W. A .Fraser

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The Gold Wolf
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The Gold Wolf

by W.A. Fraser

ALL day long Bulldog Carney had found, where the trail was soft, the odd imprint of that goblined inturned hoof. All day in the saddle, riding a trail that winds in and out among rocks, and trees, and cliffs monotonously similar, the hush of the everlasting hills holding in subjection man's soul, the towering giants of embattled rocks thrusting up towards God's dome pigmying to nothingness that rat, a man, produces a comatose condition of mind; man becomes a child, incapable of little beyond the recognition of trivial things; the erratic swoop of a bird, the sudden roar of a cataract, the dirge-like sigh of wind through the harp of a giant pine.

And so, curiously, Bulldog's fancy had toyed aimlessly with the history of the cayuse that owned that inturned left forefoot. Always where the hoof's imprint lay was the flat track of a miner's boot, the hob nails denting the black earth with stolid persistency. But the owner of the miner's boot seemed of little moment; it was the abnormal hoof that, by a strange perversity, haunted Carney.

The man was probably a placer miner coming down out of the Eagle Hills, leading a pack pony that carried his duffel and, perhaps, a small fortune in gold. Of course, like Carney, he was heading for steel, for the town of Bucking Horse.

Toward evening, as Carney rode down a winding trail that led to the ford of Singing Water, rounding an abrupt turn the mouth of a huge cave yawned in the side of a cliff away to his left. Something of life had melted into its dark shadow that had the semblance of a man; or it might have been a bear or a wolf. Lower down in the valley that was called the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge, his buckskin shied, and with a snort of fear left the trail and elliptically came back to it twenty yards beyond.

In the centre of the ellipse, on the trail, stood a gaunt form, a huge

dog-wolf. He was a sinister figure, his snarling lips curled back from strong yellow fangs, his wide powerful head low hung, and the black bristles on his back erect in challenge.

The whole thing was weird, uncanny; a single wolf to stand his ground in daylight was unusual.

Instinctively Bulldog reined in the buckskin, and half turning in the saddle, with something of a shudder, searched the ground at the wolf's feet dreading to find something. But there was nothing.

The dog-wolf, with a snarling twist of his head, sprang into the bushes just as Carney dropped a hand to his gun; his quick eye had seen the movement.

Carney had meant to camp just beyond the ford of Singing Water, but the usually placid buckskin was fretful, nervous.

A haunting something was in the air; Carney, himself, felt it. The sudden apparition of the wolf could not account for this mental unrest, either in man or beast, for they were both inured to the trail, and a wolf meant little beyond a skulking beast that a pistol shot would drive away.

High above the rider towered Old Squaw Mountain. It was like a battered feudal castle, on its upper reaches turret and tower and bastion catching vagrant shafts of gold and green, as, beyond, in the far west, a flaming sun slid down behind the Selkirks. Where he rode in the twisted valley a chill had struck the air, suggesting vaults, dungeons; the giant ferns hung heavy like the plumes of knights drooping with the death dew. A reaching stretch of salmon bushes studded with myriad berries that gleamed like topaz jewels hedged on both sides the purling, frothing stream that still held the green tint of its glacier birth.

Many times in his opium running Carney had swung along this wild trail almost unconscious of the way, his mind travelling far afield; now back to the old days of club life; to the years of army routine; to the bright and happy scenes where rich-gowned women and cultured men laughed and bantered with him. At times it was the newer rough life of the West; the ever-present warfare of man against man; the yesterday where he had won, or the to-morrow where he might cast a losing hazard -- where the dice might turn groggily from a six-spotted side to a deuce, and the thrower take a fall.

But to-night, as he rode, something of depression, of a narrow environment, of an evil one, was astride the withers of his horse; the mountains seemed to close in and oppress him. The buckskin, too, swung his heavy lop ears irritably back and forth, back and forth. Sometimes one ear was pricked forward as though its owner searched the beyond, the now glooming valley that, at a little distance, was but a blur, the other ear held backward as though it would drink in the sounds of pursuit.

Pursuit! that was the very thing; instinctively the rider turned in his saddle, one hand on the horn, and held his piercing gray eyes on the back trail, searching for the embodiment of this phantasy. The unrest had developed that far into conception, something evil hovered on his trail, man or beast. But he saw nothing but the swaying kaleidoscope of tumbling forest shadows; rocks that, half gloomed, took fantastic forms; bushes that swayed with the rolling gait of a grizzly.

The buckskin had quickened his pace as if, tired though he was, he would go on beyond that valley of fear before they camped.

Where the trail skirted the brink of a cliff that had a drop of fifty feet, Carney felt the horse tremble, and saw him hug the inner wall; and, when they had rounded the point, the buckskin, with a snort of relief,

clamped the snaffle in his teeth and broke into a canter.

"I wonder--by Jove!" and Bulldog, pulling the buckskin to a stand, slipped from his back, and searched the black-loamed trail.

"I believe you're right, Pat," he said, addressing the buckskin; "something happened back there."

He walked for a dozen paces ahead of the horse, his keen gray eyes on the earth. He stopped and rubbed his chin, thinking--thinking aloud.

"There are tracks, Patsy boy--moccasins; but we've lost our gunboat-footed friend. What do you make of that, Patsy--gone over the cliff? But that damn wolf's pugs are here; he's travelled up and down. By gad! two of them!"

Then, in silence, Carney moved along the way, searching and pondering; cast into a curious, superstitious mood that he could not shake off. The inturned hoof-print had vanished, so the owner of the big feet that carried hob-nailed boots did not ride.

Each time that Carney stopped to bend down in study of the trail the buckskin pushed at him fretfully with his soft muzzle and rattled the snaffle against his bridle teeth.

At last Carney stroked the animal's head reassuringly, saying: "You're quite right, pal--it's none of our business. Besides, we're a pair of old grannies imagining things."

But as he lifted to the saddle, Bulldog, like the horse, felt a compelling inclination to go beyond the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge to camp for the night.

Even as they climbed to a higher level of flat land, from back on the

trail that was now lost in the deepening gloom, came the howl of a wolf; and then, from somewhere beyond floated the answering call of the dog-wolf's mate--a whimpering, hungry note in her weird wail.

"Bleat, damn you!" Carney cursed softly; "if you bother us I'll sit by with a gun and watch Patsy boy kick you to death."

As if some genii of the hills had taken up and sent on silent waves his challenge, there came filtering through the pines and birch a snarling yelp.

"By gad!" and Carney cocked his ear, pulling the horse to a stand.

Then in the heavy silence of the wooded hills he pushed on again muttering, "There's something wrong about that wolf howl--it's different."

Where a big pine had showered the earth with cones till the covering was soft, and deep, and springy, and odorous like a perfumed mattress of velvet, he hesitated; but the buckskin, in the finer animal reasoning, pleaded with little impatient steps and shakes of the head that they push on.

Carney yielded, saying softly: "Go on, kiddie boy; peace of mind is good dope for a sleep."

So it was ten o'clock when the two travellers, Carney and Pat, camped in an open, where the moon, like a silver mirror, bathed the earth in reassuring light. Here the buckskin had come to a halt, filled his lungs with the perfumed air in deep draughts, and turning his head half round had waited for his partner to dismount.

It was curious this man of steel nerve and flawless courage feeling at all the guidance of unknown threatenings, unexplainable disquietude. He did not even build a fire; but choosing a place where the grass

was rich he spread his blanket beside the horse's picket pin.

Bulldog's life had provided him with different sleeping moods; it was a curious subconscious matter of mental adjustment before he slipped away from the land of knowing. Sometimes he could sleep like a tired laborer, heavily, unresponsive to the noise of turmoil; at other times, when deep sleep might cost him his life, his senses hovered so close to consciousness that a dried leaf scurrying before the wind would call him to alert action. So now he lay on his blanket, sometimes over the border of spirit land, and sometimes conscious of the buckskin's pull at the crisp grass. Once he came wide awake, with no movement but the lifting of his eyelids. He had heard nothing; and now the gray eyes, searching the moonlit plain, saw nothing. Yet within was a full consciousness that there was something--not close, but hovering there beyond.

The buckskin also knew. He had been lying down, but with a snort of discontent his forequarters went up and he canted to his feet with a spring of wariness. Perhaps it was the wolves.

But after a little Carney knew it was not the wolves; they, cunning devils, would have circled beyond his vision, and the buckskin, with his delicate scent, would have swung his head the full circle of the compass; but he stood facing down the back trail; the thing was there, watching.

After that Carney slept again, lighter if possible, thankful that he had yielded to the wisdom of the horse and sought the open.

Half a dozen times there was this gentle transition from the sleep that was hardly a sleep, to a full acute wakening. And then the paling sky told that night was slipping off to the western ranges, and that beyond the Rockies, to the east, day was sleepily travelling in from the plains.

The horse was again feeding; and Carney, shaking oh the lethargy of his broken sleep, gathered some dried stunted bushes, and, building a little fire, made a pot of tea; confiding to the buckskin as he mounted that he considered himself no end of a superstitious ass to have bothered over a nothing.

Not far from where Carney had camped the trail he followed turned to the left to sweep around a mountain, and here it joined, for a time, the trail running from Fort Steel west toward the Kootenay. The sun, topping the Rockies, had lifted from the earth the graying shadows, and now Carney saw, as he thought, the hoof-prints of the day before.

There was a feeling of relief with this discovery. There had been a morbid disquiet in his mind; a mental conviction that something had happened that intoed cayuse and his huge-footed owner. Now all the weird fancies of the night had been just a vagary of mind. Where the trail was earthed, holding clear impressions, he dismounted, and walked ahead of the buckskin, reading the lettered clay. Here and there was imprinted a moccasined foot; once there was the impression of boots; but they were not the huge imprints of hob-nailed soles. They showed that a man had dismounted, and then mounted again; and the cayuse had not an inturned left forefoot; also the toe wall of one hind foot was badly broken. His stride was longer, too; he did not walk with the short step of a pack pony.

The indefinable depression took possession of Bulldog again; he tried to shake it off--it was childish. The huge-footed one perhaps was a prospector, and had wandered up into some one of the gulches looking for gold. That was objecting Reason formulating an hypothesis.

Then presently Carney discovered the confusing element of the

same cayuse tracks heading the other way, as if the man on horseback had travelled both up and down the trail.

Where the Bucking Horse trail left the Kootenay trail after circling the mountain, Carney saw that the hoof prints continued toward Kootenay. And there were a myriad of tracks; many mounted men had swung from the Bucking Horse trail to the Kootenay path; they had gone and returned, for the hoof prints that toed toward Bucking Horse lay on top.

This also was strange; men did not ride out from the sleepy old town in a troop like cavalry. There was but one explanation, the explanation of the West--those mounted men had ridden after some body--had trailed somebody who was wanted quick. This crescendo to his associated train of thought obliterated mentally the goblin-footed cayuse, the huge hob-nailed boot, the something at the cliff, the hovering oppression of the night--everything.

Carney closed his mind to the torturing riddle and rode, sometimes humming an Irish ballad of Mangin's.

It was late afternoon when he rode into Bucking Horse; and Bucking Horse was in a ferment.

Seth Long's hotel, the Gold Nugget, was the cauldron in which the waters of unrest seethed.

A lynching was in a state of almost completion, with Jeanette Holt's brother, Harry, elected to play the leading part of the lynched. Through the deference paid to his well-known activity when hostile events were afoot, Carney was cordially drawn into the maelstrom of ugly-tempered men.

Jeanette's brother may be said to have suffered from a

preponderance of opinion against him, for only Jeanette, and with less energy, Seth Long, were on his side. All Bucking Horse, angry Bucking Horse, was for stringing him up tout de suite. The times were propitious for this entertainment, for Sergeant Black, of the Mounted Police, was over at Fort Steel, or somewhere else on patrol, and the law was in the keeping of the mob.

Ostensibly Carney ranged himself on the side of law and order. That is what he meant when, leaning carelessly against the Nugget bar, one hand on his hip, chummily close to the butt of his six-gun, he said:

"This town had got a pretty good name, as towns go in the mountains, and my idea of a man that's too handy at the lynch game is that he's a pretty poor sport."

"How's that, Bulldog?" Kootenay Jim snapped.

"He's a poor sport," Carney drawled, "because he's got a hundred to one the best of it--first, last, and always; he isn't in any danger when he starts, because it's a hundred men to one poor devil, who, generally, isn't armed, and he knows that at the finish his mates will perjure themselves to save their own necks. I've seen one or two lynch mobs and they were generally egged on by men who were yellow."

Carney's gray eyes looked out over the room full of angry men with a quiet thoughtful steadiness that forced home the conviction that he was wording a logic he would demonstrate. No other man in that room could have stood up against that plank bar and declared himself without being called quick.

"You hear fust what this rat done, Bulldog, then we'll hear what you've got to say," Kootenay growled.

"That's well spoken, Kootenay," Bulldog answered. "I'm fresh in off the trail, and perhaps I'm quieter than the rest of you, but first, being fresh in off the trail, there's a little custom to be observed."

With a sweep of his hand Carney waved a salute to a line of bottles behind the bar.

Jeanette, standing in the open door that led from the bar to the dining-room, gripping the door till her nails sank into the pine, felt hot tears gush into her eyes. How wise, how cool, this brave Bulldog that she loved so well. She had had no chance to plead with him for help. He had just come into that murder-crazed throng, and the words had been hurled at him from a dozen mouths that her brother Harry -- Harry the waster, the no-good, the gambler--had been found to be the man who had murdered returning miners on the trail for their gold, and that they were going to string him up.

And now there he stood, her god of a man, Bulldog Carney, ranged on her side, calm, and brave. It was the first glint of hope since they had brought her brother in, bound to the back of a cayuse. She had pushed her way amongst the men, but they were like wolves; she had pleaded and begged for delay, but the evidence was so overwhelming; absolutely hopeless it had appeared. But now something whispered "Hope".

It was curious the quieting effect that single drink at the bar had; the magnetism of Carney seemed to envelop the men, to make them reasonable. Ordinarily they were reasonable men. Bulldog knew this, and he played the card of reason.

For the two or three gun men--Kootenay Jim, John of Slocan, and Denver Ike--Carney had his own terrible personality and his six-gun; he could deal with those three toughs if necessary.

"Now tell me, boys, what started this hellery," Carney asked when they had drunk.

The story was fired at him; if a voice hesitated, another took up the narrative.

Miners returning from the gold field up in the Eagle Hills had mysteriously disappeared, never turning up at Bucking Horse. A man would have left the Eagle Hills, and somebody drifting in from the same place later on, would ask for him at Bucking Horse--nobody had seen him.

Then one after another two skeletons had been found on the trail; the bodies had been devoured by wolves.

"And wolves don't eat gold--not what you'd notice, as a steady chuck," Kootenay Jim yelped.

"Men wolves do," Carney thrust back, and his gray eyes said plainly, "That's your food, Jim."

"Meanin' what by that, pard?" Kootenay snarled, his face evil in a threat.

"Just what the words convey--you sort them out, Kootenay."

But Miner Graham interposed. "We got kinder leery about this wolf game, Carney, 'cause they ain't bothered nobody else 'cept men packin' in their winnin's from the Eagle Hills; and four days ago Caribou Dave -- here he is sittin' right here--he arrives packin' Fourteen-foot Johnson--that is, all that's left of Fourteen-foot."

"Johnson was my pal," Caribou Dave interrupted, a quaver in his voice, "and he leaves the Eagle Nest two days ahead of me, packin' a big clean-up of gold on a cayuse. He was goin' to mooch aroun'

Buckin' Horse till I creeps-in afoot, then we was goin' out. We been together a good many years, ol' Fourteen foot and me."

Something seemed to break in Caribou's voice and Graham added: "Dave finds his mate at the foot of a cliff."

Carney started; and instinctively Kootenay's hand dropped to his gun, thinking something was going to happen.

"I dunno just what makes me look there for Fourteen-foot, Bulldog," Caribou Dave explained. "I was comin' along the trail seein' the marks of 'em damn big feet of hisn, and they looked good to me--I guess I was gettin' kinder homesick for him; when I'd camp I'd go out and paw 'em tracks; 'twas kinder like shakin' hands. We been together a good many years, buckin' the mountains and the plains, and sometimes havin' a bit of fun. I'm comin' along, as I says, and I sees a kinder scrimmage like, as if his old tan-colored cayuse had got gay, or took the blind staggers, or somethin'; there was a lot of tracks. But I give up thinkin' it out, 'cause I knowed if the damn cayuse had jack-rabbited any, Fourteen-foot'd pick him and his load up and carry him. Then I see some wolf tracks--clang near as big as a steer's they was--and I figger Fourteen-foot's had a set-to with a couple of 'em timber coyotes and lammed hell's delight out of 'em, 'cause he could've done it. Then I'm follerin' the cayuse's trail agen, pickin' it up here and there, and all at onct it jumps me that the big feet is missin'. Sure I natural figger Johnson's got mussed up a bit with the wolves and is ridin'; but there's the clang wolf tracks agent And some moccasin feet has been passierin' along, too. Then the hoss tracks cuts out just same's if he'd spread his wings and gone up in the air--they just ain't."

"Then Caribou gets a hunch and goes back and peeks over the cliff," Miner Graham added, for old David had stopped speaking to bite viciously at a black plug of tobacco to hide his feelings.

"I dunno what made me do it," Caribou interrupted; "it was just same's Fourteen-foot's callin' me. There ain't nobody can make me believe that if two men paddles together twenty years, had their little fights, and show-downs, and still sticks, that one of 'em is going to cut clean out just 'cause he goes over the Big Divide --'tain't natural. I tell you, boys, Fourteen-foot's callin' me--that's what he is, when I goes back."

Then Graham had to take up the narrative, for Caribou, heading straight for the bar, pointed dumbly at a black bottle.

"Yes, Carney," Graham said, "Caribou packs into Buckin' Horse on his back what was left of Fourteen-foot, and there wasn't no gold and no sign of the cayuse. Then we swarms out, a few of us, and picks up cayuse tracks most partic'lar where the Eagle Hills trail hits the trail for Kootenay. And when we overhaul the cayuse that's layin' down 'em tracks it's Fourteen-foot's hawse, and a-ridin' him is Harry Holt."

"And he's got the gold you was talkie' 'bout wolves eatin', Bulldog," Kootenay Jim said with a sneer. "He was hangin' 'round here busted, cleaned to the bone, and there he's a-ridin' Fourteen-foot's cayuse, with lots of gold."

"That's the whole case then, is it, boys?" Carney asked quietly.

"Ain't it enough?" Kootenay Jim snarled.

"No, it isn't. You were tried for murder once yourself, Kootenay, and you got off, though everybody knew it was the dead man's money in your pocket. You got off because nobody saw you kill the man, and the circumstantial evidence gave you the benefit of the doubt."

"I ain't bein' tried for this, Bulldog. Your bringin' up old scores might get you in wrong."

"You're not being tried, Kootenay, but another man is, and I say he's got to have a fair chance. You bring him here, boys, and let me hear his story; that's only fair, men amongst men. Because I give you fair warning, boys, if this lynching goes through, and you're in wrong, I'm going to denounce you; not one of you will get away--not one!"

"We'll bring him, Bulldog," Graham said; "what you say is only fair, but swing he will."

Jeanette's brother had been locked in the pen in the log police barracks. He was brought into the Gold Nugget, and his defence was what might be called powerfully weak. It was simply a statement that he had bought the cayuse from an Indian on the trail outside Bucking Horse. He refused to say where he had got the gold, simply declaring that he had killed nobody, had never seen Fourteen-foot Johnson, and knew nothing about the murder.

Something in the earnestness of the man convinced Carney that he was innocent. However, that was, so far as Carney's action was concerned, a minor matter; it was Jeanette's brother, and he was going to save him from being lynched if he had to fight the roomful of men--there was no doubt about that in his mind.

"I can't say, boys," Carney began, "that you can be blamed for thinking you've got the right man."

"That's what we figgered," Graham declared.

"But you've not gone far enough in sifting the evidence if you sure don't want to lynch an innocent man. The only evidence you have is that you caught Harry on Johnson's cayuse. How do you know it's Johnsons cayuse?"

"Caribou says it is," Graham answered.

"And Harry says it was an Indian's cayuse," Carney affirmed.

"He most natural just ordinar'ly lies about it," Kootenay ventured viciously.

"Where's the cayuse?" Carney asked. "There ain't no thinkin' 'bout it," Caribou an

"Out in the stable," two or three voices answered.

"I want to see him. Mind, boys, I'm working for you as much as for that poor devil you want to string up, because if you get the wrong man I'm going to denounce you, that's as sure as God made little apples."

His quiet earnestness was compelling. All the fierce heat of passion had gone from the men; there still remained the grim determination that, convinced they were right, nothing but the death of some of them would check. But somehow they felt that the logic of conviction would swing even Carney to their side.

So, without even a word from a leader, they all thronged out to the stable yard; the cayuse was brought forth, and, at Bulldog's request, led up and down the yard, his hoofs leaving an imprint in the bare clay at every step. It was the footprints alone that interested Carney. He studied them intently, a horrible dread in his heart as he searched for that goblined hoof that inturned. But the two forefeet left saucer-like imprints, that, though they were both slightly intoed, as is the way of a cayuse, neither was like the curious goblined track that had so fastened on his fancy out in the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge.

And also there was the broken toe wall of the hind foot that he had seen on the newer trail.

He turned to Caribou Dave, asking, "What makes you think this is Johnson's pack horse?"

"There ain't no thinkin' 'bout it," Caribou answered with asperity. "When I see my boots I don't think they're mine, I just most natur'ly figger they are and pull em on. I'd know that dun-colored rat if I see him in a wild herd."

"And yet," Carney objected in an even tone, "this isn't the cayuse that Johnson toted out his duffel from the Eagle Hills on."

A cackle issued from Kootenay Jim's long, scraggy neck:

"That settles it, boys; Bulldog passes the buck and the game's over. Caribou is just an ord'nary liar, 'cordin' to Judge Carney."

"Caribou is perfectly honest in his belief," Carney declared. "There isn't more than half a dozen colors for horses, and there are a good many thousand horses in this territory, so a great many of them are the same color. And the general structure of different cayuses is as similar as so many wheel-barrows. That brand on his shoulder may be a C, or a new moon, or a flapjack."

He turned to Caribou: "What brand had Fourteen-foot's cayuse?"

"I don't know," the old chap answered surlily, "but it was there same place it's restin' now--it ain't shifted none since you fingered it."

"That won't do, boys," Carney said; "if Caribou can't swear to a horse's brand, how can he swear to the beast?"

"And if Fourteen-foot'd come back and stand up here and swear it was his hawse, that wouldn't do either, would it, Bulldog?" And Kootenay cackled.

"Johnson wouldn't say so--he'd know better. His cayuse had a club foot, an inturned left forefoot. I picked it up, here and there, for miles back on the trail, sometimes fair on top of Johnson's big boot track, and sometimes Johnson's were on top when he travelled behind."

The men stared; and Graham asked: "What do you say to that, Caribou? Did you ever map out Fourteen-foot's cayuse--what his travellers was like?"

"I never looked at his feet--there wasn't no reason to; I was minin'."

"There's another little test we can make," Carney suggested. "Have you got any of Johnson's belongings--a coat?"

"We got his coat," Graham answered; "it was pretty bad wrecked with the wolves, and we kinder fixed the remains up decent in a suit of store clothes."

At Carney's request the coat was brought, a rough Mackinaw, and from one of the men present he got a miner's magnifying glass, saying, as he examined the coat:

"This ought, naturally, to be pretty well filled with hairs from that cayuse of Johnson's; and while two horses may look alike, there's generally a difference in the hair."

Carney's surmise proved correct; dozens of short hairs were imbedded in the coat, principally in the sleeves. Then hair was plucked from many different parts of the cayuse's body, and the two lots were viewed through the glass. They were different. The hair on the cayuse standing in the yard was coarser, redder, longer, for its Indian owner had let it run like a wild goat; and Fourteen-foot had given his cayuse considerable attention. There were also some white hairs in the coat warp, and on this cayuse there was not a

single white hair to be seen.

When questioned Caribou would not emphatically declare that there had not been a star or a white stripe in the forehead of Johnson's horse.

These things caused one or two of the men to waver, for if it were not Johnson's cayuse, if Caribou were mistaken, there was no direct evidence to connect Harry Holt with the murder.

Kootenay Jim objected that the examination of the hair was nothing; that Carney, like a clever lawyer, was trying to get the murderer off on a technicality. As to the club foot they had only Carney's guess, whereas Caribou had never seen any club foot on Johnson's horse.

"We can prove that part of it," Graham said; "we can go back on the trail and see what Bulldog seen."

Half a dozen men approved this, saying: "We'll put off the hangin' and go back."

But Carney objected.

When he did so Kootenay Jim and John from Slocan raised a howl of derision, Kootenay saying: "When we calls his bluff he throws his hand in the discard. There ain't no club foot anywheres; it's just a game to gain time to give this coyote, Holt, a chance to make a get-away. We're bein' buffaloed--we're wastin' time. We gets a murderer on a murdered man's hawse, with the gold in his pockets, and Bulldog Carney puts some hawse hairs under a glass, hands out a pipe dream bout some ghost tracks back on the trail, and reaches out to grab the pot. Hell! you'd think we was a damn lot of tenderfeet."

This harangue had an effect on the angry men, but seemingly none

whatever upon Bulldog, for he said quietly:

"I don't want a troop of men to go back on the trail just now, because I'm going out myself to bring the murderer in. I can get him alone, for if he does see me he won't think that I'm after him, simply that I'm trailing. But if a party goes they'll never see him. He's a clever devil, and will make his get-away. All I want on this evidence is that you hold Holt till I get back. I'll bring the foreleg of that cayuse with a club foot, for there's no doubt the murderer made sure that the wolves got him too."

They had worked back into the hotel by now, and, inside, Kootenay Jim and his two cronies had each taken a big drink of whisky, whispering together as they drank.

As Carney and Graham entered, Kootenay's shrill voice was saying:

"We're bein' flim-flammed--played for a lot of kids. There ain't been a damn thing 'cept lookin' at some hawse hairs through a glass. Men has been murdered on the trail, and who done it--somebody. Caribou's mate was murdered, and we find his gold on a man that was stony broke here, was bummin' on the town, spongin' on Seth Long; he hadn't two bits. And 'cause his sister stands well with Bulldog he palms this three-card trick with hawse hairs, and we got to let the murderer go."

"You lie, Kootenay!" The words had come from Jeanette. "My brother wouldn't tell you where he got the gold--he'd let you hang him first; but I will tell. I took it out of Seth's safe and gave it to him to get out of the country, because I knew that you and those two other hounds, Slocan and Denver, would murder him some night because he knocked you down for insulting me."

"That's a lie!" Kootenay screamed; "you and Bulldog 're runnin'

mates and you've put this up."

There was a cry of warning from Slocan, and Kootenay whirled, drawing his gun. As he did so him arm dropped and his gun clattered to the floor, for Carney's bullet had splintered its butt, incidentally clipping away a finger. And the same weapon in Carney's hand was covering Slocan and Denver as they stood side by side, their backs to the bar.

No one spoke; almost absolute stillness hung in the air for five seconds. Half the men in the room had drawn, but no one pulled a trigger--no one spoke.

It was Carney who broke the silence:

"Jeanette, bind that hound's hand up; and you, Seth, send for the doctor--I guess he's too much of a man to be in this gang."

A wave of relief swept over the room; men coughed or spat as the tension slipped, dropping their guns back into holsters.

Kootenay Jim, cowed by the damaged hand, holding it in his left, followed Jeanette out of the room.

As the girl disappeared Harry Holt, who had stood between the two men, his wrists bound behind his back, said:

"My sister told a lie to shield me. I stole the gold myself from Seth's safe. I wanted to get out of this hell hole 'cause I knew I'd got to kill Kootenay or he'd get me. That's why I didn't tell before where the gold come from."

"Here, Seth," Carney called as Long came back into the room, "you missed any gold--what do you know about Holt's story that he got the gold from your safe?"

"I ain't looked--I don't keep no close track of what's in that iron box; I jus' keep the key, and a couple of bags might get lifted and I wouldn't know. If Jeanette took a bag or two to stake her brother, I guess she's got a right to, 'cause we're pardners in all I got."

"I took the key when Seth was sleeping," Harry declared. "Jeanette didn't know I was going to take it."

"But your sister claims she took it, so how'd she say that if it isn't a frame-up?" Graham asked.

"I told her just as I was pullin' out, so she wouldn't let Seth get in wrong by blamin' her or somebody else."

"Don't you see, boys," Carney interposed, "if you'd swung off this man, and all this was proved afterwards, you'd be in wrong? You didn't find on Harry a tenth of the gold Fourteen-foot likely had."

"That skunk hid it," Caribou declared; "he just kept enough to get out with."

Poor old Caribou was thirsting for revenge; in his narrowed hate he would have been satisfied if the party had pulled a perfect stranger off a passing train and lynched him; it would have been a quid pro quo. He felt that he was being cheated by the superior cleverness of Bulldog Carney. He had seen miners beaten out of their just gold claims by professional sharks; the fine reasoning, the microscopic evidence of the hairs, the intoed hoof, all these things were beyond him. He was honest in his conviction that the cayuse was Johnson's, and feared that the man who had killed his friend would slip through their fingers.

"It's just like this, boys," he said, "me and Fourteen-foot was together so long that if he was away somewhere I'd know he was comin' back

a day afore he hit camp--I'd feel it, same's I turned back on the trail there and found him all chawed up by the wolves. There wasn't no reason to look over that cliff only ol' Fourteen-foot a-callin' me. And now he's a-tellin' me inside that that skunk there murdered him when he wasn't lookin'. And if you chaps ain't got the sand to push this to a finish I'll get the man that killed Fourteen-foot; he won't never get away. If you boys is just a pack of coyotes that howls good and plenty till somebody calls 'em, and is goin' to slink away with your tails between your legs for fear you'll be rounded up for the lynchin', you can turn this murderer loose right now--you don't need to worry what'll happen to him. I'll be too danged lonesome without Fourteen-foot to figger what's comin' to me. Turn him loose--take the hobbles off him. You fellers go home and pull your blankets over your heads so's you won't see no ghosts."

Carney's sharp gray eyes watched the old fanatic's every move; he let him talk till he had exhausted himself with his passionate words; then he said:

"Caribou, you're some man. You'd go through a whole tribe of Indians for a chum. You believe you're right, and that's just what I'm trying to do in this, find out who is right--we don't want to wrong anybody. You can come back on the trail with me, and I'll show you the club-footed tracks; I'll let you help me get the right man."

The old chap turned his humpy shoulders, and looked at Carney out of bleary, weasel eyes set beneath shaggy brows; then he shrilled:

"I'll see you in hell fuss; I've heerd o' you, Bulldog; I've heerd you had a wolverine skinned seven ways of the jack for tricks, and by the rings on a Big Horn I believe it. You know that while I'm here that jack rabbit ain't goin' to get away--and he ain't; you can bet your soul on that, Bulldog. We'd go out on the trail and we'd find that Wie-sah-ke-chack, the Indian's devil, had stole 'em pipe-dream, club-footed

tracks, and when we come back the man that killed my chum, old Fourteen-foot, would be down somewhere where a smart-Aleck lawyer 'd get him off."

It took an hour of cool reasoning on the part of Carney to extract from that roomful of men a promise that they would give Holt three days of respite, Carney giving his word that he would not send out any information to the police but would devote the time to bringing in the murderer.

Kootenay Jim had had his wound dressed. He was in an ugly mood over the shooting, but the saner members of the lynching party felt that he had brought the quarrel on himself; that he had turned so viciously on Jeanette, whom they all liked, caused the men to feel that he had got pretty much his just deserts. He had drawn his gun first, and when a man does that he's got to take the consequences. He was a gambler, and a gambler generally had to abide by the gambling chance in gun play as well as by the fall of a card.

But Carney had work to do, and he was just brave enough to not be foolhardy. He knew that the three toughs would waylay him in the dark without compunction. They were now thirsting not only for young Holt's life, but his. So, saying openly that he would start in the morning, when it was dark he slipped through the back entrance of the hotel to the stable, and led his buckskin out through a corral and by a back way to the tunnel entrance of the abandoned Little Widow mine. Here he left the horse and returned to the hotel, set up the drinks, and loafed about for a time, generally giving the three desperadoes the impression that he was camped for the night in the Gold Nugget, though Graham, in whom he had confided, knew different.

Presently he slipped away, and Jeanette, who had got the key from Seth, unlocked the door that led down to the long communicating

drift, at the other end of which was the opening to the Little Widow mine.

Jeanette closed the door and followed Carney down the stairway. At the foot of the stairs he turned, saying: "You shouldn't do this."

"Why, Bulldog?"

"Well, you saw why this afternoon. Kootenay Jim has got an arm in a sling because he can't understand. Men as a rule don't understand much about women, so a woman has always got to wear armor."

"But we understand, Bulldog; and Seth does."

"Yes, girl, we understand; but Seth can only understand the evident. You clamber up the stairs quick."

"My God! Bulldog, see what you're doing for me now. You never would stand for Harry yourself."

"If he'd been my brother I should, just as you have, girl."

"That's it, Bulldog, you're doing all this, standing there holding up a mob of angry men, because he's my brother."

"You called the turn, Jeanette."

"And all I can do, all I can say is, thank you. Is that all?"

"That's all, girl. It's more than enough."

He put a strong hand on her arm, almost shook her, saying with an earnestness that the playful tone hardly masked:

"When you've got a true friend let him do all the friending--then you'll

hold him; the minute you try to rearrange his life you start backing the losing card. Now, good-bye, girl; I've got work to do. I'll bring in that wolf of the trail; I've got him marked down in a cave -- I'll get him. You tell that pin-headed brother of yours to stand pat. And if Kootenay starts any deviltry go straight to Graham. Good-bye."

Cool fingers touched the girl on the forehead then she stood alone watching the figure slipping down the gloomed passage of the drift, lighted candle in hand.

Carney led his buckskin from the mine tunnel climbed the hillside to a back trail, and mounting rode silently at a walk till the yellow blobs of light that was Bucking Horse lay behind him. Then at a little hunch of his heels the horse broke into a shuffling trot.

It was near midnight when he camped; both he and the buckskin had eaten robustly back at the Gold Nugget Hotel, and Carney, making the horse lie down by tapping him gently on the shins with his quirt, rolled himself in his blanket and slept close beside the buckskin--they were like two men in a huge bed.

All next day he rode, stopping twice to let the buckskin feed, and eating a dry meal himself, building no fire. He had a conviction that the murderer of the gold hunters made the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge his stalking ground. And if the devil who stalked these returning miners was still there he felt certain that he would get him.

There had been nothing to rouse the murderer's suspicion that these men were known to have been murdered.

A sort of fatality hangs over a man who once starts in on a crime of that sort; he becomes like a man who handles dynamite--careless, possessed of a sense of security, of fatalism. Carney had found all desperadoes that way, each murder had made them more sure of

themselves, it generally had been so easy.

Caribou Dave had probably passed without being seen by the murderer; indeed he had passed that point early in the morning, probably while the ghoul of the trail slept; the murderer would reason that if there was any suspicion in Bucking Horse that miners had been made away with, a posse would have come riding over the back trail, and the murderer would have ample knowledge of their approach.

To a depraved mind, such as his, there was a terrible fascination in this killing of men, and capturing their gold; he would keep at It like a gambler who has struck a big winning streak; he would pile up gold, probably in the cave Carney had seen the mouth of, even if it were more than he could take away. It was the curse of the lust of gold, and, once started, the devilish murder lust.

Carney had an advantage. He was looking for a man in a certain locality, and the man, not knowing of his approach, not dreading it, would be watching the trail in the other direction for victims. Even if he had met him full on the trail Carney would have passed the time of day and ridden on, as if going up into the Eagle Hills. And no doubt the murderer would let him pass without action. It was only returning miners he was interested in. Yes, Carney had an advantage, and if the man were still there he would get him.

His plan was to ride the buckskin to within a short distance of where the murders had been committed, which was evidently in the neighborhood of the cliff at the bottom of which Fourteen-foot Johnson had been found, and go forward on foot until he had thoroughly reconnoitered the ground. He felt that he would catch sight of the murderer somewhere between that point and the cave, for he was convinced that the cave was the home of this trail devil.

The uncanny event of the wolves was not so simple. The curious tone of the wolf's howl had suggested a wild dog--that is, a creature that was half dog, half wolf; either whelped that way in the forests, or a train dog that had escaped. Even a fanciful weird thought entered Carney's mind that the murderer might be on terms of dominion over this half-wild pair; they might know him well enough to leave him alone, and yet devour his victims. This was conjecture, rather far-fetched, but still not impossible. An Indian's train dogs would obey their master, but pull down a white man quick enough if he were helpless.

However, the man was the thing.

The sun was dipping behind the jagged fringe of mountain tops to the west when Carney slipped down into the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge, and, fording the stream, rode on to within a hundred and fifty yards of the spot where his buckskin had shied from the trail two days before.

Dismounting, he took off his coat and draping it over the horse's neck said: "Now you're anchored, Patsy--stand steady."

Then he unbuckled the snaffle bit and rein from the bridle and wound the rein about his waist. Carney knew that the horse, not hampered by a dangling rein to catch in his legs or be seized by a man, would protect himself. No man but Carney could saddle the buckskin or mount him unless he was roped or thrown; and his hind feet were as deft as the fists of a boxer.

Then he moved steadily along the trail, finding here and there the imprint of moccasined feet that had passed over the trail since he had. There were the fresh pugs of two wolves, the dog-wolf's paws enormous.

Carney's idea was to examine closely the trail that ran by the cliff to where his horse had shied from the path in the hope of finding perhaps the evidences of struggle, patches of blood soaked into the brown earth, and then pass on to where he could command a view of the cave mouth. If the murderer had his habitat there he would be almost certain to show himself at that hour, either returning from up the trail where he might have been on the lookout for approaching victims, or to issue from the cave for water or firewood for his evening meal. Just what he should do Carney had not quite determined. First he would stalk the man in hopes of finding out something that was conclusive.

If the murderer were hiding in the cave the gold would almost certainly be there.

That was the order of events, so to speak, when Carney, hand on gun, and eyes fixed ahead on the trail, came to the spot where the wolf had stood at bay. The trail took a twist, a projecting rock bellied it into a little turn, and a fallen birch lay across it, half smothered in a lake of leaves and brush.

As Carney stepped over the birch there was a crashing clamp of iron, and the powerful jaws of a bear trap closed on his leg with such numbing force that he almost went out. His brain swirled; there were roaring noises in his head, an excruciating grind on his leg.

His senses steadying, his first cogent thought was that the bone was smashed; but a limb of the birch, caught in the jaws, squelched to splinters, had saved the bone; this and his breeches and heavy socks in the legs of his strong riding boots.

As if the snapping steel had carried down the valley, the evening stillness was rent by the yelping howl of a wolf beyond where the cave hung on the hillside. There was something demoniac in this,

suggesting to the half-dazed man that the wolf stood as sentry.

The utter helplessness of his position came to him with full force; he could no more open the jaws of that double-springed trap than he could crash the door of a safe. And a glance showed him that the trap was fastened by a chain at either end to stout-growing trees. It was a man-trap; if it had been for a bear it would be fastened to a piece of loose log.

The fiendish deviltry of the man who had set it was evident. The whole vile scheme flashed upon Carney; it was set where the trail narrowed before it wound down to the gorge, and the man caught in it could be killed by a club, or left to be devoured by the wolves. A pistol might protect him for a little short time against the wolves, but that even could be easily wheedled out of a man caught by the murderer coming with a pretense of helping him.

Suddenly a voice fell on Carney's ear:

"Throw your gun out on the trail in front of you! I've got you covered, Bulldog, and you haven't got a chance on earth."

Now Carney could make out a pistol, a man's head, and a crooked arm projecting from beside a tree twenty yards along the trail.

"Throw out the gun, and I'll parley with your" the voice added.

Carney recognized the voice as that of Jack the Wolf, and he knew that the offered parley was only a blind, a trick to get his gun away so that he would be a quick victim for the wolves; that would save a shooting. Sometimes an imbedded bullet told the absolute tale of murder.

"There's nothing doing in that line, Jack the Wolf," Carney answered; "you can shoot and be damned to you! I'd rather die that way than be

torn to pieces by the wolves."

Jack the Wolf seemed to debate this matter behind the tree; then he said: "It's your own fault if you get into my bear trap, Bulldog; I ain't invited you in. I've been watchin' you for the last hour, and I've been a-wonderin' just what your little game was. Me and you ain't good 'nough friends for me to step up there to help you out, and you got a gun on you. You throw it out and I'll parley. If you'll agree to certain things, I'll spring that trap, and you can ride away, 'cause I guess you'll keep your word. I don't want to kill nobody, I don't."

The argument was specious. If Carney had not known Jack the Wolf as absolutely bloodthirsty, he might have taken a chance and thrown the gun.

"You know perfectly well, Jack the Wolf, that if you came to help me out, and I shot you, I'd be committing suicide, so you're lying."

"You mean you won't give up the gun?"

"No."

"Well, keep it, damn you! Them wolves knows a thing or two. One of 'em knows pretty near as much about guns as you do. They'll just sit off there in the dark and laugh at you till you drop; then you'll never wake up. You think it over, Bulldog, I'm--"

The speaker's voice was drowned by the howl of the wolf a short distance down the valley.

"D'you hear him, Bulldog?" Jack queried when the howls had died down. "They get your number on the wind and they're sayin' you're their meat. You think over my proposition while I go down and gather in your buckskin; he looks good to me for a get-away. You let me

know when I come back what you'll do, 'cause 'em wolves is in a hurry--they're hungry; and I guess your leg ain't none too comf'table."

Then there was silence, and Carney knew that Jack the Wolf was circling through the bush to where his horse stood, keeping out of range as he travelled.

Carney knew that the buckskin would put up a fight; his instinct would tell him that Jack the Wolf was evil. The howling wolf would also have raised the horse's mettle; but he himself was in the awkward position of being a loser, whether man or horse won.

From where he was trapped the buckskin was in view. Carney saw his head go up, the lop ears throw forward in rigid listening, and he could see, beyond, off to the right, the skulking form of Jack slipping from tree to tree so as to keep the buckskin between him and Carney.

Now the horse turned his arched neck and snorted. Carney whipped out his gun, a double purpose in his mind. If Jack the Wolf offered a fair mark he would try a shot, though at a hundred and fifty yards it would be a chance; and he must harbor his cartridges for the wolves; the second purpose was that the shot would rouse the buckskin with a knowledge that there was a battle on.

Jack the Wolf came to the trail beyond the horse and was now slowly approaching, speaking in coaxing terms. The horse, warily alert, was shaking his head; then he pawed at the earth like an angry bull.

Ten yards from the horse Jack stood still, his eye noticing that the bridle rein and bit were missing. Carney saw him uncoil from his waist an ordinary packing rope; it was not a lariat, being short. With this in a hand held behind his back, Jack, with short steps, moved slowly toward the buckskin, trying to soothe the wary animal with soft

speech.

Ten feet from the horse he stood again, and Carney knew what that meant -- a little quick dash in to twist the rope about the horse's head, or seize him by the nostrils. Also the buckskin knew. He turned his rump to the man, threw back his ears, and lashed out with his hind feet as a warning to the horse thief. The coat had slipped from his neck to the ground.

Jack the Wolf tried circling tactics, trying to gentle the horse into a sense of security with soothing words. Once, thinking he had a chance, he sprang for the horse's head, only to escape those lightning heels by the narrowest margin; at that instant Carney fired, but his bullet missed, and Jack, startled, stood back, planning sulkily.

Carney saw him thread out his rope with the noose end in his right hand, and circle again. Then the hand with a half-circle sent the loop swishing through the air, and at the first cast it went over the buckskin's head.

Carney had been waiting for this. He whistled shrilly the signal that always brought the buckskin to his side.

Jack had started to work his way up the rope, hand over hand, but at the well-known signal the horse whirled, the rope slipped through Jack's sweaty hands, a loop of it caught his leg, and he was thrown. The buckskin, strung to a high nervous tension, answered his master's signal at a gallop, and the rope, fastened to Jack's waist, dragged him as though he hung from a runaway horse with a foot in the stirrup. His body struck rocks, trees, roots; it jiggered about on the rough earth like a cork, for the noose had slipped back to the buckskin's shoulders.

Just as the horse reached Carney, Jack the Wolf's two legs

straddled a slim tree and the body wedged there. Carney snapped his fingers, but as the horse stepped forward the rope tightened, the body was fast.

"Damned if I want to tear the cuss to pieces, Patsy," he said, drawing forth his pocket knife. He just managed by reaching out with his long arm, to cut the rope, and the horse thrust his velvet muzzle against his master's cheek, as if he would say, "Now, old pal, we're all right -- don't worry."

Bulldog understood the reassurance and, patting the broad wise forehead, answered: "We can play the wolves together, Pat--I'm glad you're here. It's a hundred to one on us yet." Then a half-smothered oath startled the horse, for, at a twist, a shoot of agony raced along the vibrant nerves to Carney's brain.

In the subsidence of strife Carney was cognizant of the night shadows that had crept along the valley; it would soon be dark. Perhaps he could build a little fire; it would keep the wolves at bay, for in the darkness they would come; it would give him a circle of light, and a target when the light fell on their snarling faces.

Bending gingerly down he found in the big bed of leaves a network of dead branches that Jack the Wolf had cunningly placed there to hold the leaves. There was within reach on the dead birch some of its silver parchment-like bark. With his cowboy hat he brushed the leaves away from about his limbs, then taking off his belt he lowered himself gingerly to his free knee and built a little mound of sticks and bark against the birch log. Then he put his hand in a pocket for matches -- every pocket; he had not one match; they were in his coat lying down somewhere on the trail. He looked longingly at the body lying wedged against the tree; Jack would have matches, for no man travelled the wilds without the means to a fire. But matches in New York were about as accessible as any that might be in the dead

man's pockets.

Philosophic thought with one leg in a bear trap is practically impossible, and Carney's arraignment of tantalizing Fate was inelegant. As if Fate resented this, Fate, or something, cast into the trapped man's mind a magical inspiration--a vital grievance. His mind, acute because of his dilemna and pain, must have wandered far ahead of his cognizance, for a sane plan of escape lay evident. If he had a fire he could heat the steel springs of that trap. The leaves of the spring were thin, depending upon that elusive quality, the steel's temper, for strength. If he could heat the steel, even to a dull red, the temper would leave it as a spirit forsakes a body, and the spring would bend like cardboard.

"And I haven't got a damn match," Carney wailed. Then he looked at the body. "But you've got them--"

He grasped the buckskin's headpiece and drew him forward a pace; then he unslung his picket line and made a throw for Jack the Wolf's head. If he could yank the body around, the wedged legs would clear.

Throwing a lariat at a man lying groggily flat, with one of the thrower's legs in a bear trap, was a new one on Carney--It was some test.

Once he muttered grimly, from between set teeth: "If my leg holds out I'll get him yet, Patsy."

Then he threw the lariat again, only to drag the noose hopelessly off the head that seemed glued to the ground, the dim light blurring form and earth into a shadow from which thrust, indistinctly, the pale face that carried a crimson mark from forehead to chin.

He had made a dozen casts, all futile, the noose sometimes catching slightly at the shaggy head, even causing it to roll weirdly, as if the

man were not dead but dodging the rope. As Carney slid the noose from his hand to float gracefully out toward the body his eye caught the dim form of the dog-wolf, just beyond, his slobbering jaws parted, giving him the grinning aspect of a laughing hyena. Carney snatched the rope and dropped his hand to his gun, but the wolf was quicker than the man -- he was gone. A curious thing had happened, though, for that erratic twist of the rope had spiraled the noose beneath Jack the Wolf's chin, and gently, vibratingly tightening the slip, Carney found it hold. Then, hand over hand, he hauled the body to the birch log, and, without ceremony, searched it for matches. He found them, wrapped in an oilskin in a pocket of Jack's shirt. He noticed, casually, that Jack's gun had been torn from its belt during the owner's rough voyage.

The finding of the matches was like an anesthetic to the agony of the clamp on his leg. He chuckled, saying, "Patsy, it's a million to one on us; they can't beat us, old pard."

He transferred his faggots and birch bark to the loops of the springs, one pile at either end of the trap, and touched a match to them.

The acrid smoke almost stilled him; sparks burnt his hands, and his wrists, and his face; the jaws of the trap commenced to catch the heat as it travelled along the conducting steel, and he was threatened with the fact that he might burn his leg off. With his knife he dug up the black moist earth beneath the leaves, and dribbled it on to the heating jaws.

Carney was so intent on his manifold duties that he had practically forgotten Jack the Wolf; but as he turned his face from an inspection of a spring that was reddening, he saw a pair of black vicious eyes watching him, and a hand reaching for his gun belt that lay across the birch log.

The hands of both men grasped the belt at the same moment, and a terrible struggle ensued. Carney was handicapped by the trap, which seemed to bite into his leg as if it were one of the wolves fighting Jack's battle; and Jack the Wolf showed, by his vain efforts to rise, that his legs had been made almost useless in that drag by the horse.

Carney had in one hand a stout stick with which he had been adjusting his fire, and he brought this down on the other's wrist, almost shattering the bone. With a cry of pain Jack the Wolf released his grasp of the belt, and Carney, pulling the gun, covered him, saying:

"Hoped you were dead, Jack the Murderer! Now turn face down on this log, with your hands behind your back, till I hobble you."

"I can spring that trap with a lever and let you out," Jack offered.

"Don't need you--I'm going to see you hanged and don't want to be under any obligation to you, murderer; turn over quick or I'll kill you now--my leg is on fire."

Jack the Wolf knew that a man with a bear trap on his leg and a gun in his hand was not a man to trifle with, so he obeyed.

When Jack's wrists were tied with the picket line, Carney took a loop about the prisoner's legs; then he turned to his fires.

The struggle had turned the steel springs from the fires; but in the twisting one of them had been bent so that its ring had slipped down from the jaws. Now Carney heaped both fires under the other spring and soon it was so hot that, when balancing his weight on the leg in the trap, he placed his other foot on it and shifted his weight, the strip of steel went down like paper. He was free.

At first Carney could not bear his weight on the mangled leg; it felt as if it had been asleep for ages; the blood rushing through the released veins pricked like a tatooing needle. He took off his boot and massaged the limb, Jack eyeing this proceeding sardonically. The two wolves hovered beyond the firelight, snuffling and yapping.

When he could hobble on the injured limb Carney put the bit and bridle rein back on the buckskin, and turning to Jack, unwound the picket line from his legs, saying, "Get up and lead the way to that cave!"

"I can't walk, Bulldog," Jack protested; my leg's half broke."

"Take your choice--get on your legs, or I'll tie you up and leave you for the wolves," Carney snapped.

Jack the Wolf knew his Bulldog Carney well. As he rose groggily to his feet, Carney lifted to the saddle, holding the loose end of the picket line that was fastened to Jack's wrists, and said:

"Go on in front; if you try any tricks I'll put a bullet through you--this sore leg's got me peeved."

At the cave Carney found, as he expected, several little canvas bags of gold, and other odds and ends such as a murderer too often, and also foolishly, will garner from his victims. But he also found something he had not expected to find--the cayuse that had belonged to Fourteen-foot Johnson, for Jack the Wolf had preserved the cayuse to pack out his wealth.

Next morning, no chance of action having come to Jack the Wolf through the night, for he had lain tied up, like a turkey that is to be roasted, he started on the pilgrimage to Bucking Horse, astride Fourteen-foot Johnson's cayuse, with both feet tied beneath that

sombre animal's belly. Carney landed him and the gold in that astonished berg.

And in the fullness of time something very serious happened to the enterprising man of the bear trap.

Bulldog Carney's Alibi

W.A. Fraser

A DAY'S trail north from where Idaho and Montana come together on the Canadian border, fumed and fretted Bucking Horse River. Its nomenclature was a little bit of all right, for from the minute it trickled from a huge blue-green glacier up in the Selkirks till it fell into the Kootenay, it bucked its way over, under, and around rock-cliffs, and areas of stolid mountain sides that still held gigantic pine and cedar.

It had ripped from the bowels of a mountain pebbles of gold, and the town of Bucking Horse was the home of men who had come at the call of the yellow god.

When Bulldog Carney struck Bucking Horse it was a sick town, decrepid, suffering from premature old age, for most of the mines had petered out.

One hotel, the Gold Nugget, still clung to its perch on a hillside, looking like a bird cage hung from a balcony.

Carney had known its proprietor, Seth Long, in the Coeur d'Alene: Seth and Jeanette Holt; in the way of disapproval Seth, for he was a skidder; Jeanette with a manly regard, for she was as much on the level as a gyroscope.

Carney was not after gold that is battled from obdurate rocks with drill and shovel. He was a gallant knight of the road--a free lance of adventure; considering that a man had better lie in bed and dream than win money by dreary unexciting toil. His lithe six foot of sinewy anatomy, the calm, keen, gray eye, the splendid cool insulated nerve

and sweet courage, the curious streaks of chivalry, all these would have perished tied to routine. Like "Bucking Horse" his name, "Bulldog" Carney, was an inspiration.

He had ridden his famous buckskin, Pat, up from the Montana border, mentally surveying his desire, a route for running into the free and United States opium without the little formality of paying Uncle Sam the exorbitant and unnatural duty. That was why he first came to Bucking Horse.

The second day after his arrival Seth Long bought for a few hundred dollars the Little Widow mine that was almost like a back yard to the hotel. People laughed, for it was a worked-out proposition; when he put a gang of men to work, pushing on the long drift, they laughed again. When Seth threw up his hands declaring that the Little Widow was no good, those who had laughed told him that they had known it all the time.

But what they didn't know was that the long drift in the mine now ran on until it was directly under the Gold Nugget hotel.

It was Carney who had worked that out, and Seth and his hotel were established as a clearing station for the opium that was shipped in by train from Vancouver in tins labelled "Peaches," "Salmon," or any old thing. It was stored in the mine and taken from there by pack-train down to the border, and switched across at Bailey's Ferry, the U.S. customs officers at that point being nice lovable chaps; or sometimes it crossed the Kootenay in a small boat at night.

Bulldog supervised that end of the business, bringing the heavy payments in gold back to Bucking Horse on a laden mule behind his buckskin; then the gold was expressed by train to the head office of this delightful trading company in Vancouver.

This endeavor ran along smoothly, for the whole mining West was one gigantic union, standing "agin the government"--any old government, U.S. or Canadian.

Carney's enterprise was practically legitimatized by public opinion; besides there was the compelling matter of Bulldog's proficiency in looking after himself. People had grown into the habit of leaving him alone.

The Mounted Police more or less supervised the region, and sometimes one of them would be in Bucking Horse for a few days, and sometimes the town would be its own custodian.

One autumn evening Carney rode up the Bucking Horse valley at his horse's heels a mule that carried twenty thousand dollars in gold slung from either side of a pack saddle.

Carney went straight to the little railway station, and expressed the gold to Vancouver, getting the agent's assurance that it would go out on the night train which went through at one o'clock. Then he rode back to the Gold Nugget and put his horse and mule in the stable.

As he pushed open the front door of the hotel he figuratively stepped into a family row, a row so self-centered that the parties interested were unaware of his entrance.

A small bar occupied one corner of the dim-lighted room, and behind this Seth Long leaned back against the bottle rack, with arms folded across his big chest, puffing at a thick cigar. Facing him, with elbows on the bar, a man was talking volubly, anger speeding up his vocalization.

Beside the man stood Jeanette Holt, fire flashing from her black eyes, and her nostrils dilated with passion. She interrupted the

voluble one:

"Yes, Seth, I did slap this cheap affair, Jack Wolf, fair across the ugly mouth, and I'll do it again!"

Seth tongued the cigar to one corner of his ample lips, and drawled: "That's a woman's privilege, Jack, if a feller's give her just cause for action. You ain't got no kick comin', I reckon, 'cause this little woman ain't one to fly off the handle for nothin'."

"Nothin', Seth? I guess when I tell you what got her dander up you'll figger you've got another think comin'. You're like a good many men I see--you're bein' stung. That smooth proposition, Bulldog Carney, is stingin' you right here in your own nest."

Biff!

That was the lady's hand, flat open, impinged on the speaker's cheek. The Wolf sprang back with an oath, put his hand to his cheek, and turned to Seth with a volley of denunciation starting from his lips. At a look that swept over the proprietor's face he turned, stared, and stifling an oath dropped a hand subconsciously to the butt of his gun.

Bulldog Carney had stepped quickly across the room, and was now at his side, saying:

"So you're here, Jack the Wolf, eh? I thought I had rid civilization of your ugly presence when I turned you over to the police at Hobbema for murdering your mate."

"That was a trumped-up charge," the Wolf stammered.

"Ah! I see--acquitted! I can guess it in once. Nobody saw you put that little round hole in the back of Alberta Bill's head--not even Bill; and he was dead and couldn't talk."

Carney's gray eyes travelled up and down the Wolf's form in a cold, searching manner; then he added, with the same aggravating drawl: "You put your hands up on the bar, same as you were set when I came in, or something will happen. I've got a proposition."

The Wolf hesitated; but Bulldog's right hand rested carelessly on his belt. Slowly the Wolf lifted his arm till his fingers touched the wooden rail, saying, surlily: "I ain't got no truck with you; I don't want no proposition from a man that plays into the hands of the damn police."

"You can cut out the rough stuff, Wolf, while there's a lady present."

Carney deliberately turned his shoulder to the scowling man, and said, "How d'you do, Miss Holt?" touching his hat. Then he added, "Seth, locate a bottle on the bar and deal glasses all round."

As Long deftly twirled little heavy-bottomed glasses along the plank as though he were dealing cards, Carney turned, surveyed the room, and addressing a man who sat in a heavy wooden chair beside a square box-stove, said: "Join up, stranger--we're going to liquidate."

The man addressed came forward, and lined up the other side of Jack Wolf.

"Cayuse Braun, Mr. Carney," Seth lisped past his fat cigar as he shoved a black bottle toward Bulldog.

"The gents first," the latter intimated.

The bottle was slid down to Cayuse, who filled his glass and passed it back to Wolf. The latter carried it irritably past him without filling his glass.

"Help yourself, Wolf." It was a command, not an invitation, in

Carney's voice.

"I'm not drinkin'," Jack snarled.

"Yes, you are. I've got a toast that's got to be unanimous."

Seth, with a wink at Wolf, tipped the bottle and half filled the latter's glass, saying, "Be a sport, Jack."

As he turned to hand the bottle to Carney he arched his eyebrows at Jeanette, and the girl slipped quietly away.

Bulldog raised his glass of whisky, and said:

"Gents, we're going to drink to the squarest little woman it has ever been my good fortune to run across. Here's to Miss Jeanette Holt, the truest pal that Seth Long ever had--Miss Jeanette."

Cayuse and Seth tossed off their liquor, but the Wolf did not touch his glass.

"You drink to that toast dam quick, Jack Wolf!" and Carney's voice was deadly.

The room had grown still. One, two, three, a wooden clock on the shelf behind the bar ticked off the seconds in the heavy quiet; and in a far corner the piping of a stray cricket sounded like the drool of a pfirrari.

There was a click of a latch, a muffled scrape as the outer door pushed open. This seemed to break the holding spell of fear that was over the Wolf.

"I'll see you in hell, Bulldog Carney, before I drink with you or a girl that--"

The whisky that was in Carney's glass shot fair into the speaker's open mouth. As his hand jumped to his gun the wrist was seized with a loosening twist, and the heel of Bulldog's open right hand caught him under the chin with a force that fair lifted him from his feet to drop on the back of his head.

A man wearing a brass-buttoned khaki jacket with blue trousers down which ran wide yellow stripes, darted from where he had stood at the door, put his hand on Bulldog's shoulder, and said:

"You're under arrest in the Queen's name, Bulldog Carney!"

Carney reached down and picked up the Wolf's gun that lay where it had fallen from his twisted hand, and passed it to Seth without comment. Then he looked the man in the khaki coat up and down and coolly asked. "Are you anybody in particular, stranger?"

"I'm Sergeant Black of the Mounted Police."

"You amuse me, Sergeant; you're unusual, even for a member of that joke bank, the Mounted."

"Fine!" the Sergeant sneered, subdued anger in his voice; "I'll entertain you for several days over in the pen."

"On what grounds?"

"You'll find out."

"Yes, and now, declare yourself!"

"We don't allow rough house, gun play, and knocking people down, in Bucking Horse," the Sergeant retorted; "assault means the pen when I'm here."

"Then take that thing," and Bulldog jerked a thumb toward Jack Wolf, who stood at a far corner of the bar whispering with Cayuse.

"I'll take you, Bulldog Carney."

"Not if that's all you've got as reason," and Carney, either hand clasping his slim waist, the palms resting on his hips, eyed the Sergeant, a faint smile lifting his tawny mustache.

"You're wanted, Bulldog Carney, and you know it. I've been waiting a chance to rope you; now I've got you, and you're coming along. There's a thousand on you over in Calgary; and you've been running coke over the line."

"Oh! that's it, eh? Well, Sergeant, in plain English you're a tenderfoot to not know that the Alberta thing doesn't hold in British Columbia. You'll find that out when you wire headquarters for instructions, which you will, of course. I think it's easier for me, my dear Sergeant, to let you get this tangle straightened out by going with you than to kick you into the street; then they would have something on me--something because I'd mussed up the uniform."

"Carney ain't had no supper, Sergeant," Seth declared; "and I'll go bail--"

"I'm not takin' bail; and you can send his supper over to the lock-up."

The Sergeant had drawn from his pocket a pair of handcuffs.

Carney grinned.

"Put them back in your pocket, Sergeant," he advised. "I said I'd go with you; but if you try to clamp those things on, the trouble is all your own."

Black looked into the gray eyes and hesitated; then even his duty-befogged mind realized that he would take too big a chance by insisting. He held out his hand toward Carney's gun, and the latter turned it over to him. Then the two, the Sergeant's hand slipped through Carney's arm, passed out.

Just around the corner was the police barracks, a square log shack divided by a partition. One room was used as an office, and contained a bunk; the other room had been built as a cell, and a heavy wooden door that carried a bar and strong lock gave entrance. There was one small window safeguarded by iron bars firmly embedded in the logs. Into this bull-pen, as it was called, Black ushered Carney by the light of a candle. There was a wooden bunk in one end, the sole furniture.

"Neat, but not over decorated," Carney commented as he surveyed the bare interior. "No wonder, with such surroundings, my dear Sergeant, you fellows are angular."

"I've heard, Bulldog, that you fancied yourself a superior sort."

"Not at all, Sergeant; you have my entire sympathy."

The Sergeant sniffed. "If they give you three years at Stony Mountain perhaps you'll drop some of that side."

Carney sat down on the side of the bed, took a cigarette case from his pocket and asked, "Do you allow smoking here? It won't fume up your curtains, will it?"

"It's against the regulations, but you smoke if you want to."

Carney's supper was brought in and when he had eaten it Sergeant Black went into the cell, saying: "You're a pretty slippery customer, Bulldog--I ought to put the bangles on you for the night."

Rather irrelevantly, and with a quizzical smile, Carney asked, "Have you read 'Les Miserables,' Sergeant?"

"I ain't read a paper in a month--I've been too busy."

"It isn't a paper, it's a story."

"I ain't got no time for readin' magazines either."

"This is a story that was written long ago by a Frenchman," Carney persisted. "Then I don't want to read it. The trickiest damn bunch that ever come into these mountains are them Johnnie Crapeaus from Quebec--they're more damn trouble to the police than so many Injuns."

The soft quizzical voice of Carney interrupted Black gently. "You put me in mind of a character in that story, Sergeant; he was the best drawn, if I might discriminate over a great story."

This allusion touched Black's vanity, and drew him to ask, "What did he do--how am I like him?" He eyed Carney suspiciously.

"The character I liked in 'Les Miserables' was a policeman, like yourself, and his mind was only capable of containing the one idea--duty. It was a fetish with him; he was a fanatic."

"You're damn funny, Bulldog, ain't you? What I ought to do is slip the bangles on you and leave you in the dark."

"If you could. I give you full permission to try, Sergeant; if you can clamp them on me there won't be any hard feelings, and the first time I meet you on the trail I won't set you afoot."

Carney had risen to his feet, ostensibly to throw his cigarette through

the bars of the open window.

Black stood glowering at him. He knew Carney's reputation well enough to know that to try to handcuff him meant a fight--a fight over nothing; and unless he used a gun he might possibly get the worst of it.

"It would only be spite work," Carney declared presently; "these logs would hold anybody, and you know it."

In spite of his rough manner the Sergeant rather admired Bulldog's gentlemanly independence, the quiet way in which he had submitted to arrest; it would be a feather in his cap that, single-handed, he had locked the famous Bulldog up. His better sense told him to leave well enough alone.

"Yes," he said grudgingly, "I guess these walls will hold you. I'll be sleeping in the other room, a reception committee if you have callers."

"Thanks, Sergeant. I take it all back. Leave me a candle, and give me something to read."

Black pondered over this; but Carney's allusion to the policeman in "Les Miserables" had had an effect. He brought from the other room a couple of magazines and a candle, went out, and locked the door.

Carney pulled off his boots, stretched himself on the bunk and read. He could hear Sergeant Black fussing at a table in the outer room; then the Sergeant went out and Carney knew that he had gone to send a wire to Major Silver for instructions about his captive. After a time he came back. About ten o'clock Carney heard the policeman's boots drop on the floor, his bunk creak, and knew that the representative of the law had retired. A vagrant thought traversed his

mind that the heavy-dispositioned, phlegmatic policeman would be a sound sleeper once oblivious. However, that didn't matter, there was no necessity for escape.

Carney himself dozed over a wordy story, only to be suddenly wakened by a noise at his elbow. Wary, through the vicissitudes of his order of life he sat up wide awake, ready for action. Then by the light of the sputtering candle he saw his magazine sprawling on the floor, and knew he had been wakened by its fall. His bunk had creaked; but listening, no sound reached his ears from the other room, except certain stertorous breathings. He had guessed right, Sergeant Black was an honest sleeper, one of Shakespeare's full-paunched kind.

Carney blew out the candle; and now, perversely, his mind refused to cuddle down and rest, but took up the matter of Jack the Wolf's presence. He hated to know that such an evil beast was even indirectly associated with Seth, who was easily led. His concern was not over Seth so much as over Jeanette.

He lay wide awake in the dark for an hour; then a faint noise came from the barred window; it was a measured, methodical click-click-click of a pebble tapping on iron.

With the stealthiness of a cat he left the bunk, so gently that no tell-tale sound rose from its boards, and softly stepping to the window thrust the fingers of one hand between the bars. A soft warm hand grasped his, and he felt the smooth sides of a folded paper. As he gave the hand a reassuring pressure, his knuckles were tapped gently by something hard. He transferred the paper to his other hand, and reaching out again, something was thrust into it, that when he lifted it within he found was a strong screw-driver.

He crept back to his bunk, slipped the screw- driver between the

blankets, and standing by the door listened for ten seconds; then a faint gurgling breath told him that Black slept.

Making a hiding canopy of his blanket, he lighted his candle, unfolded the paper, and read:

"Two planks, north end, fastened with screws. Below is tunnel that leads to the mine. Will meet you there. Come soon. Important."

There was no name signed, but Carney knew it was Jeanette's writing.

He blew out the candle and stepping softly to the other end of the pen knelt down, and with his fingertips searched the ends of the two planks nearest the log wall. At first he was baffled, his fingers finding the flat heads of ordinary nails; but presently he discovered that these heads were dummies, half an inch long. Suddenly a board rasped in the other room. He had just time to slip back to his bunk when a key clinked in the lock, and a light glinted through a chink as the door opened.

As if suddenly startled from sleep, Carney called out:

"Who's that--what do you want?"

The Sergeant peered in and answered, "Nothing! thought I heard you moving about. Are you all right, Carney?"

He swept the pen with his candle, noted Carney's boots on the floor, and, satisfied, closed the door and went back to his bunk. This interruption rather pleased Carney; he felt that it was a somnolent sense of duty, responsibility, that had wakened Black. Now that he had investigated and found everything all right he would probably sleep soundly for hours.

Carney waited ten minutes. The Sergeant's bunk had given a note of complaint as its occupant turned over; now it was still. Taking his boots in his hand he crept back to the end of the pen and rapidly, noiselessly, withdrew the screw-nails from both ends of two planks. Then he crept back to the door and listened; the other room was silent save for the same little sleep breathings he had heard before.

With the screw-driver he lifted the planks, slipped through the opening, all in the dark, and drew the planks back into place over his head. He had to crouch in the little tunnel.

Pulling on his boots, on hands and knees he crawled through the small tunnel for fifty yards. Then he came to stope timbers stood on end, and turning these to one side found himself in what he knew must be a cross-cut from the main drift that ran between the mine opening and the hotel.

As he stood up in this he heard a faint whistle, and whispered, "Jeanette."

The girl came forward in the dark, her hand touching his arm.

"I'm so glad," she whispered. "We'd better stand here in the dark, for I have something serious to tell you."

Then in a low tone the girl said:

"The Wolf and Cayuse Braun are going to hold up the train to-night, just at the end of the trestle, and rob the express car."

"Is Seth in it?"

"Yes, he's standing in, but he isn't going to help on the job. The Wolf is going to board the train at the station, and enter the express car when the train is creeping over the trestle. He's got a bar and rope

for fastening the door of the car behind the express car. When the engine reaches the other side Cayuse will jump it, hold up the engineer, and make him stop the train long enough to throw the gold off while the other cars are still on the trestle; then the Wolf will jump off, and Cayuse will force the engineer to carry the train on, and he will drop off on the up-grade, half a mile beyond."

"Old stuff, but rather effective," Carney commented; "they'll get away with it, I believe."

"I listened to them planning the whole thing out," Jeanette confessed, "and they didn't know I could hear them."

"What about this little tunnel under the jail--that's a new one on me?"

"Seth had it dug, pretending he was looking for gold; but the men who dug it didn't know that it led under the jail, and he finished it himself, fixed the planks, and all. You see when the police go away they leave the keys with Seth in case any sudden trouble comes up. Nobody knows about it but Seth."

There was a tang of regret in Carney's voice as he said:

"Seth is playing it pretty low down, Jeanette; he's practically stealing from his pals. I put twenty thousand in gold in to-night to go by that train, coke money; he knows it, and that's what these thieves are after."

"Surely Seth wouldn't do that, Bulldog--steal from his partners!"

"Well, not quite, Jeanette. He figures that the express company is responsible, will have to make good, and that my people will get their money back; but all the same, it's kind of like that--it's rotten!"

"What am I to do, Bulldog? I can't peach, can I--not on Seth--not while

I'm living with him? And he's been kind of good to me, too. He ain't--well, once I thought he was all right, but since I knew you it's been different. I've stuck to him--you know, Bulldog, how straight I've been--but a thief!"

"No, you can't give Seth away, Jeanette," Carney broke in, for the girl's voice carried a tremble.

"I think they had planned, that you being here in Bucking Horse, the police would kind of throw the blame of this thing on you. Then your being arrested upset that. What am I to do, Bulldog? Will you speak to Seth and stop it?"

"No. He'd know you had told me, and your life with him would be just hell. Besides, girl, I'm in jail."

"But you're free now--you'll go away."

"Let me think a minute, Jeanette."

As he stood pondering, there was the glint of a light, a faint rose flicker on the wall and flooring of the cross-cut they stood in, and they saw, passing along the main drift, Seth, the Wolf, and Cayuse Braun. The girl clutched Carney's arm and whispered, "There they go. Seth is going out with them, but he'll come back and stay in the hotel while they pull the job off."

The passing of the three men seemed to have galvanized Carney into action, fructified in his mind some plan, for he said:

"You come back to the hotel, Jeanette, and say nothing--I will see what I can do."

"And Seth--you won't--"

"Plug him for his treachery? No, because of you he's quite safe. Don't bother your pretty little head about it."

The girl's hand that had rested all this time on Carney's arm was trembling. Suddenly she said, brokenly, hesitatingly, just as a school-girl might have blundered over wording the grand passion:

"Bulldog, do you know how much I like you? Have you ever thought of it at all, wondered?"

"Yes, many times, girl; how could I help it? You come pretty near to being the finest girl I ever knew."

"But we've never talked about it, have we, Bulldog?"

"No; why should we? Different men have different ideas about those things. Seth can't see that because that gold was ours in the gang, he shouldn't steal it; that's one kind of man. I'm different."

"You mean that I'm like the gold?"

"Yes, I guess that's what I mean. You see, well--you know what I mean, Jeanette."

"But you like me?"

"So much that I want to keep you good enough to like."

"Would it be playing the game crooked, Bulldog, if you--if I kissed you?"

"Not wrong for you to do it, Jeanette, because you don't know how to do what I call wrong, but I'm afraid I couldn't square it with myself. Don't get this wrong, girl, it sounds a little too holy, put just that way. I've kissed many a fellow's girl, but I don't want to kiss you, being

Seth's girl, and that isn't because of Seth, either. Can you untangle that--get what I mean?"

"I get it, Bulldog. You are some man, some man!"

There was a catch in the girl's voice; she took her hand from Carney's arm and drew the back of it irritably across her eyes; then she said in a steadier voice:

"Good night, man--I'm going back."

Together they felt their way along the cross-cut, and when they came to the main drift, Carney said:

"I'm going out through the hotel, Jeanette, if there's nobody about; I want to get my horse from the stable. When we come to the cellar you go ahead and clear the way for me."

The passage from the drift through the cellar led up into a little store-room at the back of the hotel; and through this Carney passed out to the stable where he saddled his buckskin, transferring to his belt a gun that was in a pocket of the saddle. Then he fastened to the horn the two bags that had been on the pack mule. Leading the buckskin out he avoided the street, cut down the hillside, and skirted the turbulent Bucking Horse.

A half moon hung high in a deep-blue sky that in both sides was bitten by the jagged rock teeth of the Rockies. The long curving wooden trestle looked like the skeleton of some gigantic serpent in the faint moonlight, its head resting on the left bank of the Bucking Horse, half a mile from where the few lights of the mining town glimmered, and its tail coming back to the same side of the stream after traversing two short kinks. It looked so inadequate, so frail in the night light to carry the huge Mogul engine with its trailing cars. No

wonder the train went over it at a snail's pace, just the pace to invite a highwayman's attention.

And with the engine stopped with a pistol at the engineer's head what chance that anyone would drop from the train to the trestle to hurry to his assistance.

Carney admitted to himself that the hold-up was fairly well planned, and no doubt would go through unless--At this juncture of thought Carney chuckled. The little unforeseen something that was always popping into the plans of crooks might eventuate.

When he came to thick scrub growth Carney dismounted, and led the buckskin whispering, "Steady, Pat--easy, my boy!"

The buckskin knew that he must make no noisy slip--that there was no hurry. He and Carney had chummed together for three years, the man talking to him as though he had a knowledge of what his master said, and he, understanding much of the import if not the uttered signs.

Sometimes going down a declivity the horse's soft muzzle was over Carney's shoulder, the flexible upper lip snuggling his neck or cheek; and some. times as they went up again Carney's arm was over the buckskin's withers and they walked like two men arm in arm.

They went through the scrubby bush in the noiseless way of wary deer; no telltale stone was thrust loose to go tinkling down the hillside; they trod on no dried brush to break with snapping noise.

Presently Carney dropped the rein from over the horse's head to the ground, took his lariat from the saddle-horn, hung the two pack-bags over his shoulder, and whispering, "Wait here, Patsy boy," slipped through the brush and wormed his way cautiously to a huge boulder a

hundred feet from the trestle. There he sat down, his back against the rock, and his eye on the blobs of yellow light that was Bucking Horse town. Presently from beyond the rock carried to his listening ears the clink of an iron-shod hoof against a stone, and he heard a suppressed, "Damn!"

"Coming, I guess," he muttered to himself.

The heavy booming whistle of the giant Mogul up on the Divide came hoarsely down the Bucking Horse Pass, and then a great blaring yellow-red eye gleamed on the mountain side as if some Cyclops forced his angry way down into the valley. A bell clanged irritably as the Mogul rocked in its swift glide down the curved grade; there was the screeching grind of airbrakes gripping at iron wheels; a mighty sigh as the compressed air seethed from opened valves at their release when the train stood at rest beside the little log station of Bucking Horse.

He could see, like the green eye of some serpent, the conductor's lantern gyrate across the platform; even the subdued muffled noise of packages thrust into the express car carried to the listener's ear. Then the little green eye blinked a command to start, the bell clanged, the Mogul coughed as it strained to its task, the drivers gripped at steel rails and slipped, the Mogul's heart beating a tattoo of gasping breaths; then came the grinding rasp of wheel flange against steel as the heavy train careened on the curve, and now the timbers of the trestle were whining a protest like the twang of loose strings on a harp.

Carney turned on his hands and knees and, creeping around to the far side of the rock, saw dimly in the faint moonlight the figure of a man huddled in a little rounded heap twenty feet from the rails. In his hand the barrel of a gun glinted once as the moon touched it.

Slowly, like some ponderous animal, the Mogul crept over the trestle! it was like a huge centipede slipping along the dead limb of a tree. When the engine reached the solid bank the crouched figure sprang to the steps of the cab and was lost to view. A sharp word of command carried to Carney's ear; he heard the clanging clamp of the air brakes; the stertorous breath of the Mogul ceased; the train stood still, all behind the express car still on the trestle.

Then a square of yellow light shone where the car door had slid open, and within stood a masked man, a gun in either hand; in one corner, with hands above his head, and face to the wall, stood a second man, while a third was taking from an iron safe little canvas bags and dropping them through the open door.

Carney held three loops of the lariat in his right hand, and the balance in his left; now he slipped from the rock, darted to the side of the car and waited.

He heard a man say, "That's all!" Then a voice that he knew as Jack the Wolf's commanded, "Face to the wall! I've got your guns, and if you move I'll plug you!" The Wolf appeared at the open door, where he fired one shot as a signal to Cayuse; there was the hiss and clang of releasing brakes and gasps from the starting engine. At that instant the lariat zipped from a graceful sweep of Carney's hand to float like a ring of smoke over the head of Jack the Wolf, and he was jerked to earth. Half stunned by the fall he was pinned there as though a grizzly had fallen upon him.

The attack was so sudden, so unexpected, that he was tied and helpless with hardly any semblance of a fight, where he lay watching the tail end of the train slipping off into the gloomed pass, and the man who had bound him as he nimbly gathered up the bags of loot.

Carney was in a hurry; he wanted to get away before the return of

Cayuse. Of course if Cayuse came back too soon so much the worse for Cayuse, but shooting a man was something to be avoided. He was hampered a little due either to the Wolf's rapacity, or the express messenger's eagerness to obey, for in addition to the twenty thousand dollars there were four other plump bags of gold. But Carney, having secured the lot, hurried to his horse, dropped the pack bags astride the saddle, mounted, and made his way to the Little Widow mine. He had small fear that the two men would think of looking in that direction for the man who had robbed them; even if they did he had a good start for it would take time to untie the Wolf and get their one horse. Also he had the Wolf's guns.

He rode into the mine, dismounted, took the loot to a cross-cut that ran off the long drift and dropped it into a sump hole that was full of water, sliding in on top rock debris. Then he unsaddled the buckskin, tied him, and hurried along the drift and crawled his way through the small tunnel back to jail. There he threw himself on the bunk, and, chuckling, fell into a virtuous sleep.

He was wakened at daybreak by Sergeant Black who said cheerfully, "You're in luck, Bulldog."

"Honored, I should say, if you allude to our association."

The Sergeant groped silently through this, then, evidently missing the sarcasm, added, "The midnight was held up last night at the trestle, and if you'd been outside I guess you'd been pipped as the angel."

"Thanks for your foresight, friend--that is, if you knew it was coming off. Tell me how your friend worked it."

Sergeant Black told what Carney already knew so well, and when he had finished the latter said: "Even if I hadn't this good alibi nobody would say I had anything to do with it, for I distrust man so thoroughly

that I never have a companion in any little joke I put over."

"I couldn't do anything in the dark," the Sergeant resumed, in an apologetic way, "so I'm going out to trail the robbers now."

He looked at Carney shiftingly, scratched an ear with a forefinger, and then said: "The express company has wired a reward of a thousand dollars for the robbers, and another thousand for the recovery of the money."

"Go to it, Sergeant," Carney laughed; "get that capital, then go east to Lake Erie and start a bean farm."

Black grinned tolerantly. "If you'll join up, Bulldog, we could run them two down."

"No, thanks; I like it here."

"I'm going to turn you out, Bulldog--set you free."

"And I'm going to insist on a hearing. I'll take those stripes off your arm for playing the fool."

The Sergeant drew from his pocket a telegram and passed it to Carney. It was from Major Silver at Golden, and ran: "Get Carney to help locate robbers. He knows the game. Express company offers two thousand."

"Where's the other telegram?" Carney asked, a twinkle in his eye.

"What other one?"

"The one in answer to yours asking for instructions over my arrest."

The Sergeant looked at Carney out of confused, astonished eyes;

then he admitted: "The Major advises we can't hold you in B.C. on the Alberta case. But what about joining in the hunt? You've worked with the police before."

"Twice; because a woman was getting the worst of it in each case. But I'm no sleuth for the official robber--he's fair game."

"You won't take the trail with me then, Carney?"

"No, I won't; not to run down the hold-up men--that's your job. But you can tell your penny-in-the-slot company, that piking corporation that offers thousand dollars for the recovery of twenty or thirty thousand, that when they're ready to pay five thousand dollars' reward for the gold I'll see if I can lead them to it. Now, my dear Sergeant, if you'll oblige me with my gun I'd like to saunter over to the hotel for breakfast."

"I'll go with you," Sergeant Black said, "I haven't had mine yet."

Jeanette was in the front room of the hotel as the two men entered. Her face went white when she saw Carney seemingly in the custody of the policeman. He stopped to speak to her, and Black, going through to the dining room saw the Wolf and Cayuse Brawn at a table. He had these two under suspicion, for the Wolf had a record with the police.

He closed the door and, standing in front of it, said: "I'm going to arrest you two men for the train robbery last night. When you finish your breakfast I want you to come quietly over to the lock-up till this thing is investigated."

The Wolf laughed derisively. "What're you doin' here, Sergeant--why ain't you out on the trail chasin' Bulldog Carney?"

The Sergeant stared. "Bulldog Carney?" he queried; "what's he got

to do with it?"

"Everything. It's a God's certainty that he pulled this hold-up off when he escaped last night."

The Sergeant gasped. What was the Wolf talking about. He turned, opened the door and called, "Carney, come here and listen to Jack Wolf tell how you robbed the train!"

At this the Wolf bent across the table and whispered hoarsely, "Christ! Bulldog has snitched--he's give us away! I thought he'd clear out when he got the gold. And he knowed me last night when we clinched. And his horse was gone from the stable this morning!"

As the two men sprang to their feet, the Sergeant whirled at the rasp of their chairs on the floor, and reached for his gun. But Cayuse's gun was out, there was a roaring bark in the walled room, a tongue of fire, a puff of smoke, and the Sergeant dropped.

As he fell, from just behind him Carney's gun sent a leaden pellet that drilled a little round hole fair in the center of Cayuse's forehead, and he collapsed, a red jet of blood spurting over the floor.

In the turmoil the Wolf slipped through a door that was close to where he sat, sped along the hall into the storeroom, and down to the mine chamber.

With a look at Cayuse that told he was dead, Carney dropped his pistol back into the holster, and telling Seth, who had rushed in, to hurry for a doctor, took the Sergeant in his arms like a baby and carried him upstairs to a bed, Jeanette showing the way.

As they waited for the doctor Carney said: "He's shot through the shoulder; he'll be all right."

"What's going to happen over this, Bulldog?" Jeanette asked.

"Cayuse Braun has passed to the Happy Hunting Ground--he can't talk; Seth, of course, won't; and the Wolf will never stop running till he hits the border. I had a dream last night, Jeanette, that somebody gave me five thousand dollars easy money. If it comes true, my dear girl, I'm going to put it in your name so Seth can't throw you down hard if he ever takes a notion to."

Carney's dream came true at the full of the moon.

The Remittance Man: A Tale Of A Prodigal

W.A. Fraser

PART I

DEAN RUTHVEN, living in England, had a son, George. This would have been a very ordinary state of affairs in the ordinary course of events; but that George Ruthven was the son of a dean, or of any other great church dignitary, was most certainly a rather unbelievable fact. His life was about as uncanonized an affair as one of the way of Piccadilly civilization, and maintained by parental remittances.

Of course, George was consigned to some one--he and his ten thousand pounds that was to start him in cattle ranching; but that didn't matter--nothing matters in the West, for things must work out their own salvation there. Besides, what mattered it how the money was spent? It would go anyway: remittance men weren't expected to make money--they were there to spend it; sent by a Providence which answered the prayers of the men in waiting, the Old-timers.

So when the son of the Dean landed in Cargelly he was welcomed as a part of the manna shower, made free of the club, and colloquially branded the "Padre."

There was no Board of Trade in Cargelly--just a billiard table at the club. And the Padre's affairs were arranged as the affairs of the other remittance men had been, by the chiefs, sitting in solemn conclave about this substitute for a council board.

"A shoemaker should stick to his last," was a patent philosophy; the Padre herding cattle was a grotesque conception. What good would it do--the cattle would die of anthrax, or some other infernal thing that was always bothering, and the golden sovereigns he had brought would somehow be lost out on the dismal plain. It was the stupid calculation of a man sitting in London, this idea of Padre's proper sphere. What he knew all about was horses and racing--there was no doubt about that; he was jolly well full of the thing.

Of course, he would have to have a ranch and a shack; but that was easy: so many square miles of air, bottomed by a short-grassed plain. It didn't even have to be surveyed; it ran from Smythe's Ranch t o Dick's Coulee--ambiguous, but wholly satisfactory for all requirements.

Then a shack was thrown together; the ark, battering-rammed into a square building, would have been an artistic villa by comparison.

The selection of the race-horses required more care. Several of the chaps had horses to sell; incidentally every racing man has a horse or two waiting for a buyer more eager than wise. However, in the end the Padre was fairly well stocked with horses.

Sport of Kings! but the gods had been kind to the dwellers in the wilderness when Dean Ruthven had been hypnotized into sending George the Wayward to the tents of Shem.

And while the direct offerings contributed in London went to the heathen in Africa and divers other places, the indirect, that was the

Dean's by right of arrangement, helped clothe the heathen in Cargelly and educate his tenderfoot son in a knowledge of men's ways.

Of course, ten thousand pounds requires some accounting for if it be expended, and the Padre sent home a fairy tale that would have gained him a prize in any literary competition. The rolling prairie was handled with conventional skill; the invigorating atmosphere was treated artistically; the future of the cattle trade was culled from government blue books. His own ranch, "The Deanery," was touched upon with diplomatic modesty; it would not do for him to boast of his success at this early stage, he stated, but he had most assuredly stumbled upon a real good thing. He wrote this last statement quite inadvertently, for the good thing so prominent in his mind was Whirlwind, a Montana-bred four-year-old mare; but he allowed the statement to stand.

The Dean was delighted when he received this epistle; the Padre had stated at the club that his father would be.

The career of a racing man is always checkered, and the Padre had his ups and downs--a whole raft of downs.

But there was no doubt about his popularity, for he had just the sunniest nature that a man could possibly have. His friends did not despoil him through any sense of meanness; they simply felt that remittance money had been predestined for the good of the greatest number. Socialistic faith condoned all their acts of piracy.

Encouraged by his first literary effort, George drew such Utopian pen-pictures of his ranch life that the Dean began to long for a sight of the paradise which contained his son.

As the ten thousand pounds dwindled into as many pence the Padre

waxed more eloquent; and in the end something akin to a falling of the heavens occurred.

That night the Padre strode into the "Ranchers' Club" with the hoarfrost of an approaching domestic storm thick upon him.

"What do you suppose is up, you fellows?" he gasped.

"Not Whirlwind! Not gone wrong, has she?" queried one excitedly.

"Bah!" ejaculated the Padre; "do you think I'd make a fuss about that?"

"Let a man guess," commanded Major Lance. "Sunflower has gone back on the Padre." Sunflower was a girl--also in the story.

"Don't chaff," pleaded the Padre, petulantly. "This is serious business. The Guv'nor is coming out--by Jove!"

A silence, an unhealthy quiet, settled over the Council.

"He'll be here on the twenty-first," continued George, despondently.

"Thunder! the race meet is on the twenty-ninth."

"That's just it," lamented the Padre.

Whirlwind must start; if she didn't, the Winnipeg horse would clean them out.

The Padre thought ruefully of his glamourous account of the cattle ranch and the large herd of many cattle. Besides, the Dean was deuced inquisitive; that was his business, to investigate and lay bare the truth.

"I say, you fellows," cried the Padre, "I haven't got a hoof--not a split hoof, out at 'The Deanery.' What am I to do?"

The others had been thinking only of Whirlwind; this was a new problem.

"You surprise me," said the Major. "Will the Dean expect to see cattle on your ranch?" he queried, with solicitous sarcasm.

"Don't be inquisitive!" interrupted one. "Of course he will. What do you suppose he is coming here for--to play whist?"

The Padre stroked his mustache and looked grateful.

"Who's got any cattle?" queried the Major. "Here, Lancaster, you have."

"Oh, they're all mixed up with everybody else's on the range."

"All the better," retorted the Major. "Some of you fellows must round up a tidy bunch of a couple of hundred, and run them out to 'The Deanery' for Ruthven. His Guv'nor is coming out here to see something, and we can't give the country a black eye."

"Gad! I should say not," chipped in the owner of Pot Luck Ranch. "He'd go back and stop all emigration; then what would become of you chaps with no remittance Johnnies to batten off?"

"By Jove! You fellows are a good lot," declared the Padre; "that's a weight off my mind. I've been in no end of a blue funk ever since I got the pater's letter. About Whirlwind--"

"Yes, what about the mare?" they all cried in simultaneous anxiety.

"Well, the Guv'nor's death on gee-gees."

"Strange," muttered the Major, sarcastically.

"Don't be a flippant goat," snapped Ruthven. "He hates race-horses worse than--than--"

"Than the man in opposition," volunteered Pot Luck.

"Exactly--if possible," concurred George.

"Cable him you're dead, Padre," suggested a big giant from whose broad shoulders hung a silk-worked buckskin coat.

"That wouldn't stop him," said the Padre; "nothing will stop him--you don't know the Guv'nor, you fellows. When he gets an idea in his head you've simply got to sit tight and dodge the idea--that's all; I know him."

"Coming on the twenty-first," mused the Major; "and the races are on the twenty-ninth--a whole week; doubt if he'll stay that long."

"Hope not," ejaculated the son. "It wouldn't be so bad if I didn't have to ride the measly beast myself; she doesn't gallop well for anyone else. How the deuce am I to work her, with the Guv'nor about?"

"By George!" exclaimed Pot Luck; "if the Dean stays we must get Sunflower to help us out; she's clever--there's no doubt about that--just confide the whole business to her, and she'll keep him out of the way."

Then for days the Council in their spare moments prepared for the advent of Dean Ruthven. The Padre's ranch was stocked with cattle; the shack knocked into some sort of shape; empty bottles thrown into a little coulee; a permanent staff of two servants put on; three or four cow-punchers hired to patrol the range; and an evanescent air of

prosperity sprayed over the place.

All these details were arranged by the Council; the Padre was told off to the training of Whirlwind and the other equine marvels in his racing string.

The Sunflower, so named because she was just like one of the slender, bright, happy, delicate-leaved sunflowers of the prairie, would most certainly have done a great deal more than this for the Padre, because--because--well, never mind. Love is a compelling master. She was of good family, and lived with her brother, Colonel Sloan, who was Indian Agent on the Blood Reserve. The Colonel was not of the Council, and had an idea that his sister might do much better than marry George Ruthven.

As arranged in the calendar, the twenty-first came around in its proper place, and, according to a telegram received, the Dean would arrive by train that night, or, really, next morning, at two o'clock.

The Council passed a resolution, unanimously, that they would act as a bodyguard to the Padre upon the arrival of his father. The late hour was no bar to this, for, as a rule, Cargelly went to bed very early--in the morning.

Divers games of more or less scientific interest helped while away the time, and the Club steward had received orders to pass the word in time for them to reach the station before the arrival of Dean Ruthven's train.

George was arrayed in orthodox, more than orthodox, ranch costume. Beginning at the bottom, his feet were tight cramped in narrow, high-heeled, Mexican-spurred riding boots; brown leather chapps, long-fringed up the sides, spread their wide expanse from boot to hip; a belt, wide as a surcingle, acted as a conjunction

between these and a flannel shirt, wide open on his sun-browned throat; buckskin coat, wide-brimmed cowboy hat, and a general air of serious business completed the disguise.

All the fellows approved of the get-up. It was the usual antithesis to Regent Street regalia; all the remittance men went in for it when they were young in their Western novitiate.

"It will be worth a thousand pounds to you, at least," the Major said.

"It will gladden your parent's heart," declared Pot Luck; "damned if you don't look as funny as Buffalo Bill."

Ruthven stalked across the hardwood floor of the billiard room proudly; his narrow-heeled boots jingled their old spurs until they clanked a victorious pæan. Everybody looked pleased.

"Touch him for two thousand guineas," hazarded Drake, who was in from his ranch at Stand Off; "hanged if I ever saw a better set-up cowpuncher than you are, Padre."

"Wish the Sunflower could see him now," muttered Pot Luck; "she'd giv him his congè."

"Train's on time, gentlemen," said the steward, at the billiard-room door; "she'll be here in five minutes."

As the Council trooped out the steward told the second steward that he "reckoned as 'ow the Goov'nor of the Territories was coming up from Regina. There'll be Gimmy-'ell to pay, too, if it's 'im, for 'e's a corker--an all-night bird." He didn't know it was a dean coming all the way from London to see his reformed son.

Ruthven walked up and down the station platform with less assurance than he had in the club billiard room. "I'll be in a bally hat,"

he confided to the Major, "if the Guv'nor finds out anything; and he's got eyes like a fluorescent lamp. At home he spoiled one of the best coups any man ever had, and said he was glad of it, too, though it broke me."

The blare eye of the express swayed drunkenly around a curve; giant wheels crunched from steel rails an unofficial announcement of Dean Ruthven's arrival. It startled the Padre--it was like a premonition of evil. A heavy-eyed porter struggled from the sleeper, dark, bulging objects clinging to him at every angle; behind came a slim, stoop-shouldered man in a heavy ulster.

"That's the Guv'nor," murmured Ruthven and, striding forward, took cheery possession of the Dean. It was an eye-opener to the ecclesiastical traveller, this reception of much multitude: also what a whole-souled grip these Westerners of stalwart frame were so prodigal of. They were introduced en masse--for the Western night wind was bleak--as George's fellow-ranchers.

Of course most of them really were ranchers of sorts; and almost every one had a brand--also of sorts. However, Dean Ruthven and his son marched at the head of a goodly company to the hotel. There, in the warm light, the Council were introduced individually, and pressed upon the pleased Dean a whole-souled invitation to spend a week or more at every ranch.

My! but the Dean was proud of his son. He attributed the inspiration that had induced him to send George to Cargelly to the very highest authority. He told the Padre this in a moist voice he was so sure of it that Ruthven said not a word about Whirlwind or any other dispensation of his own arranging.

After his father had retired Ruthven joined the Council at their club, and the plan of campaign was more definitely traced on the map.

"We've omitted something," said the Major. "You've got three cow-punchers, Padre, but you'll need an overseer; it quite slipped my memory. They're great on the overseer business in the old land; I know them. One of you fellows will have to volunteer--it adds dignity to the profession."

Drake said he'd go, for he wasn't returning to Stand Off till after the Meet, anyway.

Next day the Dean, young Ruthven, and the newly evolved overseer drove out to "The Deanery," ten miles south. The Western air, made tonic by ozone which it had picked up in the Rockies, plain to view not fifty miles away, tingled the nerves of the London churchman and sweet-breathed his heart until the short-grassed prairie, flower-studded and bright sky-topped, full of its great measure of boundless rest and untortured calm, almost blotted out all other desirable places from the face of the earth. No wonder his son had reformed; in such surroundings a man must become a child of Nature, a simple doer of good deeds--become filled with a desire to benefit his fellow-men. He would take care that friends of his at home, two friends in particular, who also had sons of unblest restlessness, should know of this safe haven for the wayward craft.

Sitting beside his stalwart boy, he of the divers race-horses, the Dean thought these beautiful thoughts, and made a mental calculation that, speaking of sordid things, he would spare another five thousand pounds if his son's ranching business seemed to require it. By a remarkable telepathic coincidence, George the Padre was at that very moment wondering how much he might induce his father to advance. He was actually in somewhat of a financial hole; unless he managed to win the Ranchers' Cup at the forthcoming Meet, the hole would grow so deep that he would probably come out in China or some other place.

The prairie road, builded by nothing but the wheels that had fashioned its course, was as smooth as a boulevard, so they were at the ranch in less than two hours. The shack was not like anything the Dean had ever seen in England. Once he had seen a couple of goods carriages that had suffered in a run-off, and, somehow or other, this memory came back to him at sight of his son's residence. He had brought a bag of clothes, meaning to stay several days--but he didn't.

Ruthven and the overseer would ride their horses to where the herd was out on the range, and the Dean would drive the buckboard in which they had come. And there were cattle right enough--cattle all over the range, for the Council had done its work with great executive ability and indiscriminate selection. Probably no rancher had ever owned such a variety of brands; if the cattle could have been stood on end, one on top of the other, they would have constituted a fair obelisk, with a charming diversity of hieroglyphics. The Council had either forgotten all about this matter of brands, or trusted to the churchman's ignorance of mundane affairs.

The Dean was delighted; it was like handling the gold from a mine in which he had shares.

George and the overseer rode out to drive up the steers so that the Dean might sit in his buckboard and review them, much as a general has soldiers file past.

"There goes the Toreador's Delight," cried the man from Stand Off to George, as they galloped, pointing to a big short-horn bull. "Where in the name of the Chinook did he come from?"

"He belongs to the Gridiron Ranch," answered the Padre; "though personally he thinks he owns the whole prairie himself, for he's got a beastly temper. I hope he doesn't take umbrage at the Guv'nor's

presence, and raid the buckboard."

"He won't bother him so long as he's in the buckboard; I shouldn't like to meet him afoot though. Any of them are bad enough when a man's set afoot; but this brute is worse than a Sioux Indian."

"Gad!" laughed George; "the fellows have rounded up every hoof within a hundred miles, I believe. I'm afraid they've overdone it. Instead of parting, the Guv'nor will want a dividend."

As George and his cowboys hustled up the laggard animals, Toreador's Delight sauntered nonchalantly up to where the Dean sat in his trap. As Drake had said, if Dean Ruthven had stuck to his ship the al fresco bull fight that presently matured would not have materialized; but the Dean was as inquisitive as an old hen, and, like the bait of an evil fate, on the bull's side was a diabolical-looking brand. It was the huge Gridiron of the Gridiron Ranch. More than that it was semi-raw, for they had lately acquired Toreador and thrown their brand on him. "A frightfully cruel thing," mused the Dean; "poor brute!"

Through his humane mind, also meddlesome, flashed divers schemes for marking cattle, quite superior to this barbarous method. "Poor old chap!" he murmured. The bull was eying him with a plaintive, hurt expression, that fairly went to the old man's heart. Swarms of fiendish flies, tormenting the cattle in a general way, assailed this tender brand-mark on the bull with fierce rivalry.

"It's a shame--poor old chap!" ejaculated the Dean, putting the reins down, picking up his umbrella, and descending from his chariot. Toreador's Delight eyed this departure with eager wistfulness; at least the old man thought so.

"Soh, bossy," called the Dean, in a soothing voice, as he walked

over to old Toreador. The bull backed up a little; a man on foot was something new to him--a man on foot in a long, black coat and a high white collar was something utterly new. A horseman was part of the range--he could understand that; but this new something coming straight for him brought a light in his eye that Dean Ruthven should have been more familiar with than he was.

"Soh, bossy! don't be frightened--I won't hurt you," he assured the bull, edging around to drive the flies from his tender side.

Toreador answered nothing; he was simply waiting for the attack to begin--he was ready.

There! with a deft side-step and a brush of the umbrella the Dean had put the wicked torturing flies to flight.

As the brass-ringed end of the umbrella touched the seared bars on Toreador's side he gave a bellow of outraged surprise. That was where the attack was to be made, eh? With lowered head, in which fairly blazed two lurid, red-streaked eyes, he whisked about, and steadied himself for a charge.

Even as the flies had fled, so fled the Dean; he departed with extreme velocity. Light of frame and nimble of foot, he saved himself from the first rush, and made for the buckboard. Also did Toreador. It seemed something substantial to get at, this part of the thing that had stung him in the side.

As Dean Ruthven skipped behind the wheels the bull crashed into it; the horse, surmising that there was trouble in the air, diligently pattered over the plain, leaving one of the hind wheels strung on Toreador's horns. The Dean had thrown all his ecclesiastical dignity to the winds--even his coat, and was busily heading for the much-despised shack.

Toreador gathered up the coat with a frantic jab, and it nestled down over the spokes of the wheel he was carrying.

Fortunately for the humane parson his son had seen from a distance his attempt on the friendship of the bull. "My God--Drake!" he exclaimed, "the Guv'nor's afoot! Old Toreador will pin him sure as a gun!"

"Of all the stupid tricks--gallop, man!"

With quirt and spur the two lashed their broncos into a frenzy of speed. The prairie swirled dizzily under the reaching hoofs of their straining steeds. Would they be in time? The crash of the buckboard startled a muffled cry from George as he drove cruel, cutting rowels up his bronco's flank. Would he be in time?

On they galloped, neck and neck, throwing loose their lariats as they leaned far forward and coaxed their broncos to give the last ounce of speed that was in their strong limbs. Even the horses knew! How they galloped! The racing seat of young Ruthven helped his mount, and he drew away from the man from Stand Off.

When Toreador checked for an instant at the black coat, the horsemen were not a hundred yards away. The Dean was fleeing for his life. Now behind him thundered the maddened bull; fifty yards! thirty! twenty! What an interminable age it took to cut down the brute's lead.

Now Ruthven's bronco had his nose on Toreador's quarter, galloping as though he knew a life was at stake. His rider raised his right arm and swung the lasso. Would it go true? Would it hold? The bull's horns were low as he galloped--would the rope miss? If it did, by a hair's breadth, the Dean, who was almost under the huge nose, would surely be killed.

"Good boy!" shrieked Drake, as the lariat sang in its tense strength and the noose slipped tight and strong over Toreador's horns. "Swish!" went the other rope; and the two broncos, thrown on their haunches, fairly skidded over the smooth grass plain, carried by the impetuous rush of the huge bull.

But Toreador was stopped; and the Dean, with blanched face, tumbled in a heap, twenty feet off.

"You're not hurt, Guv'nor?" called the son, as he and Drake, sitting well back in their saddles, held the snorting Toreador tight-lashed in subjection.

"No, thank Providence!--and you also, boy; just shaken up a bit--that's all."

"Well, you'd better walk on to the shack, if you can manage it, and we'll give this brute a run that'll cure him for a day or two."

It was most decidedly a close shave; it also most effectually cured the Dean of any lurking desire to spend a few days in the seclusion of a quiet ranch.

"Your father will want to leave soon, sure, after this," confided Drake.

"By Jove! we were just in time," muttered the Padre.

After the Toreador had been galloped, quirt-lashed and bronco-hustled until his tongue lolled like a wet rag, the two horsemen cantered to the shack. The Dean had had enough inspection for one day; also he was too much battered about to sit a saddle to Cargelly; and, as has been said, Toreador had thrown the buckboard slightly out of gear.

If the churchman had been proud of his son before over the huge herd of borrowed cattle, he now fairly worshipped him because of his manly rescue. He dwelt at great length upon the hard life his dear boy must be leading--of course this was quite true, literally, but the Dean meant a totally different hard life--a hard life of exposure, riding the ranges, roping cattle, and all the rest of it.

But the Padre had not picked up the roping business as a working exercise; he had taken to it as part of the racing game, so that he might compete in the annual sport.

Next morning they jogged back to Cargelly. The Padre was wondering whether his father would decide to leave that night or next day. The Dean set his mind at rest on this point by observing: "George, at first I meant to spend but a couple of days with you, but--but--well, never mind--you'll be pleased to know that I have changed my mind--"

"He's going to-night," thought the Padre.

"I shall stop at least a week--I can manage it," and the Dean laid a hand tenderly on his son's arm.

The Padre groaned inwardly.

That night, after the Dean had gone to bed, the Council took up all these many matters, and discussed them diplomatically. The saving of the old gentleman's life would, of course, bring funds to the Padre; also the stocking of the ranch had been most successfully managed. If it weren't for the race meeting there could be no harm in the Dean's staying with them; but how in the world were they to keep him out of the way long enough to try Whirlwind with the new horse, Gray Bird, that Ruthven had just got up from Montana? In fact, what were they to do with him on race day itself?

"We could manage the trial," said Major Lance.

"But I've got to be there myself," pleaded the Padre, "and I can't leave the Guv'nor."

"Do any of you fellows know a church--say ten or twenty miles out?" queried the Major.

"There's one at Bow River Crossing," answered Drake.

"That'll do," declared the officer; "you can work it. Get the clergyman there to invite the Dean to some sort of a tea-fight--read a lecture to young men on the evils of amateur sport, or something of that sort."

"What about me?" broke in the Padre.

"You won't have to go," retorted Lance; "one of the fellows will slip out in the morning and start a fire in the grass on your ranch and gallop back in time to nail you for that business--see?"

"And have the trial that day?" queried Pot Luck.

"Yes."

"Jupiter! but who'll attend the lecture?" asked Drake of Stand Off. "I want to see the trial."

"So you may, Dick," assured the Major; "but the other fellows from the Crossing needn't bother."

It was a brilliant idea, worthy of the Council. It was arranged Thursday night. Friday and also Saturday the Dean clung to his son with appalling persistence; where the Padre went his father went; to the club--everywhere.

A gloom settled down over the Council; billiards, even, were a thing of the past. The cry "Here they come!" rang through the ranchers' retreat at least a dozen times a day. Magazines, and papers, and books, that heretofore had only served as ornament, were constantly lying at everybody's elbow. The Dean thought them the most studious lot of men he had ever met; they were always reading.

Friday afternoon the Dean said he would have a nap at the hotel. George hurried down to the club, and the Council were soon deep in an intricate puzzle over some red, white, and blue ivory chips. In the middle of it a steward opened the door and announced: "A reverend gentleman a-lookin' for Mr. Ruthven!" At his shoulder was the Dean.

George sprang to his feet. Luckily the Major was playing. "I assure you, Mr. Ruthven," he said, addressing the Padre, and seemingly quite oblivious of the Deans entrance; "I assure you that you need not grab up the cards in that way, and try to stop the gentlemen from playing, for we are not breaking the rules of the club at all; this is not gambling--it's a new game called 'Stock the Ranch.' It's purely scientific, similar to the German military game. These counters represent steers, and its study is a great help to young ranchers."

"I'm glad to hear that," gasped young Ruthven, with a sigh of relief, "because--because--as butler--I mean, as a director of this club--"

Just then he caught sight of his father, and welcomed him with eager effusion--so glad he had come down, and all the rest of it!

Major Lance had saved the day.

That night the Dean gave his son a check for two thousand pounds. He had diplomatically drawn from the young hopeful the information that such a sum would be most acceptable; in fact, that it was sorely needed. All the previous money had gone in ranch and stock. Of

course, in reality a certain amount of it had gone in stock--racing stock. The Dean could see himself that a more commodious shack was desirable; also fencing; in fact, the utter absence of fences had rather mystified the churchman.

Saturday the Padre had a queer jumble of remarks for the Major.

"Look here, old man," he said, "the Guv'nor's too good a sort to humbug--I'm going to chuck it after the Meet."

"If it goes how?" queried Major Lance.

"Whichever way it goes. The Guv'nor's given me two thousand sov's to buy wire fences and things--"

"And you're going to put it on Whirlwind," interrupted the Major; "I know."

"No, I'm not, nor on Gray Bird."

"Why not?" queried the Major; "it's yours. Put it all on and make a killing."

"It isn't mine to bet with. What I have up already I must race for, but I'm not going to humbug the Guv'nor any more. If things go wrong over this race I'm going to slip away--chuck the whole business after the Guv'nor's gone."

"And if things go right?"

"I'm also going to chuck something then--the racing game; but I stay--sabe? Stay and buy steers. And I'm going to cut you fellows. I don't mind playing up with the boys--I've done a lot of it--but when a fellow's got to lie out of everything it isn't good enough. When I saw the Guv'nor down in front of that locoed bull, and all my fault, too, having

that mixed lot on the range, it set me thinking, and I'm just getting some clear light in on that operation."

"Well, well," exclaimed the Major, impatiently; "perhaps you're right. But you're not going to bungle the race for the Ranch Plate, are you?"

"No, I've got to win that; and we've got to have the trial, too. But I'll tell you what it is, the Dean will have a mighty slim gang at his lecture."

"Well," queried the Major, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Stock the meeting for him; hire some cowboys and fellows to go, just as you chaps ran cattle in on the range."

Major Lance whistled. "By Jove! Padre, you're turning out quite a diplomat."

This was a good idea; and the two men of resource went out into the highways and byways and gathered about as unstudious a lot of attendants for the meeting as had ever entered the portals of any place of worship. They were paid to attend, also were given cayuses to ride out.

Monday was a day of many things; a day of divers interests. The prairie fire that had been planned for the Padre's ranch conflagrated duly on time, and the Dean had to sacrifice the pleasure of his son's attendance at the lecture.

As Ruthven had feared, the regular ranchers from the Crossing District, members of the Council, and otherwise, shirked the talk, and headed for the race course, leaving their seats to the motley gang of paid hirelings.

Seven people cannot be said to constitute a very large audience, but there sat just that number facing Dean Ruthven in the little church at

Bow River Crossing.

The Dean was a man of acute sense, in religious matters at any rate, and he tempered the wind to the short lamb--that is, having a short audience, he gave them a short sermon; and, somehow feeling by intuition their moderate attainments, gave them what was really a straight talk.

Red Mike--one of the hirelings--had gone to the church in considerable trepidation, for he had heard much of the solemnity of such functions. The Dean's sensible talk pleased him so much that, when the clergyman was leaving, Mike felt it necessary to say a few words of thankful congratulation. Holding out a big paw, handy in the arts of bronco-busting and liquor-handling, he said to him "Hanged if I don't like you, Parson."

Dean Ruthven was flattered, naturally; this homage of the uncouth cowboy was gratifying. He stammered a deprecating remonstrance, claiming that he had done so little to merit the other's good opinion.

"Yes, you have, Parson," Mike assured him. "You're all right; you've asked me straight why I like you so much, an' I'll give it to you straight back. I was a bit shifty of ministers, havin' heard as how they pumped it into a fellow to beat the band, but to-day you've monkeyed less with religion than anybody I mos' ever heard speak on the subject--that's what!"

While all this was going on the men who were supposed to be fighting fire were busy over on Cargelly race course trying Whirlwind and the new Montana horse, Gray Bird.

PART II

EVEN as the advent of Red Mike had come as a slight surprise to the Parson, so also the laborers on the race course received a shock, for Gray Bird beat Whirlwind most decisively.

He must be a wonder, they all knew. Now, most assuredly, they would beat the horse from Regina, and the mare from Edmonton, and the two cracks that were coming up from Winnipeg. Even Whirlwind could do it, they thought, but here was a much greater. What in the world would the Council do with all the money they would loot from the foreign Philistines?--that is, if a Damoclesian sword which hung over their necks did not fall. The sword was Dean Ruthven, and the falling of the sword would be his discovery of his son's racing game and the stopping of it.

"He'd stop everything!" declared the Padre. "Didn't I tell you that he forced me in England to give up one of the greatest certainties any man ever had, when I could have won twenty thousand quid over it?"

George was much dissatisfied with the trial, in a way; but he had ridden the mare himself, and she seemed trying all right enough. But the fact of the matter was that, owing to his father's presence, Whirlwind had been thrown out of work considerably; George hadn't been able to ride her regularly. Also his father's mishap, and the many other things, had slightly unstrung his usual good nerve, so he had ridden the mare with an impatient eagerness born of the last few days of nervous strain.

At any rate he determined to ride Gray Bird in the race, and trust Whirlwind to somebody else.

So far as the money was concerned it would not matter which won,

for they would both start as his entry.

But he would give the mare every chance. She was a nervous, high-strung beast, as sensitive as an antelope, and the Padre devised a clever scheme. He would send her out to his ranch and keep her there until race day; then she might be led in quietly, and start in a sweet temper. In his town stables, near the course, surrounded by other horses, and tortured by the bustle of a race preparation, Whirlwind would fret, and go to the post in an erratic humor. She could have her working gallops out at the ranch in the meantime.

Later this idea worked itself out with variations.

Upon Dean Ruthven's return to the Cargelly Hotel, and as he was passing through the office, a young clerk, of an intellect such as fate always seizes upon when she wishes to curdle the milk, called the reverend gentleman's attention and handed him two missives. One was a letter, the other a carelessly folded note decorated with the terse superscription: "Padre Ruthven."

The Dean carried them to his room. The letter was of no moment--an invitation from a brother ecclesiast; the note was of a more complex nature, involving much deliberation and three distinct perusals. This is what it contained:

Dear Old Padre: Have just come back from the Blood Reserve. If you can slip away from the Guv'nor you'd better go out; Sunflower wants her Hiawatha. Go out to buy hay for all those cattle on your ranch. DICK. As Dean Ruthven thought it over carefully it appeared quite as bad an affair as the rush of old Toreador. He was clever enough to see through it at once. Sunflower was an Indian girl, evidently of the Blood tribe, and she wanted to see her Hiawatha, his son George. Also George was to slip away on a clumsy excuse of buying hay. Dick was a man of fruitful resource, without doubt, but his grim joke

of addressing the note "Padre" Ruthven had been a most providential piece of humor, for it had discovered to the father this most terrible state of affairs.

His son, the pride of his heart, and just when he was doing so well, too, to take up with a squaw! This was one of the very things he had feared slightly; he had read much of squaw men--men who had married Indian women; it meant their utter ruin.

He folded up the note slowly, deliberately, and threw it on the table with a sigh. For an hour he sat with his head on his arm, crouched in a broken heap, trying to shut out this terrible vision of a squaw siren. He was roused by the energetic tramp of his son's footstep at the door.

"Good-evening, sir," cried George, cheerfully, as he entered; "you got back safely?"

"Did you get on all right?" asked the father, schooling his voice with an effort.

"Oh, yes; it was a great trial--I mean," said George, checking himself suddenly as he remembered that his mission that day was supposed to be one of fire-fighting; "I mean, the fire nearly beat us; it was a great trial to all the fellows--there was a high wind."

"There's a note on the table, evidently for you," said the father, indicating with his hand the terrible missive. "The clerk gave it to me, and I brought it up."

"Excuse me, sir," and the Padre read Dick's brilliant literary effort. He read it twice, watching the Dean furtively from the corner of his eye. He was wondering if his father had read the note. Why, in the name of fate, had his bronco-headed friend, Dick, addressed it

"Padre" Ruthven? The Dean gave no sign; perhaps he hadn't read it; but George felt that he must prepare for that eventuality, so he said: "It's about some hay out on the Blood Reserve that I can buy for my cattle. The Indians put up hay, you know, for all the ranchers. My friend mentions a girl's name, and I fancy her brother's got the hay to sell. She interprets, you know--especially if her brother's away."

It was a floundering sort of diplomacy, this jumble of the Padre's; but when a man is suddenly thrown into deep water he doesn't always swim his very best; besides, there was a great chance that his father had not read the note.

The clergyman gave no sign--he preserved a silence as undemonstrative as the famed reticence of Dean Maitland; but next morning, when his son galloped off to purchase the apocryphal hay, he thought out a line of action which he conceived would straighten this tangle without scandal.

He rather startled the son on his return by declaring that he meant to spend two or three days out at his ranch. The news was almost too good for belief. Now the Race Meet could go on; surely the gods had clasped the Padre to their hearts.

"I wish to look more closely into this ranch life," declared the Dean.

"The cattle will be scattered now, I'm afraid," said the Padre; "the fire has driven them out on to other ranges."

"All the better," answered his father, "for I shall be in no danger from short-tempered bulls; I really want a quiet rest."

Before George and his father started for the ranch the Council learned of this happy turn of affairs. The Padre did not have to make any excuses to get back to the important business on hand, for the

Dean was equally anxious to get rid of him--he had some business of his own to look into. So the Padre, after seeing that his father was particularly comfortable, and leaving instructions that the whole business of the temporary ranch staff was to be the making of the reverend gentleman's stay pleasant, so that he might abide contentedly with them, returned to town, and prepared for his big coup with Gray Bird on the morrow, Wednesday.

Dean Ruthven was full of the great undertaking he had in hand. He had determined to go quietly to the Blood Reserve, find this Indian girl, Sunflower, and use his moral influence to have her break off the unhappy alliance with his son. He would even pay her a large sum of money.

What he would do with the son afterward he could not determine; first, the cruel infatuation must be disrupted.

The Padre had said in leaving that he would gallop out in the morning to see his sire.

That night the Council were as men who had escaped an avalanche. Diligently they prepared for the financial collapse of all who believed not in young Ruthven's ability to win the Ranch Plate.

The Council knew that Gray Bird would surely win; even Whirlwind might win in spite of her poor showing in the trial; at any rate the Padre had them both entered--they would both start, and the money that would come to their coffers would be like a great remittance from the old land.

Now Wednesday morning, which was race day, the Dean, full of his project, casually learned from one of the ranchmen that the Blood Reserve was close by--a matter of four miles, with a good trail.

The son came out early; solicitously took extra precautions for the comfort of his respected parent; spent a little time in the stable, and went back to town with the cheerful information that his father had no intention of visiting Cargelly that day.

When the cowboys rode out on to the range, the Dean, in lieu of his own clerical frock, slipped on a corduroy coat belonging to his son, went quietly to the stable, and saddled a dark-brown mare he discovered there; it was Whirlwind, but Dean Ruthven knew nothing of her racing life.

He had some difficulty over saddles, rejecting a heavy, Mexican, bronco-busting affair with disdain--it was like putting an easy-chair on a horse--as cumbersome. There was nothing else but an English-made saddle, looking suspiciously light; but it would do for an easy canter of four miles The Dean had ridden much in his young days, and his gentle seat and light hands pleased the nervous Whirlwind; she was like a lamb with him. "What a lovely beast!" he muttered.

At the Blood Reserve he found a group of red-painted buildings; he had expected only Indian lodges, not knowing anything of an Agency. It was a distinct relief. If they contained white people, by diplomacy he could possibly gain much help.

Whirlwind had been there before, so she took her rider to Colonel Sloan's door as straight as fate might have desired.

Hospitality made everything easy; besides, the Dean first of all was evidently a gentleman. "Just a little call," the reverend gentleman explained.

Whirlwind was stabled, and in the evolution of events many things came to light. The visitor was Dean Ruthven; Colonel Sloan was the intimate friend of the Dean's most intimate friend in London; ten

minutes' conversation developed that; also the invitation to luncheon which followed was eagerly accepted.

The Colonel's sister, Marion, who was the Sunflower--only, of course, the Dean knew it not--charmed him as she did all others; he almost forgot his mission in the pleasant surroundings.

He and Colonel Sloan pulled together as though they had been friends all their lives. Into the clergyman's mind came the light of a cheerful prospect. Providence had surely sent him straight to the Agent; this firm-mannered gentleman would help him, he knew. If the Indian maid, Sunflower, were obdurate and refused to listen to reason, no doubt the Colonel with his authority could send her to some other reserve--Kamchatka, or any far-distant place.

So, as soon as the pleasant-voiced Marion had withdrawn from the room, Dean Ruthven in hesitating policy broached the subject.

"My dear Colonel Sloan," he commenced; "may I--may I--ask you to help me in a matter which is giving me great uneasiness--a most delicate subject, I assure you?"

"With all my heart, my dear sir," answered the gallant Colonel; "I am at your service--you may command me."

"Well--to tell you the truth--my son, George, has, I fear, contracted an unfortunate alliance. No doubt it's one of those reckless infatuations which young men are prone to, and probably he hasn't any serious intentions; but in that case it is, if possible, even worse--quite dishonorable; I assure you, my dear Colonel, I consider it dishonorable on his part."

Colonel Sloan was listening with well-bred interest, passing his hand leisurely down the back of a fox terrier that had jumped on his knee.

He felt flattered by the confidence of this church dignitary; also he knew young Ruthven fairly well by reputation.

The speaker continued: "Yesterday, quite by accident, or, perhaps it was the finger of Providence, I discovered the existence of this intrigue."

Maid Marion came into the room at this juncture, and the Colonel, skilled in resourceful diplomacy, gave her a commission that required her considerable absence. When she had gone the Dean proceeded:

"This is a matter that possibly concerns someone in your charge, Colonel--the girl, I mean."

The Colonel started visibly, but tipped the fox terrier from his knee to conceal his confusion.

"You, no doubt, will have an influence over her," said the Dean, with futile imbecility, "so I shall confide in you to the utmost extent."

The Colonel coughed and lighted a cigar. What in the world was coming!

"Now, I think it must be broken off at all costs," declared his tormentor; "at all costs; in fact, I am prepared to pay a large sum of money, if necessary, to prevent this misalliance."

"Quite so!" interjected Colonel Sloan, in a dry voice.

"For, you see, it would never do; would it, Colonel?"

"I think not," answered the Agent.

"No, it would break his mother's heart. Fancy taking a girl of that sort

home to England--if his intentions were really honorable, which I fear they are not. I know I should feel the disgrace very keenly."

"Everybody would!" declared the Colonel, emphatically.

"Quite true. I have no doubt you know the girl I refer to, for, as I have said, she is in your charge. "

"Possibly," commented the Colonel, dryly; "you haven't mentioned the young lady's name."

"She's not exactly a lady," corrected the Dean; "I refer to a girl known as 'Sunflower.'"

The Colonel sprang to his feet with an exclamation horrible in the ears of a conscientious churchman.

"What do you mean, you hound? Have you come here to insult my sister through me--and over your profligate son?"

The Dean was also on his feet, the light of a dreadful fright in his watery gray eyes.

"Insult you, my dear sir--your sister--what is all this--what are you talking about?"

"Yes, my sister, Sunflower--Marion."

The stricken Dean moaned. "I understood that Sunflower was an Indian girl--a squaw; at least, I thought she was. This puts an entirely different face on the matter--please forgive me--I--I--oh, what shall I say? Forgive me--I will explain."

The explanation was tortuous, broken, full of deep humiliation, contrite repentance, and in all the misery of it a glorious sense of

relief that his son had not taken up with a squaw, but was evidently in love with this beautiful girl of good family. Peace finally reigned, for the Colonel was a man of much sense, and felt not like humiliating this churchman who was so thoroughly in earnest over his son's welfare.

"I am so glad I came, in spite of the terrible blunder I made," wept the Dean. "I do hope that--that--we shall understand each other better--I may say, be closer united. Your sister has quite won my heart, and I hope she has George's also."

At that moment a stranger knocked at the door. When admitted he explained that he had come for the brown mare the Dean had ridden. She was wanted in Cargelly.

"Impossible!" declared Dean Ruthven. "How am I to get back to the ranch? In fact, I think I shall go into Cargelly now"--and he turned and smiled on Colonel Sloan. Yes, that was his best plan--he would ride the mare into Cargelly.

But the messenger was obdurate.

"All right," declared the Dean, blithely; "I'll ride into Cargelly on her--I'm most anxious to get in at once;" he nodded pleasantly at the Agent, as an indication that he meant to do something of interest to him.

"She's got to be led in, sir," objected the man; "Padre Ruthven had her entered in a race to start at--"

"Heavens! a race!" gasped the Dean; "my son racing!"

Also the stranger got a shock; he didn't know that the clerical purloiner of Whirlwind was Padre Ruthven's father. He should have been better schooled when he was sent for the mare.

"Excuse me, my dear sir," the Dean said to his host; "I must stop this race. I'll take the mare there myself," he added fiercely to the newcomer.

Into the saddle clambered the Dean; eagerly he galloped for Cargelly; at his side loped the messenger. From time to time he consulted his watch; would he be in time to stop it? For, as they sped, the man explained, idiotically enough, that the son was riding Gray Bird in the race, and that he was to have ridden Whirlwind himself.

With easy swing the thoroughbred mare loped over the smooth prairie trail. If it had not been for the cayuse galloping laboriously beside her she would have gone faster.

"There's plenty of time, Guv'nor," cried his companion; "don't knock the mare about." He had an idea that, perhaps, he would yet outwit the Dean and secure Whirlwind for the race. He even thought of throwing his lariat over the churchman and pulling him out of the saddle. But he gave up this idea; many things might happen; the mare might get away; even the Dean might break his neck.

Four miles off the square, unadorned houses of Cargelly rose on the level prairie like huge packing-boxes. A motley multitude of twisting figures could be seen to the right; that was the race-course--even the Dean surmised that.

Would he be in time? His watch told him that it was twenty minutes to four.

As they drew nearer the brown mare pricked her ears wistfully; the scent of a speed battle came to her nostrils, and she rattled the snaffle-bit restlessly against her white teeth. Straight for the race

mob galloped the Dean; close at his heels loped the cayuse. Swifter glided the prairie under the two horsemen, for Whirlwind was warming to the race taint that was in the air.

"What time--is it--Guv'nor?" panted the man at Dean Ruthven's elbow.

"Two--minutes to four," he gasped in answer.

"They're at--the--post," pumped the other as the wind drove into his set teeth. He could see a dozen horsemen grouped near a man with a red flag, straight in front of them.

Now it happened that the starting-post for this race, which was one and a quarter miles, was at the point where their trail cut through the course.

Young Ruthven was one of the horsemen. He was in a rage. What had become of Whirlwind? He had sent his man, Ned Haslam, a good rider, too, out for her--Ned was to have ridden Whirlwind; next to the Padre himself, she would gallop better for Haslam than anyone else.

He thought that, perhaps, Ned might have her at the post waiting, for there was no weighing out to be done--the race terms being for gentlemen riders, catchweights over one hundred and forty pounds. He had not declared her a non-starter, and his two horses were coupled in the betting. But neither Haslam nor Whirlwind was at the post.

As Gray Bird swerved away from the starter's flag, and swung around on his hind feet, young Ruthven caught sight of the two horsemen.

"Hold on for a minute," he cried eagerly to the starter; "here comes

Whirlwind at last; I think Ned is on her back, too. She'll be under your orders in another minute and can start."

One of the Winnipeg riders uttered an objection.

"She'll have all the worse of it," retorted the Padre, "for her idiotic rider has got tangled up in some delay, and has had to gallop the mare."

"I'll wait," said the starter; "line up, and get ready."

There could be no technical objection.

The Padre beckoned with his whip for Whirlwind's rider to come to the post; the Dean answered with a shout when he recognized his son.

"Back there--line up!" called the starter. "Whirlwind must start as soon as she gets in the bunch--I can't wait."

Nobody recognized the Dean in his tight-buttoned corduroy coat--not even his son; for they were busy trying for the best of the start.

"Hold on!" called the Dean, as he swung on to the course from the trail.

"Go to the devil!" yelled the starter; "I've no time to let you breathe your horse!"

Even if the starter had wished to delay matters the Dean would not have been of the party, for Whirlwind, trained to the quick start, keen for the strife that had been of all her life, rushed through the eager straining horses, carrying them with her.

"Go!" yelled the starter, dropping his flag as they flashed by him all in

a bunch.

Down went the second flag! It was a start--a beautiful start!

As the Dean flashed by his son the Padre recognized him. Great Cæsar! Had the Guv'nor gone mad! It was like a nightmare; he rode as one in a dream. But in front of him was the terrible tangibility of his clerical father riding in a wicked horse-race. Of course the Guv'nor was crazy, but--and he took a pull at Gray Bird's head--he couldn't afford to throw away the race on that account.

At his flank raced the mare from Edmonton; behind, half a length, thundered the two from Winnipeg. Past the crude grand-stand on the first round they swung in this order. Whirlwind had the lead and she meant to keep it; that had always been her idea of a race. Speed she had in plenty; but when horses were in front they threw fierce-cutting sand in her face, and the snapping of the rider's shirts in the wind and the cracking of their whips bothered her.

How she liked the jockey on her back! His strong pull on the bit steadied her around the curves; firm-braced in the saddle he sat quiet--just as a jockey should, she reasoned.

In the Dean's face was the horror of a lifetime compressed into a tiny tablet. With set teeth and braced knees he pulled strong at the mad brute's head. "She's running away with me," he muttered; "I shall be disgraced for life!"

Hard on the right rein he tugged as Whirlwind hugged the circling rail on the left. If he could only pull her off the course!

"That's right," whispered the mare; "steady me a bit wide." Out of her large, wise eye she watched the horses behind. Ha, ha! such sport! They would never catch her.

"Good old girl!" muttered the Padre, as the strong, brown quarters in front of him gathered and straightened with the easy motion of a steam piston. Now the broad hoofs scattered the gravel back in their faces; truly she was a picture.

He eased Gray Bird back after they passed the stand on the first round. The Regina horse slipped into his place at the mare's heels. On his right pounded a big bay from Winnipeg; half a length back was the gray mare from Edmonton running under a strong wrap.

Madly the grand-stand cheered as Whirlwind, still in the lead, swung into the straight. "Who is the jockey?" someone asked. "Thought Ned Haslam was to ride for the Padre--that's not Ned."

"He's a mighty good jockey, though--whoever he is," another answered.

A quarter of a mile from the finish the Winnipeg horse, Cyclone, far-reaching in his big stride, was lapped on Whirlwind's quarter. The Padre saw this; that was what he was lying back for--to see things, and put them right. Into the flank of Gray Bird he drove a spur, and the Montana horse, quivering with the strain of his giant muscles, pushed past the white-faced chestnut that was running him neck and neck, and crept up until his long, sloping shoulder touched the huge thigh of the Winnipeg Cyclone.

Never had such a race been seen in Cargelly. The stand watchers rose to their feet--stood on their very toes in excitement. Would the mare last out--the gallant little Whirlwind? Surely she would, for her jockey, sitting with set face, riding with superb judgment, had not moved on her; not once had he raised his whip. Surely he knew that his mount had plenty in hand, or he would have urged her with whip and spur.

"Cyclone will win!" said a Winnipeg man, his voice tense with excitement.

"I'll lay you a thousand the mare beats him!" said Major Lance huskily.

"Done!" cried Winnipeg.

Cyclone's big nose was at Whirlwind's shoulder now, and they were a furlong from the finish.

"If my rider sits tight," murmured the mare, "that brute will never catch me."

The Dean sat tight--there was nothing else in it for him; a false move on the tiring mare, well he knew, might throw her under the feet of the galloping horses. All the evil that could come to him, all the disgrace, had materialized at the start; therefore he sat tight and waited.

The Padre pushed Gray Bird still farther up, fairly lifting him at every jump. He could not win, he felt convinced, but a little bustle at the side of Cyclone might juggle his stride a bit.

Ah! what a race it was home to the finish post! The big horse, strong galloping, lashed and cut with whip and spur, strained and far-stretched his strong muscles to overtake the smooth-gliding little brown mare but a neck in front. Even the neck lead shortened, and still the grim figure on her back swerved her not a hair's breadth from her stride. Now it was a head, just a small brown head in front. There was only silence in the grandstand; no noise in the air at all--nothing but the muffled roar of hoofs pounding the turf, and the sharp crack of a quirt on Cyclone's ribs.

Only the Judge, sighting straight across the two finish posts, knew whether a bay or brown nose had caught his eye first. In the stand a

babel of voices was yelling: "Cyclone wins! Whirlwind's got it!"

Then, after a little waiting hush, number five went up. That was Whirlwind's number.

The Padre galloped on and overtook the mare.

He threw himself from Gray Bird's back. Back he led Whirlwind. "Sit here for a minute, father, and rest," he said, lifting the old man down; and in a trice he had the saddle on the back of the seat. It was the weighing scales. And the weight was sufficient--two pounds over the hundred and forty.

Eagerly the men who had amassed sudden wealth gathered about this new rider the Padre had unearthed from somewhere. What a clever trick of the Padre's it had been, to be sure. Nobody but Major Lance recognized the man in the corduroy coat. The Padre fought them off, and carried his father from the course, leaving the care of the horses and all the rest of it to the Major and others of the Council.

There was an aftermath of reproach and exhortation and remorse on the part of the Dean, and contrition on the part of the Padre, and the assurance of an undoubted reformation. Willingly he promised to race no more, and where are there fathers without forgiveness in their hearts? There was not one in Cargelly anyway, because, at the end of all things the Dean knew, because he performed the ceremony himself, that Marion, the Sunflower, would guard his son's moral interests as only a good wife can.

The Scoring of the Raja

W.A. Fraser

BURRAPARA was Raja of his own domain after a fashion. The domain of Burrapara was on the Madras side, two days steady steaming from Calcutta.

His father, the old Raja, aided by a bull-necked Dewan (Prime Minister) had ground down the ryots (farmers) for tax-money until the whole Raj had become practically bankrupt.

Then the British Sirdar (Government) stepped in and platonically arranged things. That's the Sirdar's prerogative in India.

Under the new régime thirty-six lakhs a year flowed into the coffers, and the burden on the shoulders of the ryots was lighter than it had been in the memory of ten generations. The Raja was allowed twelve lakhs a year for himself and court, while the Sirdar took the other twenty-four for managing the country, and incidentals.

The Double X Hussars were stationed at Burrapara as part of the governing faculty. It was like sending a public school to a watering place for duty. There were white palaces, and leisure Brahmins, and horses without stint; a big polo ground, a fine race course, and a proper oriental atmosphere as background.

The Double X contingent had everything in life to make them happy--except the Burrapara Cup. Each year, for three years, they had reached out with a "by-your-leave-gentlemen" for this bit of plate, but each year it had gone back to grace the sideboard of the Raja.

Burrapara himself was a sportsman from the first tinkle of the bell. He gathered leopards and kept them in a cage; and once a year turned them out on the plain for an improved pig-sticking bout. This was at Christmas time.

The Double X took themselves to horse and hunted "Spots" with their lances. In the three years only two fellows had been mauled with sufficient intentness to cause their death--that is, two European officers; perhaps a score of beaters and shikarries had also been mauled, but they were His Highness's subjects, and did not figure on the European side of the ledger; so it was good sport, and of a fair interest.

The polo was as fast as they played it in Tirhoot, which is like looking at polo from the topmost pinnacle; and not one of the Double X played a bit faster or closer on the ball than Burrapara himself.

From an earthly point of view it was almost a paradise for men whose lines were cast along that plane. As I have said, the only unreasoning thing was the Cup--they could not get that. Yearly it sat big in pride of place at the annual Race Meet. It was donated by the Raja for an open handicap steeplechase of three miles. It was a retroactive donation, for his own stable always won it. That was why the Double X were sad.

Captain Woolson started it. "If you fellows will back me up," he said, "we'll land that mug this try."

"Going to ham-string the Raja's horses?" Devlin asked. But Devlin had no head for deep plots, Woolson knew that; he was only a lieutenant who danced well.

"The Raja gets this crazy old plate back every time because he's got

the best nags," Woolson observed with an air of conviction.

"There may be something in that," Devlin answered, setting his glass down with a sort of "hear! hear!" ring.

"Devlin, you're an imbecile. You make remarks that are not in the game. What I mean is that we haven't a gee-gee in the whole bally troop that Burrapara can't give pounds to, with, at least, a dozen Arabs."

"That's what's the matter, Woolson," one of the officers said; "we're beaten before the race starts--that's what's the matter with getting the Cup."

"It's a great discovery," said Devlin, sarcastically.

"Look here, youngster, shut up!" said Captain Lutyens, wearily; "it's too hot to blather. Woolson's got a scheme, or he wouldn't be talking--talking's all rot, anyway."

"Yes," continued Woolson, "the Raja is as slick as a Brahmin. He gets fifteen or twenty Arabs down from Abdul Rahman at Bombay, gallops them a bit--God knows where, we never see the trial--and the best of the lot is chucked into this handicap light, being a green one, and beats all our well-pounded nags out."

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Devlin, impatinetly; "all the fellows know that. Your discovery is like going to hear 'Pinafore'-- it's antique. Besides, it's not the Raja at all; it's O'Neill that does the trick. You're an unsophisticated lot, and O'Neill knows just what your nags can do. What do you suppose the Raja keeps him for--his beauty? it's to play the English game against you Feringhis."

Lutyens threw a box of matches at Devlin's head by way of entreaty, and the latter went out on the veranda swearing there was a

conspiracy to keep him out of the good thing.

"Go on, Woolson," said Lutyens; "tell us how to do up the Raja. That young ass is out of it now, so go on with the disclosure."

"Well, we'll have to get a horse down from up country on the quiet to do the trick. What do you think?"

"Where'll you get him?" asked Lutyens.

"Some of you fellows remember Captain Frank, don't you--Frank Jocelyn."

"I do," said Lutyens, decisively. "I've had to live in retirement, financially, since I joined him in a big thing we were to pull off at Lucknow once. But he's always got a fast horse; generally-- yes."

"Well, he's got one called Saladin now, that you simply couldn't handicap down to the form of the Raja's lot."

The others waited, and Woolson continued unravelling his brilliant plot:

"I saw a note in one of the Calcutta papers about this Saladin brute, and wrote up to Doyne. Doyne says he's dicky on his legs, but he'd stand a prep. for one race, especially in the soft going here. He's never won yet, because his legs wouldn't stand training on the Calcutta course. It's as hot and hard as a lime-kiln, as you fellows know. If we could buy him from Captain Frank, and play him a bit in polo here, he'd be sure to get in the handicap with a light weight, and we'd even up things with His Highness."

"I'm if, it, if it's all on the square," said Lutyens. "The Raja's a good sort, and we must have it all straight."

"Gad I I'll tell him we're going to win with Saladin,, if we get him," exclaimed Woolson. "But we mustn't let Captain Frank know about it; he'd never let any sort of a game go through unless he was Viceroy of it himself. We'll get Doyne to buy the horse, and Jocelyn can discover accidentally that he's being sent up to Tirhoot among the indigo sahibs, or to Heaven, or to almost any place but here."

"I'll stand doing Captain Frank up," said Lutyens with candor. "His hand is against every man, and, pro tem., we'll send a punitive expedition against him. I don't mind that a bit."

The truth of the matter as concerning Woolson was, that there was a standing feud between him and Jocelyn over some brilliant coup at Lucknow, and he knew the Captain wouldn't sell him a horse at any price.

So that was the inception of the plot. Woolson was commissioned to acquire Saladin. He wrote his friend Captain Doyne to buy the horse as cheaply as he could--warned him against Captain Frank's rapacity, and explained that Saladin would be supposed to go to any part of the British Empire but Burrapara.

Doyne executed his commission with diplomatic enthusiasm. Jocelyn wanted three thousand rupees. Doyne offered two thousand, and half the first purse the horse won, plate not to count. Theoretically that should have represented a considerable sum--in point of fact, Doyne chuckled softly to himself over this commercial victory, for he knew that Saladin would only win the Cup at Burrapara and no prize money.

The horse was bought and shipped in a roundabout way to his new owners.

Woolson played him in polo just twice, then pretended to make a

discovery. "I'm going to keep that chestnut brute for the races," he assured the Raja, "he can gallop a bit."

Burrapara smiled pensively, for he had Shahbaz in his stable, and it would take a rare good horse to beat him.

O'Neill was an ex-Hussar officer who had found the service too fast for his limited income. Influential friends had farmed him out to the Raja, and he was what might be called commander-in-chief of stables to His Highness. He also made a discovery; the Raja would never have found it out for himself.

"Look here, Your Highness," he said, "the Mess have got hold of a good thing at last. I don't know where they puckerowed that white-faced Arab, but he's a rare good one. He'll beat Shahbaz for the Cup."

"And--?" said the Raja, with oriental control.

"We must play the game too, Your Highness."

"You know best, O'Neill Sahib. It's in your department." The Raja liked to play at officialdom.

"Shall I get a horse to beat them, Your Highness?"

"What appropriation do you require?" asked Burrapara.

"Perhaps three or four thousand, Your Highness."

"I will command the treasurer," replied the Raja, laconically.

Now as it happened, O'Neill, before he left the service, had swung along in the racing game beside Captain Frank. "Frank knows every horse in India," he mused, "and if the rupees are forthcoming, he'll

get just what I want." Though he had not the faintest idea that the Mess had got one from Frank.

So he wrote by the first mail steamer to Jocelyn:

"The fellows down here have picked up a horse somewhere, called Saladin. Do you know anything about him? I saw them try him out, and he galloped like a wild boar. If you've got something in your stable to beat him I'll buy it, or lease it. It's all about the Raja's Cup, three miles over timber, for Arabs and Countrybreds. Captain Woolson is at the bottom of it--I think you'll remember him."

Jocelyn puckered his thin rips and whistled long and softly to himself when he read the letter. "My aunt!" he ejaculated, "they played softly. Who the thunder told Woolson about Saladin?"

He shoved the letter into his pocket, lighted a cheroot, and played chess with this new thing for three days. Then he wrote to O'Neill:

"Woolson was born of commercial parents--he gets this thing from his father, who was a successful soap merchant. They bought Saladin from me to go up country. The Raja has my sympathy if he hopes to beat the chestnut with anything he's got there. I have nothing in my stable could look at him over three miles of country.

"But all the same, I think we can beat out this joint stock company. I've got May Queen, and Saladin has always been worked with her. He's a sluggish devil, and has notions. He won't try a yard so long as the mare is galloping beside him; that's because they've worked together so much. He'll just plug along about a neck in front of her, and the more you hammer him the sulkier he gets.

"If you've got something fairish good in your stable, and the Raja will pay well for the expedition, I'll send the Queen down, and go myself

later on to ride her, for the edification of our friend, the soap merchant's offspring. I'll guarantee you'll beat Saladin, only you must have something good enough to do up the others. Don't let them know where you've got the mare."

These affairs of state were duly laid before the Raja by O'Neill in a general way without too much attention to detail. Kings as a rule don't care for detail, they like to win, that's all. Burrapara simply gleaned that by the aid of a mare, a certain Captain Frank, and his own Shahbaz, he was to win once more his favorite toy; also triumph over the united ingenuity of the Double X Mess. The executive duties he left to O'Neill; also spoke the necessary word to the treasurer.

In two weeks May Queen was in the Raja's stables, and the wise men who had gone out of the West knew not of this back-wash in the tide of their affairs.

Two weeks later Frank Jocelyn sauntered into the Mess of the Double X with his débonnaire military swing, as though he had just returned from a week's shikarri, and lived there always.

"Great gattlings!" exclaimed Luytens; "where in the name of all the Brahmins did you come from? Jocelyn, by all that's holy."

"Where's the balloon?" asked Devlin.

"Nobody ever come here any more?" asked Captain Frank, pitching into a big chair after solemnly grabbing each paw that was extended to him.

"Heaps of ordinary chaps," answered Lutyens.

"But visits like mine are like the cherubs', eh?"

"He's tons like a cherub," muttered Devlin; then aloud, "Here, boy,

bring a peg, Captain Sahib's dry."

"Came down to the fair to pick up some smart polo ponies," Jocelyn volunteered. "Any racing at the fair?"

"Heaps," said Lutyens; thinking dismally of the accursed fate that had steered Captain Frank their way when they had got it all cut and dried for Saladin. "Make yourself at home, Jocelyn," he said, "I've got to make a call."

Then he posted down to Woolson's bungalow. "Guess who's here?" he said.

"Anybody big?"

"Size of an elephant."

"The C.C.?"

"No--Jocelyn."

"Good God! Not Captain Frank?"

Lutyens nodded; Woolson turned pale. "Does he know!" he asked dismally.

"Don't think it. It's a pure fluke, his coming; he's down after some polo tats."

Woolson's face showed that he was still mistrustful. "He'll stay for the races, sure."

"Uh-hu!" grunted Lutyens.

"And he'll spot Saladin; he's got devil-eyes, that chap."

"Uh-hu!" again assented Lutyens.

"We'll have to tell him, and beg him to keep quiet."

"I think so."

"You'll have to put him up, Lutyens, to keep him out of their hands."

"All right."

So that night Captain Frank learned to his great surprise that Saladin was in Burrapara. Gracious! but he was surprised. How had it happened--he had understood Doyne was sending him up country?

Woolson told the Captain a fairy tale about that part of it; but he had to be made free of the secret that they hoped to win the Cup with Saladin.

"Don't tell the Raja nor O'Neill," begged Lutyens. "The honor of the Double X demands that we win that Cup."

"I'll tell nobody," said Captain Frank. "Let everybody find out things for themselves--that's my way of working."

They cracked a bottle of champagne to this noble sentiment, and all that belonged to the Double X was placed at the disposal of Captain Frank during his sojourn amongst them. The Raja had a dozen bungalows splendidly furnished, always at the command of visitors; and Captain Frank assured Lutyens that one of these had already been placed at his disposal, so he declined the Double X Captain's hospitality. "Hang it!" he said to himself, "I can't eat his rations, and sleep in his bed, and play against him; that's too stiff an order."

As race day approached, events outlined themselves more clearly. The Raja had three horses entered for the Cup; Shahbaz, May

Queen and Ishmael. Woolson had Saladin, and there were six other entries, not calculated to have much bearing on the history of the Cup.

"What's this May Queen thing?" asked Lutyens.

Nobody knew; not even where she had come from. She was a country-bred without a record, that's all that anybody could say. It didn't matter anyway, Shahbaz was what they had to beat, that was certain. O'Neill was riding this pick of the stable himself.

Two evenings before the race O'Neill came over to the Mess. He wanted somebody to take the mount on May Queen; the boy who was to have ridden her was ill, he explained.

"Jocelyn will ride for you," exclaimed Lutyens. "He'd get paralysis if he hadn't a mount at a meeting."

"Is she any good?" asked Captain Frank.

"We don't know much about her," answered O'Neill. "We'll declare to win with Shahbaz, but the mare may run well. The Raja'll be delighted if you'll pilot her."

"It'll be better," said Lutyens, "for an outsider to ride than one of our fellows."

"All right, I'll take the mount," exclaimed Captain Frank, "only I'd like to school her a bit to-morrow."

You will see that the tea set had been almost completed; because when Fate undertakes to arrange matters, there is seldom a hitch. Everybody works for Fate--everybody.

Of course there was a big lottery held at the officers' mess the night

before the race; and the Burrapara Cup was the main medium for a plunge.

Woolson was suspicious. "I don't like it," he said to Lutyens. "Frank Jocelyn isn't down here for the benefit of his health; and I'll swear he hasn't bought a single gee-gee. We don't know anything about that mare; I've tried to find out where she comes from, but nobody knows."

"Do you suppose she's good enough to beat Saladin?" asked Lutyens, doubtingly.

"Well, Jocelyn rides her."

"I'm the cause of that," answered Lutyens.

"You may think so, but to me it looks like a job. O'Neill and Captain Frank knew each other in the old days. If they back the mare in the lotteries, I'm going to have a bit of it," asserted Woolson.

This little cloud of suspicion broadened out, until by the time the lotteries were on, there was a strong tip out that May Queen was a good thing for the Cup. The Mess ran Saladin up to a steep figure when his chances were sold in the lotteries.

Nobody but O'Neill wanted to back Shahbaz, and he went cheap. When May Queen was put up, Jocelyn laughingly made a bid, saying, "I'd back a mule if I rode him in a race."

"You're pretty slick, Mr. Frank," Woolson muttered; and he bid on the mare. This started it, and in the end May Queen fetched nearly as good a price as Saladin. It went that way all the evening; the Mess flattered themselves that they had stood by Saladin pretty well--and they had. Of course Captain Frank couldn't well bid on Saladin, he explained; it was their preserve.

When they were finished at last, Captain Frank said to Woolson: "I've got that brute Shahbaz in two lotteries. You'd better take half to hedge your money; you're loaded up with Saladin."

"No, thanks," the other man said, with a clever glint in the corner of his eye, "I've also got May Queen, your mount; I've got enough."

"Do you want to part with a bit of May Queen?" the Captain asked carelessly.

"Not an anna of it. I'll stick to the lot. The Saladin money belongs to the Mess; we bought him together, but the May Queen business is nearly all my own."

He looked sideways at Jocelyn while he said this, watching the blond-mustached face narrowly; then he spoke up with abrupt impetuousness, "Jocelyn, look here, you know all about that mare. Tell me whether it's all right or not."

"I think," answered Jocelyn, leisurely, pouring with judicious exactness half a bottle of soda into his peg glass, "that you fellows here are a bally lot of sharks. You've bought all of Saladin in the lotteries; the most of May Queen, and then want to know what's going to win. You'd better have half of Shahbaz now, and make a certainty."

"No thanks, I'm filled up."

"Do you want to part with a bit of Saladin?"

"Can't do it. All the fellows are in it--all the Mess."

"I think you're missing it over Shahbaz. O'Neill thinks he'll win," drawled the Captain, appearing terribly solicitous for his enemy's welfare.

A little later Captain Frank rehearsed this scene to O'Neill. "I pretended to want a bit of Saladin, or May Queen, but Woolson wouldn't part with any. Lord! but the father is big in the son. Stuck to his pound of flesh like a proper Ishmaelite. Then I offered him some of Shahbaz in the lottery, but he shut up like a knife; he was afraid I'd force it on him. To-morrow after Shahbaz wins, I'll say to him: 'I wanted you to take a bit of the good thing;' and he'll scowl, because he'll be sick at his stomach. I'll teach them to get a good horse out of me to do up a fine chap like the Raja, and then pay for him out of stakes that are not to be had."

Woolson's version of the same thing to Lutyens was slightly different, which only goes to show that human nature is a complex machine.

"Jocelyn's got stuck with Shahbaz in the lottery, and he's been trying to unload on me. He wanted a piece of Saladin. That's Captain Frank all over; pokes his nose in here on our good thing, roots around until he finds out something, then wants a share."

"I wish he hadn't come," said Lutyens, abstractedly. "Heaven knows what he'll do; he's like a Hindoo juggler."

"He can only win out on May Queen," retorted Woolson, crabbedly; "and I've got the biggest part of her in the lotteries myself."

"Yes, but the other fellows are all down on Saladin, and it's the Cup we're really after, not the rupees."

Woolson said nothing to this. The Cup was all right as a Cup, but it would suit him to land his big coup over May Queen.

The next day at the race-course Lieutenant Devlin sauntered up to Captain Frank, and said: "Little Erskine, who is in the Seventh, over in Collombo, is in a bit of a hole; and I'd like to help him out. What I've

got's no good to him--'tisn't enough."

"Say, youngster," drawled Jocelyn, "are you one of the forty thieves that got Saladin down here to do up O'Neill and the Raja?"

"Oh, I think the fellows played fair enough," answered Devlin, "but whatever it was they didn't ask my advice; in fact they drummed me out."

"What are the bookies laying against Shahbaz?" queried Captain Frank.

"Five to one," answered Devlin.

"What does Erskine need?"

"Couple of thou., I fancy."

"Have you got four hundred?"

"Yes; but can Shahbaz--"

"Don't be a damn fool," interrupted Captain Frank, with profane brevity.

It was time to mount for the Burrapara Cup. As they jogged down to the post, Frank ranged alongside of Woolson, who was riding Saladin, and said, "You'd better take half of Shahbaz still"; but Woolson tickled Saladin with the spur, and swerved to one side, pretending not to have heard.

O'Neill was riding Shahbaz, and to him Jocelyn said: "When we've gone half the journey, you slip out in front before Saladin gets his dander up. I'll keep close beside him and he'll never try a yard. But keep on in front, so as not to draw him out."

For a mile and a half, half-a-dozen of the nine starters were pretty well up. As the pace increased, and Shahbaz drew away in the lead, all of the others but Saladin and May Queen commenced to drop out of it. At two miles Shahbaz was six lengths in front; Saladin and May Queen were swinging along under a steady pull, neck and neck.

"He means to stick to me, and beat me out," mused Woolson.

"The blasted idiot is kidding himself," thought Jocelyn. "He thinks he's got to hang to my coattails to win."

Saladin was keeping his eye on May Queen. He had been separated from his stable chum for weeks, and now he was galloping along beside her as in the old days. His soft Arab heart was glad. What a pity she couldn't gallop a bit faster though. The thrill of strength was in his muscles, and he would like to unstring his great tendons that soft warm day, and spurn the red, yielding earth. His leg wasn't a bit sore; ah, there was another horse on in front there. Why couldn't May Queen hurry up?

Soon his rider's legs commenced to hitch at his ribs, and Woolson was chirruping at him to move on. If they'd hurry his chum he would.

Woolson was getting anxious. There was only half a mile to go now, and Shahbaz was still well in the lead. He had ridden Saladin under a pull all the time, and fancied that his horse had a lot left in him; but now when he shook him up he didn't respond.

"Go on!" he shouted to Captain Frank. "We'll never catch Shahbaz."

"Go on yourself," answered the Captain, in schoolboy retort.

Woolson brought his whip down on Saladin's flank. Stung by it the Arab sprang forward, and for a second Woolson's heart jumped with

joy. He felt the great muscles contract and spread under him, and fancied that he would soon overtake the dark bay in front. The mare struggled too; Saladin heard her laboring at his quarters, and waited patiently.

"Steady, you brute!" Captain Frank ejaculated to the mare, but Saladin knew the voice, and after that the man on his back amounted to very little in the forces governing the race.

With whip, and spur, and profane appeals Woolson labored at of his stride a dozen times. The mare struggled and strained every nerve to keep up with her stable companion. Saladin rebelled against the fool who was riding him, and sulked with Arab persistence; raced as he had always done at home with the mare, neck and neck.

Shahbaz was tiring badly. At the last fence he nearly fell, striking the top rail with his toes out of sheer weariness. There was only a short run in on the level now. Would he last out? If Saladin ever ranged alongside of him it would be all over, Jocelyn knew that. In the struggle he would forget about May Queen, and shoot by Shahbaz as though he were dead.

Woolson was in an agony of suspense. Shahbaz would certainly win, and he might have saved his mount, throwing Wim out his money by taking Frank's offer. A sudden resolve seized him. Saladin was sulking and he was worse beaten than the horse; he could not ride him out. He would take Frank's offer now.

Bending his face around toward Jocelyn he gasped "I'll--take --half--Shahbaz--" then he disappeared. That final grab had effectually settled the race. They were rising at the last jump, and his movement caused Saladin to swerve. The horse struck the rail heavily, and Woolson was shot out of the saddle, and planted inches deep in the soft earth on the outside of the course.

It had looked a close thing from the stand. "Saladin'll win in a walk," the Mess fellows said just before the fall: "Woolson's been waiting on O'Neill, and now he'll come away and win as he likes."

When Woolson vacated the saddle so energetically, a groan went up from them. When Shahbaz slipped by the judge's stand, three lengths in front of May Queen, they groaned again; but with official politeness cheered lustily for the Raja.

His Highness sat complacently eyeing the excited people. It was a very small thing to get agitated about, for he had won, you see.

Captain Frank bought Saladin back for a thousand rupees; beaten horses go cheap.