the border it was a different matter; also he was wanted for a more serious crime than a threat to shoot, and once in the toils this might crop up. So he pleaded. But Cameron was obdurate; the Wolf had no right to stick up his work and quit at a moment's notice.

Then Jack had an inspiration. He brought Lucy Black. Like woman of all time her faith having been given she stood pat, a flush rouging her

bleached cheeks as, earnest in her mission, she pleaded for the "wayward boy," as she euphemistically designated this coyote. Cameron was to let him go to lead the better life; thrown into the pen of the police barracks, among bad characters, he would become contaminated. The police had always persecuted her Jack.

Cameron mentally exclaimed again, "Ma God!" as he saw tears in the neutral blue-tinted eyes. Indeed it was time that the Wolf sought a new runway. He had a curious Scotch reverence for women, and was almost reconciled to the loss of a man over the breaking up of this situation.

Jack was paid the wages due; but at his request for a horse to take him back to Edmonton the Scotchman laughed. "I'm not making presents of horses to-day," he said; "and I'll take good care that nobody else here is shy a horse when you go, Jack. You'll take the hoof express it's good enough for you."

So the Wolf tramped out of Fort Victor with a pack slung over his shoulder; and the next day Sergeant Heath swung into town looking very debonaire in his khaki, sitting atop the bright blood-bay police horse.

He hunted up Cameron, saying: "You've a man here that I want--Jack Wolf. They've found his prospecting partner dead up on the Smoky River, with a bullet hole in the back of his head. We want Jack at Edmonton to explain."

"He's gone."

"Gone! When?"

"Yesterday."

The Sergeant stared helplessly at the Scotchman.

A light dawned upon Cameron. "Did you, by any chance, send word that you were coming?" he asked.

"I'll be back, mister," and Heath darted from the shack, swung to his saddle, and galloped toward the little log school house.

Cameron waited. In half an hour the Sergeant was back, a troubled look in his face.

"I'll tell you," he said dejectedly, "women are hell; they ought to be interned when there's business on."

"The little school teacher?"

"The little fool!"

"You trusted her and wrote you were coming, eh?"

"I did."

"Then, my friend, I'm afraid you were the foolish one."

"How was I to know that rustler had been 'making bad medicine'--had put the evil eye on Lucy? Gad, man, she's plumb locoed; she stuck up for him; spun me the most glimmering tale--she's got a dime novel skinned four ways of the pack. According to her the police stood in with Bulldog Carney on a train holdup, and made this poor innocent lamb the goat. They persecuted him, and he had to flee. Now he's given his heart to God, and has gone away to buy a ranch and send for Lucy, where the two of them are to live happy ever after."

"Ma God!" the Scotchman cried with vehemence.

"That bean-headed affair in calico gave him five hundred she's pinched up against her chest for years."

Cameron gasped and stared blankly; even his reverent exclamatory standby seemed inadequate.

"What time yesterday did the Wolf pull out?" the Sergeant asked.

"About three o'clock."

"Afoot?"

"Yes."

"He'll rustle a cayuse the first chance he gets, but if he stays afoot he'll hit Edmonton to-night, seventy miles."

"To catch the morning train for Calgary," Cameron suggested.

"You don't know the Wolf, Boss; he's got his namesake of the forest skinned to death when it comes to covering up his trail--no train for him now that he knows I'm on his track; he'll just touch civilization for grub till he makes the border for Montana. I've got to get him. If you'll stake me to a fill-up of bacon and a chew of oats for the horse I'll eat and pull out."

In an hour Sergeant Heath shook hands with Cameron saying: "If you'll just not say a word about how that cuss got the message I'll be much obliged. It would break me if it dribbled to headquarters."

Then he rode down the ribbon of roadway that wound to the river bed, forded the old Saskatchewan that was at its summer depth, mounted the south bank and disappeared.

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When Jack the Wolf left Fort Victor he headed straight for a little log shack, across the river, where Descoign, a French half-breed, lived. The family was away berry picking, and Jack twisted a rope into an Indian bridle and borrowed a cayuse from the log corral. The cayuse was some devil, and that evening, thirty miles south, he chewed loose the rope hobble on his two front feet, and left the Wolf afoot.

Luck set in against Jack just there, for he found no more borrowable horses till he came to where the trail forked ten miles short of Fort Saskatchewan. To the right, running southwest, lay the well beaten trail that passed through Fort Saskatchewan to cross the river and on to Edmonton. The trail that switched to the left, running southeast, was the old, now rarely-used one that stretched away hundreds of miles to Winnipeg.

The Wolf was a veritable Indian in his slow cunning; a gambler where money was the stake, but where his freedom, perhaps his life, was involved he could wait, and wait, and play the game more than safe. The Winnipeg trail would be deserted--Jack knew that; a man could travel it the round of the clock and meet nobody, most like. Seventy miles beyond he could leave it, and heading due west, strike the Calgary railroad and board a train at some small station. No notice would be taken of him, for trappers, prospectors, men from distant ranches, morose, untalkative men, were always drifting toward the rails, coming up out of the silent solitudes of the wastes, unquestioned and unquestioning.

The Wolf knew that he would be followed; he knew that Sergeant Heath would pull out on his trail and follow relentlessly, seeking the glory of capturing his man single-handed. That was the esprit de corps of these riders of the prairies, and Heath was, par excellence, large in conceit.

A sinister sneer lifted the upper lip of the trailing man until his strong teeth glistened like veritable wolf fangs. He had full confidence in his ability to outguess Sergeant Heath or any other Mounted Policeman.

He had stopped at the fork of the trail long enough to light his pipe, looking down the Fort Saskatchewan-Edmonton road thinking. He knew the old Winnipeg trail ran approximately ten or twelve miles east of the railroad south for a hundred miles or more; where it crossed a trail running into Red Deer, half-way between Edmonton and Calgary, it was about ten miles east of that town.

He swung his blanket pack to his back and stepped blithely along the Edmonton chocolate-colored highway muttering: "You red-coated snobs, you're waiting for Jack. A nice baited trap. And behind, herding me in, my brave Sergeant. Well, I'm coming."

Where there was a matrix of black mud he took care to leave a footprint; where there was dust he walked in it, in one or the other of the ever persisting two furrow-like paths that had been worn through the strong prairie turf by the hammering hoofs of two horses abreast, and grinding wheels of wagon and buckboard. For two miles he followed the trail till he sighted a shack with a man chopping in the front yard. Here the Wolf went in and begged some matches and a drink of milk; incidentally he asked how far it was to Edmonton. Then he went back to the trail--still toward Edmonton. The Wolf had plenty of matches, and he didn't need the milk, but the man would tell Sergeant Heath when he came along of the one he had seen heading for Edmonton.

For a quarter of a mile Jack walked on the turf beside the road, twice putting down a foot in the dust to make a print; then he walked on the road for a short distance and again took to the turf. He saw a rig coming from behind, and popped into a cover of poplar bushes until

it had passed. Then he went back to the road and left prints of his feet in the black soft dust, that would indicate that he had climbed into a waggon here from behind. This accomplished he turned east across the prairie, reaching the old Winnipeg trail, a mile away; then he turned south.

At noon he came to a little lake and ate his bacon raw, not risking the smoke of a fire; then on in that tireless Indian plod--toes in, and head hung forward, that is so easy on the working joints--hour after hour; it was not a walk, it was more like the dog-trot of a cayuse, easy springing short steps, always on the balls of his wide strong feet.

At five he ate again, then on. He travelled till midnight, the shadowy gloom having blurred his path at ten o'clock. Then he slept in a thick clump of saskatoon bushes.

At three it was daylight, and screened as he was and thirsting for his drink of hot tea, he built a small fire and brewed the inspiring beverage. On forked sticks he broiled some bacon; then on again.

All day he travelled. In the afternoon elation began to creep into his veins; he was well past Edmonton now. At night he would take the dipper on his right hand and cut across the prairie straight west; by morning he would reach steel; the train leaving Edmonton would come along about ten, and he would be in Calgary that night. Then he could go east, or west, or south to the Montana border by rail. Heath would go on to Edmonton; the police would spend two or three days searching all the shacks and Indian and half-breed camps, and they would watch the daily outgoing train.

There was one chance that they might wire Calgary to look out for him; but there was no course open without some risk of capture; he was up against that possibility. It was a gamble, and he was playing his hand the best he knew how. Even approaching Calgary he would

swing from the train on some grade, and work his way into town at night to a shack where Montana Dick lived. Dick would know what was doing.

Toward evening the trail gradually swung to the east skirting muskeg country. At first the Wolf took little notice of the angle of detour; he was thankful he followed a trail, for trails never led one into impassable country; the muskeg would run out and the trail swing west again. But for two hours he plugged along, quickening his pace, for he realized now that he was covering miles which had to be made up when he swung west again.

Perhaps it was the depressing continuance of the desolate muskeg through which the shadowy figures of startled hares darted that cast the tiring man into foreboding. Into his furtive mind crept a suspicion that he was being trailed. So insidiously had this dread birthed that at first it was simply worry, a feeling as if the tremendous void of the prairie was closing in on him, that now and then a white boulder ahead was a crouching wolf. He shivered, shook his wide shoulders and cursed. It was that he was tiring, perhaps.

Then suddenly the thing took form, mental form--something was on his trail. This primitive creature was like an Indian--gifted with the sixth sense that knows when somebody is coming though he may be a day's march away; the mental wireless that animals possess. He tried to laugh it off; to dissipate the unrest with blasphemy; but it wouldn't down.

The prairie was like a huge platter, everything stood out against the luminous evening sky like the sails of a ship at sea. If it were Heath trailing, and that man saw him, he would never reach the railroad. His footprints lay along the trail, for it was hard going on the heavily-grassed turf. To cut across the muskeg that stretched for miles would trap him. In the morning light the Sergeant would discover that his

tracks had disappeared, and would know just where he had gone. Being mounted the Sergeant would soon make up for the few hours of darkness would reach the railway and wire down the line.

The Wolf plodded on for half a mile, then he left the trail where the ground was rolling, cut east for five hundred yards, and circled back. On the top of a cut-bank that was fringed with wolf willow he crouched to watch. The sun had slipped through purple clouds, and dropping below them into a sea of greenish-yellow space, had bathed in blood the whole mass of tesselated vapour; suddenly outlined against this glorious background a horse and man silhouetted, the stiff erect seat in the saddle, the docked tail of the horse, square cut at the hocks, told the watcher that it was a policeman.

When the rider had passed the Wolf trailed him, keeping east of the road where his visibility was low against the darkening side of the vast dome. Half a mile beyond where the Wolf had turned, the Sergeant stopped, dismounted, and, leading the horse, with head low hung searched the trail for the tracks that had now disappeared. Approaching night, creeping first over the prairie, had blurred it into a gigantic rug of sombre hue. The trail was like a softened stripe; footprints might be there, merged into the pattern till they were indiscernible.

A small oval lake showed in the edge of the muskeg beside the trail, its sides festooned by strong-growing blue-joint, wild oats, wolf willow, saskatoon bushes, and silver-leafed poplar. Ducks, startled from their nests, floating nests built of interwoven rush leaves and grass, rose in circling flights, uttering plaintive rebukes. Three giant sandhill cranes flopped their sail-like wings, folded their long spindle shanks straight out behind, and soared away like kites.

Crouched back beside the trail the Wolf watched and waited. He

knew what the Sergeant would do; having lost the trail of his quarry he would camp there, beside good water, tether his horse to the picket-pin by the hackamore rope, eat, and sleep till daylight, which would come about three o'clock; then he would cast about for the Wolf's tracks, gallop along the southern trail, and when he did not pick them up would surmise that Jack had cut across the muskeg land; then he would round the southern end of the swamp and head for the railway.

"I must get him," the Wolf muttered mercilessly; "gentle him if I can, if not--get him."

He saw the Sergeant unsaddle his horse, picket him, and eat a cold meal; this rather than beacon his presence by a glimmering fire.

The Wolf, belly to earth, wormed closer, slithering over the gillardias, crunching their yellow blooms beneath his evil body, his revolver held between his strong teeth as his grimy paws felt the ground for twigs that might crack.

If the Sergeant would unbuckle his revolver belt, and perhaps go down to the water for a drink, or even to the horse that was at the far end of the picket line, his nose buried deep in the succulent wild-pea vine, then the Wolf would rush his man, and the Sergeant, disarmed, would throw up his hands.

The Wolf did not want on his head the death of a Mounted Policeman, for then the "Redcoats" would trail him to all corners of the earth. All his life there would be someone on his trail. It was too big a price. Even if the murder thought had been paramount, in that dim light the first shot meant not overmuch.

So Jack waited. Once the horse threw up his head, cocked his ears fretfully, and stood like a bronze statue; then he blew a breath of

discontent through his spread nostrils, and again buried his muzzle in the pea vine and sweet-grass.

Heath had seen this movement of the horse and ceased cutting at the plug of tobacco with which he was filling his pipe; he stood up, and searched with his eyes the mysterious gloomed prairie.

The Wolf, flat to earth, scarce breathed.

The Sergeant snuffed out the match hidden in his cupped hands over the bowl, put the pipe in his pocket, and, revolver in hand, walked in a narrow circle; slowly, stealthily, stopping every few feet to listen; not daring to go too far lest the man he was after might be hidden somewhere and cut out his horse. He passed within ten feet of where the Wolf lay, just a gray mound against the gray turf.

The Sergeant went back to his blanket and with his saddle for a pillow lay down, the tiny glow of his pipe showing the Wolf that he smoked. He had not removed his pistol belt.

The Wolf lying there commenced to think grimly how easy it would be to kill the policeman as he slept; to wiggle, snake-like to within a few feet and then the shot. But killing was a losing game, the blundering trick of a man who easily lost control; the absolutely last resort when a man was cornered beyond escape and saw a long term at Stony Mountain ahead of him, or the gallows. The Wolf would wait till all the advantage was with him. Besides, the horse was like a watch-dog. The Wolf was down wind from them now, but if he moved enough to rouse the horse, or the wind shifted--no, he would wait. In the morning the Sergeant, less wary in the daylight, might give him his chance.

Fortunately it was late in the summer and that terrible pest, the mosquito, had run his course.

The Wolf slipped back a few yards deeper into the scrub, and, tired, slept. He knew that at the first wash of gray in the eastern sky the ducks would wake him. He slept like an animal, scarce slipping from consciousness; a stamp of the horse's hoof on the sounding turf bringing him wide awake. Once a gopher raced across his legs, and he all but sprang to his feet thinking the Sergeant had grappled with him. Again a great horned owl at a twist of Jack's head as he dreamed, swooped silently and struck, thinking it a hare.

Brought out of his sleep by the myriad noises of the waterfowl the Wolf knew that night was past, and the dice of chance were about to be thrown. He crept back to where the Sergeant was in full view, the horse, his sides ballooned by the great feed of sweet-pea vine, lay at rest, his muzzle on the earth, his drooped ears showing that he slept.

Waked by the harsh cry of a loon that swept by rending the air with his death-like scream, the Sergeant sat bolt upright and rubbed his eyes sleepily. He rose, stretched his arms above his head, and stood for a minute looking off toward the eastern sky that was now taking on a rose tint. The horse, with a little snort, canted to his feet and sniffed toward the water; the Sergeant pulled the picket-pin and led him to the lake for a drink.

Hungrily the Wolf looked at the carbine that lay across the saddle, but the Sergeant watered his horse without passing behind the bushes. It was a chance; but still the Wolf waited, thinking, "I want an ace in the hole when I play this hand."

Sergeant Heath slipped the picket-pin back into the turf, saddled his horse, and stood mentally debating something. Evidently the something had to do with Jack's whereabouts, for Heath next climbed a short distance up a poplar, and with his field glasses scanned the surrounding prairie. This seemed to satisfy him; he dropped back to earth, gathered some dry poplar branches and built

a little fire; hanging by a forked stick he drove in the ground his copper tea pail half full of water.

Then the thing the Wolf had half expectantly waited for happened. The Sergeant took off his revolver belt, his khaki coat, rolled up the sleeves of his gray flannel shirt, turned down its collar, took a piece of soap and a towel from the roll of his blanket and went to the water to wash away the black dust of the prairie trail that was thick and heavy on his face and in his hair. Eyes and ears full of suds, splashing and blowing water, the noise of the Wolf's rapid creep to the fire was unheard.

When the Sergeant, leisurely drying his face on the towel, stood up and turned about he was looking into the yawning maw of his own heavy police revolver, and the Wolf was saying: "Come here beside the fire and strip to the buff--I want them duds. There won't nothin' happen you unless you get hostile, then you'll get yours too damn quick. Just do as you're told and don't make no fool play; I'm in a hurry."

Of course the Sergeant, not being an imbecile, obeyed.

"Now get up in that tree and stay there while I dress," the Wolf ordered. In three minutes he was arrayed in the habiliments of Sergeant Heath; then he said, "Come down and put on my shirt."

In the pocket of the khaki coat that the Wolf now wore were a pair of steel handcuffs; he tossed them to the man in the shirt commanding, "Click these on."

"I say," the Sergeant expostulated, "can't I have the pants and the coat and your boots?"

The Wolf sneered: "Dif'rent here my bounder; I got to make a get-

away. I'll tell you what I'll do--I'll give you your choice of three ways: I'll stake you to the clothes, bind and gag you; or I'll rip one of these 44 plugs through you; or I'll let you run foot loose with a shirt on your back; I reckon you won't go far on this wire grass in bare feet."

"I don't walk on my pants."

"That's just what you would do; the pants and coat would cut up into about four pairs of moccasins; they'd be as good as duffel cloth."

"I'll starve."

"That's your look-out. You'd lie awake nights worrying about where Jack Wolf would get a dinner--I guess not. I ought to shoot you. The damn police are nothin' but a lot of dirty dogs anyway. Get busy and cook grub for two--bacon and tea while I sit here holdin' this gun on you."

The Sergeant was a grotesque figure cooking with the manacles on his wrists, and clad only in a shirt.

When they had eaten the Wolf bridled the horse, curled up the picket line and tied it to the saddle horn, rolled the blanket and with the carbine strapped it to the saddle, also his own blanket.

"I'm goin' to grubstake you," he said, "leave you rations for three days; that's more than you'd do for me. I'll turn your horse loose near steel, I ain't horse stealin', myself--I'm only borrowin'."

When he was ready to mount a thought struck the Wolf. It could hardly be pity for the forlorn condition of Heath; it must have been cunning--a play against the off chance of the Sergeant being picked up by somebody that day. He said:

"You fellers in the force pull a gag that you keep your word, don't

you?"

"We try to."

"I'll give you another chance, then. I don't want to see nobody put in a hole when there ain't no call for it. If you give me your word, on the honor of a Mounted Policeman, swear it, that you'll give me four days' start before you squeal I'll stake you to the clothes and boots; then you can get out in two days and be none the worse."

"I'll see you in hell first. A Mounted Policeman doesn't compromise with a horse thief--with a skunk who steals a working girl's money."

"You'll keep palaverin' till I blow the top of your head off," the Wolf snarled. "You'll look sweet trampin' in to some town in about a week askin' somebody to file off the handcuffs Jack the Wolf snapped on you, won't you?"

"I won't get any place in a week with these handcuffs on," the Sergeant objected; "even if a pack of coyotes tackled me I couldn't protect myself."

The Wolf pondered this. If he could get away without it he didn't want the death of a man on his hands--there was nothing in it. So he unlocked the handcuffs, dangled them in his fingers debatingly, and then threw them far out into the bushes, saying, with a leer: "I might get stuck up by somebody, and if they clamped these on to me it would make a get-away harder."

"Give me some matches," pleaded the Sergeant.

With this request the Wolf complied saying, "I don't want to do nothin' mean unless it helps me out of a hole."

Then Jack swung to the saddle and continued on the trail. For four

miles he rode, wondering at the persistence of the muskeg. But now he had a horse and twenty-four hours ahead before train time; he should worry.

Another four miles, and to the south he could see a line of low rolling hills that meant the end of the swamps. Even where he rode the prairie rose and fell, the trail dipping into hollows, on its rise to sweep over higher land. Perhaps some of these ridges ran right through the muskegs; but there was no hurry.

Suddenly as the Wolf breasted an upland he saw a man leisurely cinching a saddle on a buckskin horse.

"Hell!" the Wolf growled as he swung his mount; "that's the buckskin that I see at the Alberta; that's Bulldog; I don't want no mix-up with him."

He clattered down to the hollow he had left, and raced for the hiding screen of the bushed muskeg. He was almost certain Carney had not seen him, for the other had given no sign; he would wait in the cover until Carney had gone; perhaps he could keep right on across the bad lands, for his horse, as yet, sunk but hoof deep. He drew rein in thick cover and waited.

Suddenly the horse threw up his head, curved his neck backward, cocked his ears and whinnied. The Wolf could hear a splashing, sucking sound of hoofs back on the tell-tale trail he had left.

With a curse he drove his spurs into the horse's flanks, and the startled animal sprang from the cutting rowels, the ooze throwing up in a shower.

A dozen yards and the horse stumbled, almost coming to his knees; he recovered at the lash of Jack's quirt, and struggled on; now going

half the depth of his cannon bones in the yielding muck, he was floundering like a drunken man; in ten feet his legs went to the knees.

Quirt and spur drove him a few feet; then he lurched heavily, and with a writhing struggle against the sucking sands stood trembling; from his spread mouth came a scream of terror--he knew.

And now the Wolf knew. With terrifying dread he remembered--he had ridden into the "Lakes of the Shifting Sands." This was the country they were in and he had forgotten. The sweat of fear stood out on the low forehead; all the tales that he had heard of men who had disappeared from off the face of the earth, swallowed up in these quicksands, came back to him with numbing force. To spring from the horse meant but two or three wallowing strides and then to be sucked down in the claiming quicksands.

The horse's belly was against the black muck. The Wolf had drawn his feet up; he gave a cry for help. A voice answered, and twisting his head about he saw, twenty yards away, Carney on the buckskin. About the man's thin lips a smile hovered. He sneered:

"You're up against it, Mister Policeman; what name'll I turn in back at barracks?"

Jack knew that it was Carney, and that Carney might know Heath by sight, so he lied:

"I'm Sergeant Phillips; for God's sake help me out."

Bulldog sneered. "Why should I--God doesn't love a sneaking police hound."

The Wolf pleaded, for his horse was gradually sinking; his struggles now stilled for the beast knew that he was doomed.

"All right," Carney said suddenly. "One condition--never mind, I'll save you first--there isn't too much time. Now break your gun, empty the cartridges out and drop it back into the holster," he commanded. "Unsling your picket line, fasten it under your armpits, and if I can get my cow-rope to you tie the two together."

He slipped from the saddle and led the horse as far out as he dared, seemingly having found firmer ground a little to one side. Then taking his cowrope, he worked his way still farther out, placing his feet on the tufted grass that stuck up in little mounds through the treacherous ooze. Then calling, "Look out!" he swung the rope. The Wolf caught it at the first throw and tied his own to it. Carney worked his way back, looped the rope over the horn, swung to the saddle, and calling, "Flop over on your belly--look out!" he started his horse, veritably towing the Wolf to safe ground.

The rope slacked; the Wolf, though half smothered with muck, drew his revolver and tried to slip two cartridges into the cylinder.

A sharp voice cried, "Stop that, you swine!" and raising his eyes he was gazing into Carney's gun. "Come up here on the dry ground," the latter commanded. "Stand there, unbuckle your belt and let it drop. Now take ten paces straight ahead." Carney salvaged the weapon and belt of cartridges.

"Build a fire, quick!" he next ordered, leaning casually against his horse, one hand resting on the butt of his revolver.

He tossed a couple of dry matches to the Wolf when the latter had built a little mound of dry poplar twigs and birch bark.

When the fire was going Carney said: "Peel your coat and dry it; stand close to the fire so your pants dry too--I want that suit."

The Wolf was startled. Was retribution so hot on his trail? Was Carney about to set him afoot just as he had set afoot Sergeant Heath? His two hundred dollars and Lucy Black's five hundred were in the pocket of that coat also. As he took it off he turned it upside down, hoping for a chance to slip the parcel of money to the ground unnoticed of his captor.

"Throw the jacket here," Carney commanded; "seems to be papers in the pocket."

When the coat had been tossed to him, Carney sat down on a fallen tree, took from it two packets--one of papers, and another wrapped in strong paper. He opened the papers, reading them with one eye while with the other he watched the man by the fire. Presently he sneered: "Say, you're some liar--even for a government hound; your name's not Phillips, it's Heath. You're the waster who fooled the little girl at Golden. You're the bounder who came down from the Klondike to gather Bulldog Carney in; you shot off your mouth all along the line that you were going to take him singlehanded. You bet a man in Edmonton a hundred you'd tie him hoof and horn. Well, you lose, for I'm going to rope you first, see? Turn you over to the Government tied up like a bag of spuds; that's just what I'm going to do, Sergeant Liar. I'm going to break you for the sake of that little girl at Golden, for she was my friend and I'm Bulldog Carney. Soon as that suit is dried a bit you'll strip and pass it over; then you'll get into my togs and I'm going to turn you over to the police as Bulldog Carney. D'you get me, kid?" Carney chuckled. "That'll break you, won't it, Mister Sergeant Heath? You can't stay in the Force a joke; you'll never live it down if you live to be a thousand--you've boasted too much."

The Wolf had remained silent--waiting. He had an advantage if his captor did not know him. Now he was frightened; to be turned in at Edmonton by Carney was as bad as being taken by Sergeant Heath.

"You can't pull that stuff, Carney," he objected; "the minute I tell them who I am and who you are they'll grab you too quick. They'll know me; perhaps some of them'll know you."

A sneering "Ha!" came from between the thin lips of the man on the log. "Not where we're going they won't, Sergeant. I know a little place over on the rail"--and he jerked his thumb toward the west--"where there's two policemen that don't know much of anything; they've never seen either of us. You ain't been at Edmonton more'n a couple of months since you came from the Klondike. But they do know that Bulldog Carney is wanted at Calgary and that there's a thousand dollars to the man that brings him in."

At this the Wolf pricked his ears; he saw light--a flood of it. If this thing went through, and he was sent on to Calgary as Bulldog Carney, he would be turned loose at once as not being the man. The police at Calgary had cause to know just what Carney looked like for he had been in their clutches and escaped.

But Jack must bluff--appear to be the angry Sergeant. So he said: "They'll know me at Calgary, and you'll get hell for this."

Now Carney laughed out joyously. "I don't give a damn if they do. Can't you get it through your wooden police head that I just want this little pleasantry driven home so that you're the goat of that nanny band, the Mounted Police; then you'll send in your papers and go back to the farm?"

As Carney talked he had opened the paper packet. Now he gave a crisp "Hello! what have we here?" as a sheaf of bills appeared.

The Wolf had been watching for Carney's eyes to leave him for five seconds. One hand rested in his trousers pocket. He drew it out and dropped a knife, treading it into the sand and ashes.

"Seven hundred," Bulldog continued. "Rather a tidy sum for a policeman to be toting. Is this police money?"

The Wolf hesitated; it was a delicate situation. Jack wanted that money but a slip might ruin his escape. If Bulldog suspected that Jack was not a policeman he would jump to the conclusion that he had killed the owner of the horse and clothes. Also Carney would not believe that a policeman on duty wandered about with seven hundred in his pocket; if Jack claimed it all Carney would say he lied and keep it as Government money.

"Five hundred is Government money I was bringin' in from a post, and two hundred is my own," he answered.

"I'll keep the Government money," Bulldog said crisply; "the Government robbed me of my ranch--said I had no title. And I'll keep yours, too; it's coming to you."

"If luck strings with you, Carney, and you get away with this dirty trick, what you say'll make good--I'll have to quit the Force; an' I want to get home down east. Give me a chance; let me have my own two hundred."

"I think you're lying--a man in the Force doesn't get two hundred ahead, not honest. But I'll toss you whether I give you one hundred or two," Carney said, taking a half dollar from his pocket. "Call!" and he spun it in the air.

"Heads!" the Wolf cried.

The coin fell tails up. "Here's your hundred," and Bulldog passed the bills to their owner.

"I see here," he continued, "your order to arrest Bulldog Carney.

Well, you've made good, haven't you. And here's another for Jack the Wolf; you missed him, didn't you? Where's he--what's he done lately? He played me a dirty trick once; tipped off the police as to where they'd get me. I never saw him, but if you could stake me to a sight of the Wolf I'd give you this six hundred. He's the real hound that I've got a low down grudge against. What's his description--what does he look like?"

"He's a tall slim chap--looks like a breed, 'cause he's got nigger blood in him," the Wolf lied.

"I'll get him some day," Carney said; "and now them duds are about cooked--peel!"

The Wolf stripped, gray shirt and all.

"Now step back fifteen paces while I make my toilet," Carney commanded, toying with his 6-gun in the way of emphasis.

In two minutes he was transformed into Sergeant Heath of the N.W.M.P., revolver belt and all. He threw his own clothes to the Wolf, and lighted his pipe.

When Jack had dressed Carney said: "I saved your life, so I don't want you to make me throw it away again. I don't want a muss when I turn you over to the police in the morning. There ain't much chance they'd listen to you if you put up a holler that you were Sergeant Heath--they'd laugh at you, but if they did make a break at me there's be shooting, and you'd sure be plumb in line of a careless bullet--see? I'm going to stay close to you till you're on that train."

Of course that was just what the Wolf wanted; to go down the line as Bulldog Carney, handcuffed to a policeman, would be like a passport for Jack the Wolf. Nobody would even speak to him--the policeman

would see to that.

"You're dead set on putting this crazy thing through, are you?" he asked.

"You bet I am--I'd rather work this racket than go to my own wedding."

"Well, so's you won't think your damn threat to shoot keeps me mum, I'll just tell you that if you get that far with it I ain't going to give myself away. You've called the turn, Carney; I'd be a joke even if I only got as far as the first barracks a prisoner. If I go in as Bulldog Carney I won't come out as Sergeant Heath--I'll disappear as Mister Somebody. I'm sick of the Force anyway. They'll never know what happened toSergeant Heath from me--I couldn't stand the guying. But if I ever stack up against you, Carney, I'll kill you for it." This last was pure bluff--for fear Carney's suspicions might be aroused by the other's ready compliance.

Carney scowled; then he laughed, sneering: "I've heard women talk like that in the dance halls. You cook some bacon and tea at that fire--then we'll pull out."

As the Wolf knelt beside the fire to blow the embers into a blaze he found a chance to slip the knife he had buried into his pocket.

When they had eaten they took the trail, heading south to pass the lower end of the great muskegs. Carney rode the buckskin, and the Wolf strode along in front, his mind possessed of elation at the prospect of being helped out of the country, and depression over the loss of his money. Curiously the loss of his own one hundred seemed a greater enormity than that of the school teacher's five hundred. That money had been easily come by, but he had toiled a month for the hundred. What right had Carney to steal his labor--to rob a workman.

As they plugged along mile after mile, a fierce determination to get the money back took possession of Jack. If he could get it he could get the horse. He would fix Bulldog some way so that the latter would not stop him. He must have the clothes, too. The khaki suit obsessed him; it was a red flag to his hot mind.

They spelled and ate in the early evening; and when they started for another hour's tramp Carney tied his cow-rope tightly about the Wolf's waist, saying: "If you'd tried to cut out in these gloomy hills I'd be peeved. Just keep that line taut in front of the buckskin and there won't be no argument."

In an hour Carney called a halt, saying: "We'll camp by this bit of water, and hit the trail in the early morning. We ain't more than ten miles from steel, and we'll make some place before train time."

Carney had both the police picket line and his own. He drove a picket in the ground, looped the line that was about the Wolf's waist over it, and said.

"I don't want to be suspicious of a mate jumping me in the dark, so I'll sleep across this line and you'll keep to the other end of it; if you so much as wink at it I guess I'll wake. I've got a bad conscience and sleep light. We'll build a fire and you'll keep to the other side of it same's we were neighbors in a city and didn't know each other."

Twice, as they ate, Carney caught a sullen, vicious look in Jack's eyes. It was as clearly a murder look as he had ever seen; and more than once he had faced eyes that thirsted for his life. He wondered at the psychology of it; it was not like his idea of Sergeant Heath. From what he had been told of that policeman he had fancied him a vain, swaggering chap who had had his ego fattened by the three stripes on his arm. He determined to take a few extra precautions, for he did not wish to lie awake.

"We'll turn in," he said when they had eaten; "I'll hobble you, same's a shy cayuse, for fear you'd walk in your sleep, Sergeant."

He bound the Wolf's ankles, and tied his wrists behind his back, saying, as he knotted the rope, "What the devil did you do with your handcuffs--thought you johnnies always had a pair in your pocket?"

"They were in the saddle holster and went down with my horse," the Wolf lied.

Carney's nerves were of steel, his brain worked with exquisite precision. When it told him there was nothing to fear, that his precautions had made all things safe, his mind rested, untortured by jerky nerves; so in five minutes he slept.

The Wolf mastered his weariness and lay awake, waiting to carry out the something that had been in his mind. Six hundred dollars was a stake to play for; also clad once again in the police suit, with the buckskin to carry him to the railroad, he could get away; money was always a good thing to bribe his way through. Never once had he put his hand in the pocket where lay the knife he had secreted at the time he had changed clothes with Carney, as he trailed hour after hour in front of the buckskin. He knew that Carney was just the cool-nerved man that would sleep--not lie awake through fear over nothing.

In the way of test he shuffled his feet and drew from the half-dried grass a rasping sound. It partly disturbed the sleeper; he changed the steady rhythm of his breathing; he even drew a heavy-sighing breath; had he been lying awake watching the Wolf he would have stilled his breathing to listen.

The Wolf waited until the rhythmic breaths of the sleeper told that he had lapsed again into the deeper sleep. Slowly, silently the Wolf

worked his hands to the side pocket, drew out the knife and cut the cords that bound his wrists. It took time, for he worked with caution. Then he waited. The buckskin, his nose deep in the grass, blew the pollen of the flowered carpet from his nostrils.

Carney stirred and raised his head. The buckskin blew through his nostrils again, ending with a luxurious sigh of content; then was heard the clip-clip of his strong teeth scything the grass. Carney, recognizing what had waked him, turned over and slept again.

Ten minutes, and the Wolf, drawing up his feet slowly, silently, sawed through the rope on his ankles. Then with spread fingers he searched the grass for a stone the size of a goose egg, beside which he had purposely lain down. When his fingers touched it he unknotted the handkerchief that had been part of Carney's make-up and which was now about his neck, and in one corner tied the stone, fastening the other end about his wrist. Now he had a slung shot that with one blow would render the other man helpless.

Then he commenced his crawl.

A pale, watery, three-quarter moon had climbed listlessly up the eastern sky changing the sombre prairie into a vast spirit land, draping With ghostly garments bush and shrub.

Purposely Carney had tethered the buckskin down wind from where he and the Wolf lay. Jack had not read anything out of this action, but Carney knew the sensitive wariness of his horse, the scent of the stranger in his nostrils would keep him restless, and any unusual move on the part of the prisoner would agitate the buckskin. Also he had only pretended to drive the picket pin at some distance away; in the dark he had trailed it back and worked it into the loose soil at his very feet. This was more a move of habitual care than a belief that the bound man could work his way, creeping and rolling, to the

picket-pin, pull it, and get away with the horse.

At the Wolf's first move the buckskin threw up his head, and, with ears cocked forward, studied the shifting blurred shadow. Perhaps it was the scent of his master's clothes which the Wolf wore that agitated his mind, that cast him to wondering whether his master was moving about; or, perhaps as animals instinctively have a nervous dread of a vicious man he distrusted the stranger; perhaps, in the dim uncertain light, his prairie dread came back to him and he thought it a wolf that had crept into camp. He took a step forward; then another, shaking his head irritably. A vibration trembled along the picket line that now lay across Carney's foot and he stirred restlessly.

The Wolf flattened himself to earth and snored. Five minutes he waited, cursing softly the restless horse. Then again he moved, so slowly that even the watchful animal scarce detected it.

He was debating two plans: a swift rush and a swing of his slung shot, or the silent approach. The former meant inevitably the death of one or the other--the crushed skull of Carney, or, if the latter were by any chance awake, a bullet through the Wolf. He could feel his heart pounding against the turf as he scraped along, inch by inch. A bare ten feet, and he could put his hand on the butt of Carney's gun and snatch it from the holster; if he missed, then the slung shot.

The horse, roused, was growing more restless, more inquisitive. Sometimes he took an impatient snap at the grass with his teeth; but only to throw his head up again, take a step forward, shake his head, and exhale a whistling breath.

Now the Wolf had squirmed his body five feet forward. Another yard and he could reach the pistol; and there was no sign that Carney had wakened--just the steady breathing of a sleeping man.

The Wolf lay perfectly still for ten seconds, for the buckskin seemingly had quieted; he was standing, his head low hung, as if he slept on his feet. Carney's face was toward the creeping man and was in shadow. Another yard and now slowly the Wolf gathered his legs under him till he rested like a sprinter ready for a spring; his left hand crept forward toward the pistol stock that was within reach; the stone-laden handkerchief was twisted about the two first fingers of his right.

Yes, Carney slept.

As the Wolf's finger tips slid along the pistol butt the wrist was seized in fingers of steel, he was twisted almost face to earth, and the butt of Carney's own gun, in the latter's right hand, clipped him over the eye and he slipped into dreamland. When he came to workmen were riveting a boiler in the top of his head; somebody with an augur was boring a hole in his forehead; he had been asleep for ages and had wakened in a strange land. He sat up groggily and stared vacantly at a man who sat beside a camp fire smoking a pipe. Over the camp fire a copper kettle hung and a scent of broiling bacon came to his nostrils. The man beside the fire took the pipe from his mouth and said: "I hoped I had cracked your skull, you swine. Where did you pick up that thug trick of a stone in the handkerchief? As you are troubled with insomnia we'll hit the trail again."

With the picket line around his waist once more Jack trudged ahead of the buckskin, in the night gloom the shadowy cavalcade cutting a strange, weird figure as though a boat were being towed across sleeping waters.

The Wolf, groggy from the blow that had almost cracked his skull, was wobbly on his legs--his feet were heavy as though he wore a diver's leaden boots. As he waded through a patch of wild rose the briars clung to his legs, and, half dazed he cried out, thinking he

struggled in the shifting sands.

"Shut up!" The words clipped from the thin lips of the rider behind.

They dipped into a hollow and the played-out man went half to his knees in the morass. A few lurching steps and overstrained nature broke; he collapsed like a jointed doll--he toppled head first into the mire and lay there.

The buckskin plunged forward in the treacherous going, and the bag of a man was skidded to firm ground by the picket line, where he sat wiping the mud from his face, and looking very all in.

Carney slipped to the ground and stood beside his captive. "You're soft, my bucko--I knew Sergeant Heath had a yellow streak," he sneered; "boasters generally have. I guess we'll rest till daylight. I've a way of hobbling a bad man that'll hold you this time, I fancy."

He drove the picket-pin of the rope that tethered the buckskin, and ten feet away he drove the other picket pin. He made the Wolf lie on his side and fastened him by a wrist to each peg so that one arm was behind and one in front.

Carney chuckled as he surveyed the spread-eagle man: "You'll find some trouble getting out of that, my bucko; you can't get your hands together and you can't get your teeth at either rope. Now I will have a sleep."

The Wolf was in a state of half coma; even untethered he probably would have slept like a log; and Carney was tired; he, too, slumbered, the soft stealing gray of the early morning not bringing him back out of the valley of rest till a glint of sunlight throwing over the prairie grass touched his eyes, and the warmth gradually pushed the lids back.

He rose, built a fire, and finding water made a pot of tea. Then he saddled the buckskin, and untethered the Wolf, saying: "We'll eat a bite and pull out."

The rest and sleep had refreshed the Wolf, and he plodded on in front of the buckskin feeling that though his money was gone his chances of escape were good.

At eight o'clock the square forms of log shacks leaning groggily against a sloping hill came into view; it was Hobbema; and, swinging a little to the left, in an hour they were close to the Post.

Carney knew where the police shack lay, and skirting the town he drew up in front of a log shack, an iron-barred window at the end proclaiming it was the Barracks. He slipped from the saddle, dropped the rein over his horse's head, and said quietly to the Wolf: "Knock on the door, open it, and step inside," the muzzle of his gun emphasizing the command.

He followed close at the Wolf's heels, standing in the open door as the latter entered. He had expected to see perhaps one, not more than two constables, but at a little square table three men in khaki sat eating breakfast.

"Good morning, gentlemen," Carney said cheerily; "I've brought you a prisoner, Bulldog Carney."

The one who sat at table with his back to the door turned his head at this; then he sprang to his feet, peered into the prisoner's face and laughed.

"Bulldog nothing, Sergeant; you've bagged the Wolf.

The speaker thrust his face almost into the Wolf's. "Where's my

uniform--where's my horse? I've got you now--set me afoot to starve, would you, you damn thief--you murderer! Where's the five hundred dollars you stole from the little teacher at Fort Victor?"

He was trembling with passion; words flew from his lips like bullets from a gatling--it was a torrent.

But fast as the accusation had come, into Carney's quick mind flashed the truth--the speaker was Sergeant Heath. The game was up. Still it was amusing. What a devilish droll blunder he had made. His hands crept quietly to his two guns, the police gun in the belt and his own beneath the khaki coat.

Also the Wolf knew his game was up. His blood surged hot at the thought that Carney's meddling had trapped him. He was caught, but the author of his evil luck should not escape.

"That's Bulldog Carney!" he cried fiercely; "don't let him get away."

Startled, the two constables at the table sprang to their feet.

A sharp, crisp voice said: "The first man that reaches for a gun drops." They were covered by two guns held in the steady hands of the man whose small gray eyes watched from out narrowed lids.

"I'll make you a present of the Wolf," Carney said quietly; "I thought I had Sergeant Heath. I could almost forgive this man, if he weren't such a skunk, for doing the job for me. Now I want you chaps to pass, one by one, into the pen," and he nodded toward a heavy wooden door that led from the room they were in to the other room that had been fitted up as a cell. "I see your carbines and gunbelts on the rack--you really should have been properly in uniform by this time; I'll dump them out on the prairie somewhere, and you'll find them in the course of a day or so. Step in, boys, and you go first, Wolf."

When the four men had passed through the door Carney dropped the heavy wooden bar into place, turned the key in the padlock, gathered up the fire arms, mounted the buckskin, and rode into the west.

A week later the little school teacher at Fort Victor received through the mail a packet that contained five hundred dollars, and this note:—

DEAR MISS BLACK:--

I am sending you the five hundred dollars that you bet on a bad man. No woman can afford to bet on even a good man. Stick to the kids, for I've heard they love you. If those Indians hadn't picked up Sergeant Heath and got him to Hobbema before I got away with your money I wouldn't have known, and you'd have lost out.

Yours delightedly,

BULLDOG CARNEY.