

Lewis Alfred Henry

Faro Nell and Her Friends: Wolfville Stories



Alfred Lewis
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Lewis Alfred Henry Faro Nell and Her Friends: Wolfville Stories

I DEAD SHOT BAKER

"Which you never knows Dead Shot Baker?"

This, from the old cattleman, with a questioning glance my way.

"No? Well, you shore misses knowin' a man! Still, it ain't none so strange neither; even Wolfville's acquaintance with Dead Shot's only what you-all might call casyooal, him not personally lastin' more'n three months.

"This yere Dead Shot has a wife. Thar's women you don't want to see ontill you're tired, an' women you don't want to see ontill you're rested, an' women you don't want to see no how—don't want to see at all. This wife of Dead Shot's belongs with the latter bunch.

"Last evenin' I'm readin' whar one of them philosophic sports asserts that women, that a-way, is shore the sublimation of the oncertain. That's how he lays it down; an' he never hedges the

bluff for so much as a single chip. He insists that you can't put a bet on women; that you can bet on hosses or kyards or 'lections, but not on women—women bein' too plumb oncertain. As I reads along, I can't he'p feelin' that somehow this philosophic party must have knowed Dead Shot's wife.

"The first time we-all ever sees Dead Shot, he comes trackin' into the Red Light one evenin' jest after the stage rolls up. Bein' it's encroachin' on second drink time, he sidles up to the bar; an' then, his manner some diffident an' apol'getic, he says:

"Gents, do you-all feel like a little lick, that a-way?"

"It bein' imp'lite to reefuse, we assembles within strikin' distance of the bottles Black Jack is slammin' the len'th of the counter, an' begins spillin' out our forty drops. At this he turns even more apol'getic.

"Which I trusts,' he says, 'that no one'll mind much if I takes water?"

"Of course no one minds. Wolfville don't make no speshulty of forcin' whiskey onto no gent who's disinclined. If they prefers water, we encourages 'em.

"An' for this yere reason,' expounds Boggs, once when he undertakes to explain the public attitooode towards water to some inquirin' tenderfoot—'an' for this partic'lar reason: Arizona is a dry an' arid clime; an' water drinkers bein' a cur'ous rarity, we admires to keep a spec'men or two buck-jumpin' about, so's to study their habits.'

"As we picks up our glasses, Dead Shot sets to introdoocin'

himse'f.

"'My name, gents,' he says, 'is Baker, Abner Baker. The Wells-Fargo folks sends me down yere from Santa Fe to ride shotgun for 'em.'

"The name's plenty s'fficient. It's him who goes to a showdown with them three road agents who lays for the stage over in a spur of the Black Range back of San Marcial, an' hives the three. That battle saves the company \$200,000; an', they're that pleased with Dead Shot's industry, they skins the company's bankroll for a bundle of money the size of a roll of blankets, an' gives it to him by way of reward. It's the talk of the two territories.

"While we-all knows Dead Shot when he speaks his name, none of us lets on. It's ag'inst ettiquette in the southwest to know more of a gent than what he tells himse'f.

"'So water's all you samples?' puts in Texas Thompson, as we stands an' drinks.

"'It's like this,' explains Dead Shot, appealin' round with his eye. 'You see I can't drink nosepaint none, an' drink successful.'

"'Shore,' observes Faro Nell, who's takin' her diminyootive toddy right at Dead Shot's elbow; 'thar's gents so organized that to go givin' 'em licker is like tryin' to play a harp with a hammer.'

"'That's me,' exclaims Dead Shot; 'that's me, Miss, every time. Give me a spoonful, an' I deemands a bar'l. After which, thar ain't no se'f respectin' camp that'll stand for my game.'

"'I savvys what you means,' says Tutt; 'I reecalls in my own case how, on the hocks of mebbly it's the ninth drink—which this

is years an' years ago, though—I mistakes a dem'crat primary for a Methodist praise meetin', an' comes ramblin' in an' offers to lead in pra'r. Which I carries the scars to this day.'

""Which is why, Dave,' interjecks Cherokee Hall, in hopes of settin' Tutt to pitchin' on his p'litical rope, him bein' by nacher a oncompromisin' reepublican that a-way—'which is why you always holds dem'crats so low.'

""But I don't hold 'em low,' protests Tutt. 'Thar's heaps to be said for dem'crats, leastwise for the sort that's pesterin' 'round in the country I hails from.'

""What be your dem'crats like, Dave?' Texas urges. 'Which I wants to see if they're same as the kind I cuts the trail of down about Laredo.'

""Well,' returns Tutt, 'simply hittin' the high places, them dem'crats by which I'm born surrounded chews tobacco, sw'ars profoosely, drinks mighty exhaustive, hates niggers, an' some of 'em can read.'

""That deescription goes for Laredo, too,' Texas allows. 'This yere jedge, who gives my wife her divorce that time, an' sets the sheriff to sellin' up my steers for costs an' al'mony, is a dem'crat. What you says, Dave, is the merest picture of that joorist.'

""I expects my wife'll come rackin' along *poco tiempo*,' Dead Shot remarks, after a pause. 'I'm yere as advance gyard to sling things into shape.'

""It's as good as a toone of music to see how softly his face lights up. He's as big an' wide an' thick an' strong as Boggs, an'

yet it's plain as paint that this yere wife of his, whoever she is, can jest nacherally make curl-papers of him.

"That mention of a wife as usual sets Texas to growlin'.

"'Thar you be, Dan!' I overhears him whisper, same as if he's been ill-treated; 'the instant this Dead-Shot says "Water" I'm onto it that he's a married man. Water an' matrimony goes hand in hand.'

"'Now I don't see why none?' retorts Boggs.

"'Because water's weakenin'. Feed a sport on water, an' it's a cinch he falls a prey to the first female who ropes at him.'

"'Thar's Dave,' Boggs argyoos, noddin' towards Tutt. 'Ain't he drinkin' that time he weds Tucson Jennie?'

"'Dave's the exception. Also, you-all remembers them circumstances, Dan. Dave don't marry Jennie; Jennie simply ups an' has him.'

"'All the same,' contends Boggs, 'I don't regyard Dead Shot's sobriety as no drawback. Thar's lots of folks who's cap'ble of bein' sober an' sociable at one an' the same time.'

"These yere low-voiced wranglin's between Texas an' Boggs is off to one side. Meanwhile, the gen'ral confab proceeds.

"'You ain't been long hooked up?' says Doc Peets, addressin' Dead Shot.

"'About a year. She's in the stage that time I has the trouble with them hold-ups in the Black Range, an' she allows she likes my style.'

"'We-all hears about that Black Range battle,' remarks

Enright.

"'It's a mighty lucky play for me,' says Dead Shot; 'I don't ree'lize it while I'm workin' my winchester, but I'm winnin' a angel all the time. That's on the level, gents! I never puts my arm 'round her yet, but what I go feelin' for wings.'

"'Don't this make you sick?' Texas growls to Boggs.

"'No, it don't,' Boggs replies. 'On the contrary, I'm teched.'

"'Gents,' goes on Dead Shot, an' I sees his mustache tremble that a-way; 'I don't mind confessin' she's that angelic I'm half afraid to marry her. I ain't fine enough! It's like weddin' gunny-sack to silk—me makin' her my wife. Which I shore has to think an' argyoo with myse'f a whole lot, before I gets the courage. Ain't you-all ever noticed'—yere he appeals 'round to Peets—'that every time you meets up with a angel, thar's always some smoke-begrimed an' sin-encrusted son of Satan workin' double-turn to support her?'

"Peets nods.

"'Shore! Well, it's sech reflections which final gives me the reequred sand. An' so, one evenin' up in Albuquerque, we prances over before a padre an' we're married. You bet, it's like a vision.'

"'Any papooses?' asks Tutt, plumb pompous.

"'None as yet,' confesses Dead Shot, lookin' abashed.

"'Which I've nacherally got one,' an' yere Tutt swells. 'You can put your case *peso* on it he's the real thing, too.'

"'Little Enright Peets is certainly a fine child,' remarks Nell.

'Dave, you're shore licensed to be proud of him.'

""That's whatever,' adds Boggs. 'Little Enright Peets is nothin' short of bein' the No'th Star of all hoomanity!'

"Mebby a week passes, an' one mornin' Dead Shot goes squanderin' over to Tucson to bring his wife. An' nacherally we're on what they calls in St. Looney the 'quee vee' to see her. At that, we-all don't crowd 'round permiscus when the stage arrives, an' we avoids everything which borders on mob voylence.

"Dead Shot hits the street, lookin' that happy it's like he's in a dream, an' then goes feelin' about, soft an' solic'tous, inside. At last he lifts her out, an' stands thar holdin' her in his arms. She's shore beautiful; only she ain't no bigger 'n a ten year old youngone. Yellow-ha' red an' bloo-eyed, she makes you think of these yere china ornaments that's regyarded artistic by the Dutch.

"They're certainly a contrast—him big as a house, her as small an' pretty as a doll! An' you should see that enamored Dead Shot look at her!—long an' deep, like a man drinkin'! Son, sometimes I fears women, that a-way, misses all knowledge of how much they're loved.

""She ain't sick,' says Dead Shot, speakin' gen'ral; 'only she twists her off ankle gettin' out at the last station.'

"Dead Shot heads for the little 'dobe he's fitted up, packin' his bloo-eyed doll in his arms. What's our impressions? No gent who signs the books as sech'll say anything ag'in a lady; but between us, thar's a sooperior wrinkl'n of the little tipped-up nose, an' a cold feel to them bloo eyes, which don't leave us plumb

enthoosiastic.

"'It's like this,' volunteers Enright, who stacks in to explain things. 'Every gent's got his ideal; an' this yere wife of his is Dead Shot's ideal.'

"'Whatever's an ideal, Doc?' asks Boggs, who's always romancin' about for information.

"'Which an ideal, Dan,' Peets replies, 'is the partic'lar gold brick you're tryin' to buy.'

"At the time Dead Shot's standin' thar with his fam'ly in his arms, Nell comes out on the Red Light steps to take a peek. Also, Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie is hoverin' about all sim'lar. After Dead Shot an' his bride has faded into their 'dobe, them three experts holds a energetic consultation in the street. Of course, none of us has the hardihood to go j'inin' in their deelibrations, but from what's said later we gets a slant at their conclotions.

"'Dead Shot's a mighty sight too good for her,' is how Missis Rucker gives judgment. 'It's peltin' pigs with pearls for him to go lovin' her like he does.'

"Shore; bein' ladies that-a-way, Missis Rucker, Tucson Jennie an' Faro Nell all visits Dead Shot's wife. But the feelin' is that they finds her some stuck up an' haughty. This yere notion is upheld by Nell callin' her a 'minx,' while Tucson Jennie alloodes to her as a 'cat' on two sep'rate occasions.

"Dead Shot an' his doll-bride, in the beginnin', seems to be gettin' along all right. It's only when thar's money goin' over,

that Dead Shot has to buckle on his guns an' ride out with the stage. This gives him lots of time to hang 'round, an' worship her. Which I'm yere to reemark that if ever a white man sets up an idol, that a-way, an' says his pra'rs to it, that gent's Dead Shot. Thar's nothin' to it; prick her finger, an' you pierce his heart.

"'It'd be beautiful if it wasn't awful,' says Faro Nell.

"It ain't a month when events lifts up their p'isin heads, which goes to jestify them comments of Nell's. Thar's been a White House shift back in Washington, an' a new postmaster's sent out. He's a dapper party, with what Peets calls a 'Van Dyke' beard, an' smells like a ha'r-dresser's shop.

"Now if affairs stops thar, we could have stood it; but they don't. I abhors to say so, but it ain't two weeks before Dead Shot's wife's makin' onmistak'ble eyes at that postmaster. Them times when Dead Shot's dooties has took him to the other end of the trail, she's over to the post office constant. None of us says anything, not even to ourselves; but when it gets to whar she shoves you away from the letter place, an' begins talkin' milk and honey to him right under your nose, onless you're as blind as steeple bats, an' as deaf as the adder of scriptoore which stoppeth her y'ear, you're shore bound to do some thinkin'.

"'Which if ever a gov'ment offishul,' exclaims Texas, as he comes t'arin' into the Red Light one evenin', deemandin' drinks—which if ever a gov'ment offishul goes organizin' his own fooneral that a-way, it's this yere deeboshed postmaster next door!'

"Thar's nothin' said, but we-all knows what's on Texas's mind. That wife of Dead Shot's, for the fo'th time that day, has gone askin' for letters.

"She writes 'em to herse'f,' is the way Missis Rucker lays it down. 'Also, it's doo to the crim'nal besottedness of that egreegious Dead Shot. The man's shorely love-blind!'

"You ain't goin' to t'ar into him for that, be you?' Nell asks, her tones reproachful. 'Him lovin' her like he does shore makes a hit with me. A limit goes in farobank; but my notion is to take the bridle off when the game's love.'

"But all the same he needn't get that lovin' it addles him,' says Missis Rucker. 'In a way, it's Dead Shot's sole fault, her actin' like she does. Instead of keepin' them Mexicans to do her work, Dead Shot ought to make her go surgin' round, an' care for her house herse'f. Thar ain't nobody needs steady employment more'n a woman. You-all savvys where it says that Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do? Which you bet that bluff means women—an' postmasters—every time.'

"Missis Rucker continues along sim'lar lines, mighty inflexible, for quite a spell. She concloodes by sayin':

"You keep a woman walsin' round a cook-stove, or wrastlin' a washtub, or jugglin' pots an' skilletts, same as them sleight-of-hand folks at the Bird Cage Op'ry House, an' she won't be so free to primp an' preen an' look at herse'f in the glass, an' go gaddin' after letters which she herse'f's done writ.'

"We-all can't he'p hearin' this yere, seen' we're settin' round

the O. K. dinin' table feedin' at the time; but we stubbornly refooses to be drawed into any views, Enright settin' us the example. That sagacious old warchief merely reaches for the salt-hoss, an' never yeeps; wharupon we maintains ourselves stoodiously yeepless likewise.

"Things goes on swingin' an' rattlin', an' the open-air flirtations which Dead Shot's wife keeps up with that outcast of a postmaster's enough to give you a chill. We sets thar, powerless, expectin' a killin' every minute. An' all the time, like his eyes has took a layoff, Dead Shot wanders to an' fro, boastin' an' braggin' in the mushiest way about his wife. Moreover—an' this trenches on eediotcy—he goes out of his path to make a pard of the postmaster, an' has that deebauchee over to his shack evenin's.

"Dead Shot even begins publicly singin' the praises of this office holder.

"'Which it's this a-way,' he says; 'what with him bein' book-read an' a sport who's seen foreign lands, he's company for my wife. She herse'f's eddicated to a feather-edge; an', nacherally, that's what gives 'em so much in common.'

"Thar's all the same a note in Dead Shot's voice that's like the echo of a groan. It looks, too, as though it sets fire to Texas, who jumps up as if he's stung by a trant'ler.

"'Come,' he says, grabbin' Boggs by the shoulder.

"Texas has Boggs drug half-way to the door, before Enright can head 'em off.

"'Whar to?' demands Enright; an' then adds, 'don't you-all boys go nigh that post office.'

"'All right,' says Texas final, but gulpin' a little; 'since it's you who says so, Sam, we won't. Me an' Dan yere'll merely take a little *passer* as far as the graveyard, by way of reecoverin' our sperits an' to get the air. I'll shore blow up if obleeged to listen to that Dead Shot any longer.'

"'I sees it in his eye,' Enright explains in a low tone to Peets, as he resoomes his cha'r; 'Texas is simply goin' to bend his gun over that letter man's head.'

"'How often has I told you, Dan,' asks Texas, after they gets headed for Boot Hill, an' Texas has regained his aplomb, 'that women is a brace game?'

"'Not all women,' Boggs objects; 'thar's Nell.'

"'Shore; Nell!' Texas consents. 'Sech as her has all of the honor an' honesty of a Colt's-45. A gent can rely on the Nellie brand, same as he can on his guns. But Nellie's one in one thousand. Them other nine hundred an' ninety-nine'll deal you the odd-kyard, Dan, every time.'

"'When Texas an' Boggs arrives at Boot Hill, Texas goes seelectin' about, same as if he's searchin' out a site for a grave. At last he finds a place whar thar's nothin' but mesquite, soapweed an' rocks, it's that ornery:

"'Yere's whar we plants him,' says Texas; 'off yere, by himse'f, like as if he's so much carrion.'

"'Who you talkin' about?' asks Boggs, some amazed.

"'Who?' repeats Texas; 'whoever but that postmaster? Dead Shot's got to get him soon or late. An' followin' the obsequies, thar ain't goin' to be no night gyards neither. Which if them coyotes wants to dig him up, they're welcome. It's their lookout, not mine; an' I ain't got no love for coyotes no how.'

"'Thar ain't no coyote in Cochise County who's sunk that low he'll eat him,' says Boggs.

"Like every other outfit, Wolfville sees its hours of sunshine an' its hours of gloom, its lights an' its shadders. But I'm yere to state that it never suffers through no more nerve-rackin' eepock than that which it puts in about Dead Shot an' his wife. She don't bother us so much as him. It's Dead Shot himse'f, praisin' up the postmaster an' paintin' the sun-kissed virchoose of his wife, which keeps the sweat a-pourin' down the commoonal face. An' all that's left us is to stand pat, an' wait for the finish!

"One day the Wells-Fargo people sends Dead Shot to Santa Fe to take a money box over to Taos. Two days later, Dead Shot's wife finds she's got to go visit Tucson. Likewise, the postmaster allows he's been ordered to Wilcox, to straighten out some deepartmental kinks. Which we certainly sets thar an' looks at each other!—the play's that rank.

"The postmaster an' Dead Shot's wife goes rumblin' out on the same stage. Monte starts to tell us what happens when he returns, but the old profligate don't get far.

"'Gents,' he says, 'that last trip, when Dead Shot's—'

"'Shet up,' roars Enright, an' Monte shore shets up.

"It comes plenty close to killin' the mis'rable old dipsomaniac at that. He swells an' he swells, with that pent-up information inside of him, ontill he looks like a dissipated toad. But sech is his awe of Enright, he never dar's opens his clamshell.

"It's a week before Dead Shot's wife gets back, an' the postmaster don't show up till four days more. Then Dead Shot himse'f comes trackin' in.

"Faro Nell, who's eyes is plumb keen that a-way, lets on to Cherokee private that Dead Shot looks sorrow-ridden. But I don't know! Dead Shot's nacherally grave, havin' no humor. A gent who constant goes messin' round with road agents, shootin' an' bein' shot at, ain't apt to effervesce. Nell sticks to it, jest the same, that he's onder a cloud.

"Dead Shot continyoos to play his old system, an' cavorts 'round plumb friendly with the postmaster, an' goes teeterin' yere an' thar tellin' what a boon from heaven on high his wife is, same as former.

"Faro Nell shakes her head when Cherokee mentions this last:

"'That's his throw-off,' she says.

"One evenin' Dead Shot comes trailin' into the Red Light, an' strolls over to whar Cherokee's dealin' bank.

"'What's the limit?' he asks.

"At this, we-all looks up a whole lot. It's the first time ever Dead Shot talks of puttin' down a bet.

"Cherokee's face is like a mask, the face of the thorough-paced kyard sharp. He shows no more astonishment than if Dead

Shot's been settin' in ag'inst his game every evenin' for a month.

"'One hundred an' two hundred,' says Cherokee.

"'Bueno!' an' Dead Shot lays down two one-hundred dollar bills between the king and queen.

"Thar's two turns. The third the kyards falls 'ten-king,' an' Nell, from her place on the lookout's stool, shoves over two hundred dollars in bloo checks. Thar they are, with the two one-hundred dollar bills, between the king an' queen.

"'Does it go as it lays?' asks Dead Shot, it bein' double the limit.

"'It goes,' says Cherokee, never movin' a muscle.

"'One turn, an' the kyards falls 'trey-queen.' Nell shoves four hundred across to match up with Dead Shot's four hundred.

"'An' now?' Dead Shot asks.

"'I'll turn for it,' Cherokee responds.

"'It's yere that Dead Shot's luck goes back on him. The turn comes 'queen-jack,' an' Nell rakes down the eight hundred.

"'Dead Shot's hand goes to the butt of his gun.

"'I've been robbed,' he growls; 'thar's fifty-three kyards in that deck.'

"'Cherokee's on his feet, his eyes like two steel p'int, gun half drawed. But Nell's as quick. Her hand's on Cherokee's, an' she keeps his gun whar it belongs.

"'Steady!' she says; 'can't you see he's only coaxin' you to bump him off?' Then, with her face full on Dead Shot, she continyoos: 'It won't do, Dead Shot; it won't do none! You-all

can't get it handed to you yere! You're in the wrong shop; you-all ought to try next door!' An' Nell p'int's with her little thumb through the wall to the post office.

"Dead Shot stands thar the color of seegyar ashes, while Cherokee settles ca'mly back in his cha'r. Cherokee's face is as bar' of expression as a blank piece of paper, as he runs his eye along the lay-out, makin' ready for the next turn. Thar's mebb'y a dozen of us playin', but not a word is spoke. Everyone is onto Dead Shot's little game, the moment Nell begins to talk.

"Matters seems to hang on centers, ontill Nell stretches across an' lays her baby hand on Dead Shot's:

"'Thar ain't a soul in sight,' she says, mighty soft an' good, 'but what's your friend, Dead Shot.'

"Dead Shot, pale as a candle, wheels toward the door.

"'Pore Dead Shot!' murmurs Nell, the tears in her eyes, to that extent she has to ask Boggs to take her place as lookout.

"Four hours goes by, an' thar's the poundin' of a pony's hoofs, an' the creak of saddle-leathers, out in front. It's the Red Dog chief, who's come lookin' for Enright.

"They confabs a minute or two at a table to the r'ar, an' then Enright calls Peets over.

"'Dead Shot's gone an' got himse'f downed,' he says.

"'It's on the squar' gents,' explains the Red Dog chief; 'Dead Shot'll say so himself. He jest nacherally comes huntin' it.'

"It looks like Dead Shot, after that failure with Cherokee in the Red Light, p'int's across for Red Dog. He searches out a party

who's called the Lightnin' Bug, on account of the spontaneous character of his six-shooter. Dead Shot finds the Lightnin' Bug talkin' with two fellow gents. He listens awhile, an' then takes charge of the conversation.

"Bug,' he says, raisin' his voice like it's a challenge—'Bug, only I'm afraid folks'll string you up a whole lot, I'd say it's you who stood up the stage last week in Apache Canyon. Also'—an' yere Dead Shot takes to gropin' about in his jeans, same as if he's feelin' for a knife—it's mighty customary with me, on occasions sech as this, to cut off the y'ears of—'

"Dead Shot stops short, by reason of a bullet from the Bug's pistol which lodges in his lungs.

"When Peets an' Enright finds him, he's spread out on the Red Dog chief's blankets, coughin' blood, with the sorrow-stricken Bug proppin' him up one moment to drink water, an' sheddin' tears over him the next, alternate.

"The Red Dog chief leads out the weepin' Bug, who's lamentin' mighty grievous, an' leaves Enright an' Peets with Dead Shot.

"'It's all right, gents,' whispers Dead Shot; 'I comes lookin' for it, an' I gets it. Likewise, she ain't to blame; it's me. I oughtn't to have married her that time—she only a girl, an' me a full-growed man who should 'av had sense for both.'

"'That's no lie,' says Peets, an' Dead Shot gives him a grateful look.

"'No,' he goes on, 'she's too fine, too high—I wasn't her breed.

An' I ought to have seen it.' Yere he has a tussle to hang on.

"Peets pours him out some whiskey.

"'It's lickin', ain't it?' Dead Shot gasps, sniffin' the glass. 'I'm for water, Doc, lickin' makin' me that ornery.'

"'Down with it,' urges Peets. 'Which, if I'm a jedge, you'll pack in long before you're due to start anything extra serious, even if you drinkt a gallon.'

"'Shore!' agrees Dead Shot, as though the idee brings him relief. 'For a moment it slips my mind about me bein' plugged. But as I'm sayin', gents, don't blame her. An' don't blame him. I has my chance, an' has it all framed up, too, when I crosses up with 'em recent over in Tucson, to kill 'em both. But I can't do it, gents. The six-shooter at sech a time's played out. That's straight; it don't fill the bill; it ain't adequate, that a-way. So all I can do is feel sorry for 'em, an' never let 'em know I knows. For, after all, it ain't their fault, it's mine. You sports see that, don't you? She's never meant for me, bein' too fine; an', me a man, I ought to have knowed.'

"Dead Shot ceases talkin', an' Enright glances at Peets. Peets shakes his head plenty sorrowful.

"'Go on,' he says to Dead Shot; 'you-all wants us to do—what?'

"'Thar you be!' an' at the sound of Peets' voice Dead Shot's mind comes creepin' back to camp. 'She'll be happy with him—they havin' so much in common—an' him an' her bein' eddicated that a-way—an' him havin' traveled a whole lot! An' this yere's what I wants, gents. I wants you-all, as a kindness to me an' in a

friendly way—seein' I can't stay none to look-out the play myse'f—to promise to sort o' supervise round an' put them nuptials over right. I takes time by the forelock an' sends to Tucson for a sky-pilot back two days ago. Bar accidents, he'll be in camp by to-morry. He can work in at the funeral, too, an' make it a whipsaw.'

"Dead Shot turns his eyes on Enright. It's always so about our old chief; every party who's in trouble heads for him like a coyote for a camp fire.

"'You'll shore see that he marries her?—Promise!'

"Thar's a quaver in Dead Shot's voice, Peets tells me, that's like a pra'r.

"'Thar's my hand, Dead Shot,' says Enright, who's chokin' a little. 'So far as the letter man's concerned, it'll be the altar or the windmill, Jack Moore an' a lariat or that preacher party you refers to.'

"Dead Shot's gettin' mighty weak. After Enright promises he leans back like he's takin' a rest. He's so still they're beginnin' to figger he's done cashed in; but all at once he starts up like he's overlooked some bet, an' has turned back from eternity to tend to it.

"'About Cherokee an' his box,' he whispers; 'that's a lyin' bluff I makes. Tell him I don't mean nothin'; I'm only out to draw his fire.'

"After this Dead Shot only rouses once. His voice ain't more'n a sigh.

"'I forgets to tell you,' he says, 'to give her my love. An' you

say, too, that I'm bumped off like snuffin' out a candle—too plumb quick for her to get yere. An' don't blame her, gents; it's not her fault, it's mine.'

"It's the week after the fooneal. The postmaster's still in town, partly by nacheral preference, partly because Enright notifies Jack Moore to ride herd on him, an' fill him as full of lead as a bag of bullets in event he undertakes to go stampedin' off.

"In the Red Light the seventh evenin' Enright rounds up Peets.

"'Doc,' he says, 'a month would be more respect'ble, but this yere's beginnin' to tell on me.'

"'Besides,' Peets chips in, by way of he'pin' Enright out, 'that preacher sharp corraled over to Missis Rucker's is gettin' restless. Unless we side-lines or puts hobbles on that divine we-all can't expect to go holdin' him much longer.'

"Enright leads the way to the r'ar wareroom of the Noo York store, which bein' whar the stranglers holds their meetin's is Wolfville's hall of jestic. After licker is brought Enright sends Jack Moore for the postmaster, who comes in lookin' plenty white. Missis Rucker brings over the divine; an' next Dead Shot's widow—she's plumb lovely in black—appears on the arm of Peets, who goes in person.

"Thar's a question in the widow's eye, like she don't onderstand.

"'Roll your game,' says Enright to the preacher sharp.

"It's yere an' now Dead Shot's widow fully b'ars out that philos'pher who announces so plumb cold, that a-way, that

women's the sublimation of the unexpected. Jack Moore's jest beginnin' to manoeover that recreant public servant into p'sition on the widow's left hand, so's he can be married to the best advantage, an' the preacher sharp's gettin' out an' openin' his book of rooles, when the widow draws back.

"P'intin' at the bridegroom postmaster, same as if he's a stingin' lizard, she addresses Enright.

"'Whatever's the meanin' of this?'

"'Merely the croode preelim'naries, Ma'am,' Enright explains, 'to what we-all trusts will prove a fa'rly deesir'ble weddin'.'

"'Me marry him?' an' the onmitigated scorn that relict exhibits, to say nothin' of her tone of voice, shore makes the postmaster bridegroom feel chagrined.

"'You'll pardon us, Ma'am,' returns Enright, soft an' depreecatory, tryin' to get her feelin's bedded down, 'which you'll shore pardon us if in our dullness we misreads your sentiments. You see, the notion gets somehow proned into us that you wants this party. Which if we makes a mistake, by way of repa'rin' that error, let me say that if thar's any one else in sight whom you preefers, an' who's s'fficiently single an' yoothful to render him el'gible for wedlock,'—yere Enright takes in Boggs an' Texas with his gaze, wharat Texas grows as green-eyed as a cornered bobcat—'he's yours, Ma'am, on your p'intin' him out.'

"'Which I don't want to marry no one,' cries the widow, commencin' to sob. 'An' as for marryin' him speshul'—yere she glances at the bridegroom postmaster in sech a hot an' drastic way

he's left shrivellin' in his own shame—'I'd sooner live an' die the widow of Dead Shot Abner Baker than be the wife of a cornfield full of sech.'

"Everybody stares, an' Enright takes a modicum of Old Jordan.

"'You don't deeserve this none,' he says at last, turnin' to the postmaster bridegroom. 'Onder the circumstances, however, thar's nothin' left for me to do as cha'rman but deeclear' this yere weddin' a misdeal.'

"Texas is plumb disgusted.

"'Don't some folks have nigger luck, Dan?'" he says.

"'Later, after thinkin' things up an' down in his mind, Texas takes ombrage at Enright's invitin' Dead Shot's widow to look him an' Boggs over that a-way, an' take her pick.

"'Which sech plays don't stand ace-high with me, Sam,' Texas says—'you tryin' to auction me off like you does. Even a stranger, with a half-way hooman heart, after hearin' my story would say that I already suffers enough. An' yet you, who calls yourse'f my friend, does all that lays in your callous power to thrust me back into torment.'

"'Texas,' replies Enright, like he's bore about all he can, 'you shorely worries me with your conceit. If you-all won't take my word, then go take a good hard look at yourse'f in the glass. Thar's never the slightest risk, as everybody but you yourse'f sees plainly, of that lady or any other lady takin' you.'

"'You thinks not?'" asks Texas, plenty incensed.

"Which I *knows* not. No lady's lot ain't quite that desp'rate.'

"Well,' returns Texas, after a pause, his face expressin' his soreness, 'I'm yere to say, Sam, I don't agree with you, none whatever. You forgets that I've already been took in wedlock bonds by one lady. An' while that Laredo wife of mine is hard an' crooel, all Texas knows she's plumb partic'lar. Also, no one ever yet comes pirootin' up the trail who doubts her taste.'

"It's the evenin' before the preacher sharp goes back to Tucson, when Enright edges him off into a corner of the O. K. dinin' room.

"Parson,' says Enright, lookin' like he's a heap bothered about somethin'—'parson, in addition to your little game as a preacher that a-way, you don't happen to be up none on table-tippin' or sperit rappin', same as them mediums, do you?'

"Which I shore don't,' replies the preacher sharp, archin' his neck, indignant. 'Likewise, I regyards them cer'monials you alloodes to as satantic in their or'gin.'

"Doubtless, parson,' returns Enright, some disapp'inted, 'doubtless. Still, if you-all but counts the rings on my horns, as givin' some impression of the years I've lived an' what troubles I've probably gone through, you'll onderstand that I ain't takin' Satan no more serious than a empty six-shooter. But the mere trooth is, parson, I'm pestered by them promises I makes deeceased. Which I'd give a yellow stack to get put next to Dead Shot's sperit long enough to explain concernin' them nuptials, an' make cl'ar jest how me an' the Doc falls down.'"

II

OLD MAN ENRIGHT'S UNCLE

"Which you'll excoose me," and the old cattleman replaced his glass upon the table with a decisive click, "if I fails to j'ine you in them sent'ments. For myse'f, I approves onreserved of both lies an' liars. Also, that reemark goes double when it comes to public liars tellin' public lies. Which, however se'fish it may sound, I prefers this gov'ment to last my time; an' it's my idee that if them statesmen back at Washington ever takes a hour off from their tax-eatin' an' tells the people the trooth, the whole trooth an' nothin' but the trooth of their affairs, said people'll be down on the sityooation instanter, like a weasel on a nest of field mice, an' wipe the face of nacher free an' cl'ar of these United States."

The above was drawn forth by my condemnatory comments on the published speech of a Senator, wherein the truth was as a grain of wheat in a bushel of mendacious chaff.

"Shore," continued the old gentleman, with the manner of one who delivers final judgment, "lies is not only to be applauded, but fostered. They're the angle-irons an' corner-braces that keeps plumb the social fabric, wantin' which the whole frame-work of soci'ty would go leanin' sideways, same as that Eyetalian tower you shows me the picture of the other day. Why, if everybody in the world was to go tellin' the trooth for the next hour ninety-

nine folks in every hundred would be obleeged to put in the rest of their lives hidin' out.

"Do I myse'f ever lie?"

"Frequent an' plumb cheerful. I bases life on the rooles laid down by that sharp who advises folks to do unto others as others does unto them, an' beat 'em to it. Believin', tharfore, in handin' a gent his own system, I makes it my onbreakable practice to allers lie to liars. Then, ag'in, whenever some impert'nent prairie dog takes to rummagin' 'round with queries to find out my deesigns, I onflaggingly fills him to the brim with all forms of misleadin' mendac'ty, an' casts every fictional obstruction in his path that's calc'lated to get between his heels an' trip him up. I shore do admire to stand all sech inquirin' mavericks on their heads, an' partic'ler if they're plottin' ag'in me.

"An' why not? A party that a-way, as I some time ago instructs you, ain't got no more right to search my head than to search my warbags, an' a gent who may lock a door may lie. Which, if you'll go off by yourse'f an' think this yere over, you'll see that it's so, an' so with a double cinch.

"Thar's statements, too, which, speakin' technical, might be regyarded as lyin' which don't in jestic class onder no sech head. For spec'men, when Dick Wooten, upon me askin' him how long he's been inhabitin' the Raton Pass, p'intns to the Spanish Peaks an' says, 'You see them em'nences? Well, when I pitches camp in this yere gully them mountings was two holes in the ground,' I don't feel like he's lyin'. I merely remembers that he steals the

bluff from old Jim Bridger, grins an' lets it go at that.

"Likewise, I'm sim'larly onaffected towards that amiable multitoode who simply lies to entertain. These yere latter sports in their preevar'cations is public ben'factors. You-all can spread yourse'f out in the ca'm shadow of their yarns, same as if it's the shade of a tree, an' find tharin reefreshment an' reepose.

"While the most onimag'native of us, from Peets to Cherokee, ain't none puny as conversationists, the biggest liar, ondoubted, who ever comes romancin' into Wolfville is Enright's uncle, who visits him that time. Back in Tennessee a passel of scientists makes what this yere relative of Enright's deescribes as a 'Theological Survey' of some waste land he has on Gingham Mountain, an' finds coal. An' after that he's rich. Thus, in his old age, but chipper as a coopful of catbirds, he comes rackin' into town, allowin' he'll take a last look at his nephew, Sam, before he cashes in.

"His name is Stallins, bein' he's kin to Enright on his mother's side, an' since thar's nine ahead of him—Enright's mother bein' among the first—an' he don't come along as a infant until the heel of the domestic hunt that a-way, he's only got it on Enright by ten years in the matter of age.

"No, I shore shouldn't hes'tate none to mention him as a top-sawyer among liars, the same bein' his constant boast an' brag. He accepts the term as embodyin' a compliment, an' the quick way to get his bristles up is to su'gest that his genius for mendac'ty is beginnin' to bog down.

"For all that, Enright imparts to me, private, that the old gent as a liar ain't a marker to his former se'f.

"'You've heard tell,' Enright says, 'of neighborhood liars, an' township liars, an' county liars; an' mebbly even of liars whose fame as sech might fill the frontiers of a state. Take my uncle, say forty years ago, an' give him the right allowance of baldface whiskey, an' the coast-to-coast expansiveness of them fictions he tosses off shore entitles him to the name of champion of the nation. Compar'd to him, Ananias is but a ambitious amatoor.'

"It's the second evenin' old Stallins is with us, an' Enright takes him over to Hamilton's Dance Hall, whar Boggs an' Texas—by partic'lar reequet—uplifts his aged sperits with that y'ear-splittin' an' toomultuous minyooet, the 'Love Dance of the Catamounts.' Which the exh'biton sets his mem'ry to millin', an' when we gets back to the Red Light he breaks out remin'scent.

"'Sammy,' he says to Enright, 'you was old enough to rec'llect when I has that location over on the upper Hawgthief? Gents,' he goes on, turnin' to us, 'it's a six-forty, an'—side hill, swamp an' bottom—as good a section as any to be crossed up with between the Painted Post an' the 'Possum Trot. It's that "Love Dance of the Catamounts" which brings it to my mind, since it's then an' thar, by virchoo of a catamount, I wins my Sarah Ann.

"'She's shore the star-eyed Venus of the Cumberland, is my Sarah Ann. Her ha'r, black as paint, is as thick as a pony's mane; her lips is the color of pokeberry juice; her cheeks—round an' soft—is as cl'ar an' bright an' glowin' as a sunset in Jooly; her

teeth is as milk-white as the inside of a persimmon seed. She's five-foot-eleven without her mocassins, stands as up an' down as a pine tree, got a arm on her like the tiller of a scow, an' can heft a full-sized side of beef an' hang it on the hook. That's fifty years ago. She's back home on the Hawgthief waitin' for me now, my Sarah Ann is. You'd say she's as gray as a 'possum, an' as wrinkled as a burnt boot. Mebby so; but not to me, you bet. She's allers an' ever to me the same endoorin' hooman sunburst I co'tes an' marries that long time ago.'

"Old Stallins pauses to reefresh himse'f, an' Texas, who's been fidgetin' an' frettin' since the first mention of Sarah Ann, goes whisperin' to Boggs.

"'Can't some of you-all,' he says, plenty peevish, 'head this yere mushy old tarrapin off? This outfit knows what I suffers with that Laredo wife of mine. An' yet it looks like I'm to be tortured constant with tales of married folks, an' not one hand stretched out to save me from them reecitals.'

"'Brace up,' returns Boggs, tryin' to comfort him. 'Thicken your hide ag'in sech childish feelin's, an' don't be so easy pierced. Besides, I reckons the worst's over. He's comin' now to them catamounts.'

"Texas grinds his teeth, an' old Stallins resoomes his adventures.

"'My Sarah Ann's old pap has his location jest across the Hawgthief from me. Besides him an' Sarah Ann, thar ain't nobody but the old woman in the fam'ly, the balance of 'em

havin' been swept away in a freshet. Shore, old man Bender—that's Sarah Ann's pap's name—has fourteen children once, Sarah Ann, who's oldest, bein' the first chicken on the domestic roost. But the other thirteen is carried off one evenin' when, what with the rains an' what with the snow meltin' back on Gingham Mountain, the Hawgthief gets its back up. Swish comes a big wave of water, an' you hear me them children goes coughin' an' kickin' an' splutterin' into the misty beyond.

""Which I says thirteen only because that's whar old Bender allers puts his loss. Zeb Stiles, who lives on the Painted Post, insists that it's fifteen who gets swept away that time. He allows he counts them infant Benders two evenin's before, perched along on old Bender's palin's like pigeons on a limb. Thirteen or fifteen, however, it don't make no difference much, once they're submerged, that a-way.

""Mebby I've been co'tin' my Sarah Ann for goin' on six months, givin' her b'ar robes an' mink pelts, with now an' then a pa'r of bald eagle wings to bresh the hearth. Nothin' heart-movin', however, comes off between us, Sarah Ann keepin' me at arm's len'th an' comportin' herse'f plumb uppish, as a maiden should. She's right; a likely girl can't be too conserv'tive techin' what young an' boundin' bucks comes co'tin' at her house.

""Old Bender sort o' likes me in streaks. After he gets bereft of them thirteen or fifteen offspring he turns morose a whole lot, an' I used to go 'cross in my dugout an' cheer him up with my lies.

""Could I lie?

"My nephew, Sammy, thar'll nar'ate how I once lies a full-grown b'ar to death. The cunnin' varmint takes advantage of me bein' without my weepens, an' chases me up a tree. I ensconces myse'f in the crotch, an' when the b'ar starts to climb I hurls down ontrooth after ontrooth on top of him ontill, beneath a avalanche of falsehood, he's crushed dead at the base of the tree. Could I lie, you asks? Even folks who don't like me concedes that I'm the most irresist'ble liar south of the Ohio river.

"While I'm upliftin' the feelin's of old Bender mendacious that a-way, he likes me; it's only when we gets to kyard-playin' he waxes sour. He's a master-hand to gamble, old Bender is, an' as shore as I shows up, followin' a lie or two, he's bound he'll play me seven-up for a crock of baldface whiskey. Now thar ain't a sport from the Knobs of old Knox to the Mississippi who could make seed corn off me at seven-up, an' nacherally I beats old Bender out of the baldface.

"With that he'd rave an' t'ar, an' make like he's goin' to jump for his 8-squar' Hawkins rifle, whar she's hangin' on a pa'r of antlers over the door; but he'd content himse'f final by orderin' me out of the shack, sayin' that no sech kyard-sharpin' galoot as me need come pesterin' 'round allowin' to marry no child of his'n. At sech eepocks, too, it looks like Sarah Ann sees things through the eyes of her old man, an' she's more'n common icy.

"One day old Bender goes weavin' over to Pineknot, an' starts to tradin' hosses with Zeb Stiles. They seesaws away for hours, an' old Bender absorbs about two dollars' worth of licker, still-

house rates. In the finish Zeb does him brown an' does him black on the swap, so it don't astonish nobody to death when next day he quiles up in his blankets sick. Marm Bender tries rekiverin' him with yarbs, an' kumfrey tea, an' sweet gum sa'v. When them rem'dies proves footile she decides that perhaps a frolic'll fetch him.

"It's about second drink time in the afternoon when Marm Bender starts out Fiddler Abe, givin' notice of the treat. I hears the old nigger as, mule-back, he goes meanderin' along, singin':

Thar's a smoke house full of bacon,
An' a barrel full of rum.
For to eat an' drink an' shake a laig
You've only got to come.

"As soon as Fiddler Abe starts singin' the girls an' boys begin comin' out of the woods like red ants out of a burnin' log, headin' hotfoot for old Bender's.

"Do I go?

"It ain't a hour after candle lightin' when, with mebbly it's a pint of baldface onder the buckle of my belt, I'm jumpin' higher, shoutin' louder, an' doin' more to loosen the puncheons in the floor than any four males of my species who's present at that merry-makin'. It he'ps old Bender, too, an' inspired by the company an' onder the infloouence of four or five stiff toddies, he resolves not to let that hoss trade carry him to a ontimely grave, an' is sittin' up in his blankets, yellin', "Wake snakes; an' Gin'ral

Jackson fit the Injuns!" in happy accord with the sperit of his times.

"Fiddler Abe strikes into the exyooberant strains of "Little Black Bull Come Down the Mountains," an' I hauls Ten-spot Mollie out of the gin'ral ruck of calico for a reel. We calls her Ten-spot Mollie because she's got five freckles on each cheek. All the same, when it comes to dancin', she's shore a she-steamboat. Every time we swings she hefts me plumb free of the floor, an' bats my heels ag'in the rafters ontill both ankles is sprained.

"Sarah Ann falls jealous, seem' me an' Ten-spot Mollie thus pleasantly engaged, an' to get even goes to simperin' an' talkin' giggle-talk to Mart Jenkins, who's rid in from Rapid Run. Jenks is a offensive numbskull who's wormed his way into soci'ty by lickin' all the boys 'round his side of Gingham Mountain. At that, he's merely tol'rated.

"Seein' Sarah Ann philanderin' with Jenks, I lets go of Ten-spot Mollie, who goes raspin' an' rollin' into a corner some abrupt, an' sa'nters across to whar they're at. Leanin' over Sarah Ann's off-shoulder, bein' the one furthest from that onmitigated Jenks, I says, "Sweetheart, how can you waste time talkin' to this yere hooman Sahara, whose intellects is that sterile they wouldn't raise cow-pease?"

"This makes Jenks oneasy, an' getting up, he reemarks, "Dick Stallins, I'll be the all-firedest obleeged to you if you'll attend on me to the foot of the hollow, an' bring your instrouments."

"At this I explains that I ain't got my instrouments with me, havin' left both rifle an' bowie in the dugout when I paddles over to the dance.

"Jenks makes a insultin' gesture, an' reetorts, "Don't crawl, Dick Stallins. Borry old Bender's nine-inch bootcher, an' come with me."

"To appease him I says I will, an' that I'll j'ine him at the before named slaughter-ground in the flicker of a lamb's tail. Jenks stalks off plumb satisfied, while I searches out Ben Hazlett, an' whispers that Jenks is askin' for him some urgent, an' has gone down the trace towards the foot of the hollow to look him up. Nacherally, my diplom'cy in this yere behalf sends Ben cavortin' after Jenks; an' this relieves me a heap, knowin' that all Jenks wants is a fight, an' Ben'll do him jest as well as me.

"Which them was shorely happy days!' he continyoos, settin' down the bottle wharwith he's been encouragin' his faculties. 'Troo, every gent has to sleep with his head in a iron kettle for fear of Injuns, an' a hundred dollars is bigger'n a cord of wood, but life is plenty blissful jest the same.'

"Was you afraid of this yere Jenks?' asks Boggs.

"No more'n if he's a streak of lightnin'. Only, I've got on a new huntin' shirt, made of green blanket cloth, an' I ain't none strenuous about havin' that gyarment all slashed up.

"To proceed: After I dispatches Ben on the heels of Jenks that a-way it occurs to me that mebbly I'm sort o' tired with the labors of the evenin', an' I'll find my dugout, ferry myse'f over to

my own proper wickyup, an' hit the hay for a snooze. I'm some hurried to the conclousion by the way in which eevents begins to accumyoolate in my immedyit vicin'ty. Bill Wheeler announces without a word of warnin' that he's a flyin' alligator, besides advancin' the theery that Gene Hemphill is about as deeserv'dly pop'lar as a abolitionist in South Caroliny. I suspects that this attitooode of mind on Bill's part is likely to provoکه discussion, which suspicion is confirmed when Gene knocks Bill down, an' boots him into the dooryard. Once in the open, after a clout or two, Gene an' Bill goes to a clinch an' the fightin' begins.

"It ain't no time when the circumf'rence of trouble spreads. Bud Ingalls makes a pass at me pers'nal, an' by way of reeprisal I smashes a stewpan on him. Bud's head goes through the bottom, like the clown through them paper hoops in a cirkus, the stewpan fittin' down 'round his neck same as one of them Elizbethan ruffs. The stewpan ockyoopies so much of Bud's attention that I gets impatient, an' so, tellin' him I ain't got no time to wait, I leaves him strugglin' with that yootensil, an' strolls off down to the Hawgthief whistlin' "Sandy Land."

"It's dark as the inside of a cow, an' somehow I misses the dugout; but bein' stubborn, an' plumb sot about gettin' home, I wades in an' begins to swim. The old Hawgthief is bank full, but I'd have made t'other side all right if it ain't that, as I swims out from onder the overhangin' branch of a tree, somethin' drops into the water behind me, an' comes snarlin' an' splashin' an' spittin' along in pursoot. I don't pay much heed at the jump, but when it

claws off my nigh moccasin, leavin' a inch-deep gash in my heel, I glances back an' perceives by the two green eyes that I've become an object of comsoomin' int'rest to a pa'nter, or what you-all out yere calls a mountain lion, an' we-uns back in Tennessee a catamount.'

""But a panther won't swim,' reemonstrates Tutt.

""Arizona catamounts won't,' returns old Stallins, 'thar bein' no rivers to speak of. But in Tennessee, whar thar's rivers to waste, them cats takes to the water like so many muskrats.

""When I finds that thar's nothin' doggin' me but a catamount, I heads all casyoal for whar a tree's done been lodged midstream, merely flingin' the reemark over my shoulder to the catamount that, if he keeps on annoyin' me, he'll about pick up the makin's of a maulin'. As I crawls out on the bole of the lodged tree, I can hear the catamount sniggerin', same as if he's laughin' me to scorn, an' this yere insultin' contoomely half-way makes me mad. Which I ain't in the habit of bein' took lightly by no catamount.

""Drawin' myse'f out o' the water, I straddles the bole of my tree, an' organizes for the catamount, who's already crawlin' after me. T'arin' off a convenient bough the thickness of your laig, I arranges myse'f as a reception committee for visitin' catamounts, an' by way of beginnin' confers on my partic'lar anamile sech a bat over the snout that he falls back into the drink, an' starts to swimmin' fancy an' goin' 'round in circles, same as if his funny-bone's been teched.

""Every time he gets in reach I jabs him in the eye with the

splinter end of the bough, an' at last he grows that disgusted at these formal'ties he swims off to the bank. Thar he camps down on his ha'nches, an' glares green-eyed at me across the ragin' flood.

"Shore, I could have raised the long yell for he'p, but am withheld by foolish pride. Besides, I can hear Ben an' Jenks tusslin' an' gruntin' an' carryin' on over in the mouth of the hollow, as they kyarves into each other with their knives, an' don't want to distract their attention.

"As I sets camped thar on my lodged tree, an' the catamount is planted on the bank, I hears the lippin' splash of a paddle, an' then a voice which sounds like a chime of bells floats across to ask, "Dick Stallins, you ornery runnigate, wharever be you?"

"It's my Sarah Ann, whose love, gettin' the upper hand of maidenly reeserve, has sent her projectin' 'round in search of me. She's in my dugout.

"The catamount identifies her as soon as me; an' thinkin' she ought to be easy, he slides into the water ag'in an' starts for the boat. It's that dark I ain't shore of his deesigns ontill I sees him reach up, tip the dugout over, an' set Sarah Ann to wallowin' in the rushin' torrent. The dugout upsets on the catamount, an' this so confooses him that, by the time he's got his bearin's, Sarah Ann's been swept down to my tree, an' I've lifted her to a seat by my side. The catamount don't try to lay siege to our p'sition, recognizing it as impregnable, but paddles back to the shore an' goes into watchful camp as prior.

"For myse'f, I'm so elevated with love an' affection at havin' Sarah Ann with me, I dismisses the catamount as a dead issue, an' as sech beneath contempt, an' by way of mollifyin' Sarah Ann's feelin's, cuts loose an' kisses her a gross or two of times, an' each like the crack of a bull-whacker's whip.

"Old Bender hears them caresses plumb up to his house—as well he may, they're that onreeserved an' earnest—an' thinks it's some one shootin' a rifle. It has the effect of bringin' out the old Spartan with his Hawkins; an' the first word of it that reaches me an' Sarah Ann is him, Marm Bender an' the whole b'ilin' of folks is down thar on the bank, tryin' to make out in the gen'ral dimness whatever be we-all lovers doin' out thar in the middle of the Hawgthief on a snag.

"They don't deetect my catamount none, which sagacious feline slinks off into the shadows covered with confoosion; all they sees is us. An' the spectacle certainly excites old Bender. "Gen'ral Jackson fit the Injuns!" he exclaims, as all of a sudden a thought strikes him; "that measly excoose for a Union Democrat out thar is seekin' to eelope with our Sarah Ann."

"The old murderer starts to get a bead on me with the Hawkins. "Father," yells Marm Bender, pullin' at his sleeve, "you shore must be mistook."

"Old Bender won't have it. "Maw," he returns, strivin' to disengage himse'f, "I was never mistook about nothin' in my life but once, an' that's when I shifts from baldface whiskey to hard cider on a temp'rance argyooment. Let me go, woman, till I drill

the miscreant an' wash the stain from our fam'ly honor."

"Before the old hom'cide can get to launderin' the fam'ly honor in my blood, however, Sarah Ann has interposed. "Don't go to blazing away at my Dickey, pop," she sings out, "or I'll shore burn every improvement you got, an' leave you an' maw an' me roofless in the midst of the wilderness."

"This goes a long way towards soberin' down old Bender, because he knows my Sarah Ann's the Cumberland hollyhock to put them menaces into execootion. He lowers the muzzle of his old 8-squar', an' allows if I promises to marry the girl I can swim ashore an' be forgiven.

"Thus the matter ends mighty amic'ble. We'all goes trackin' up to the house, a preacher is rushed to the scene from Pineknott, an' them nuptials between Sarah Ann an' me is sol'mnized. Shore, Jenks an' Ben is thar. They're found by a committee of their friends scattered about at the foot of the hollow, an' is collected an' brought up to the weddin' in blankets. Dave Daniels, who surveys the scene next day, says you could plant corn whar they fit, it's that plowed up.

"Followin' the cer'mony Marm Bender an' the old gent takes me into their hearts an' cabin like I'm their own an' only son. He's a great old daddy-in-law, old Bender is, an' is ven'rated for forty miles about Gingham Mountain, as deevoted heart an' soul to baldface, seven-up an' sin in any shape.

"That match-makin' catamount?

"We hives him. Me an' my new daddy-in-law tracks him to

his reetreat, an' when we're through he's plumb used up. I confers the pelt on my Sarah Ann; an' she spreads it on the floor over by her side of the bed, so as to put her little number sevens on it when she boils out of a winter's mornin' to light the fire, an' rustle me my matoot'nal buckwheat cakes an' sa'sage.'"

III

CYNTHIANA, PET- NAMED ORIGINAL SIN

"This yere speecific heroine is a heap onconventional, so much so as to be plumb puzzlin' to the common mind. Jest the same, she finishes winner, an' makes herse'f a gen'ral source of pride. She don't notify us, none whatever, that she intends a Wolfville deboos; jest nacherally descends upon us, that a-way, as onannounced as a mink on a settin' hen. All the same, we knows she's comin' while yet she's five mile out on the trail. Not that we savvys who she is or what she aims at; we merely gets moved up next to the fact that she's a lady, an' likewise no slouch for looks.

"We reads these yere trooths in the dust old Monte kicks up, as he comes swingin' in with the stage. Which it's the weakness of this inebriate, as I tells you former, that once let him get a lady aboard, it looks like it's a signal for him to go pourin' the leather into his team like he ain't got a minute to live. It's a p'lite attention he assoomes, in his besotted way, is doo the sex.

"It's the more strange, too, since it's the only attention Monte ever pays 'em. He never looks at 'em, never speaks to 'em; simply plants himse'f on the box, as up an' down as a cow's tail, an' t'ars into them harassed hosses. If the lady he's complimentin' that a-way was to get jolted overboard—which the same wouldn't

be no mir'cal, considerin' how that dipsomaniac drives—it's even money he leaves her hunched up like a jack-rabbit alongside the trail, an' never thinks of stoppin' or turnin' back. He's merely a drunkard with that one fool idee of showin' off, an' nothin' the stage people's ever able to say can teach him different. From first to last you-all could measure Monte's notion of the pulcritooode of a petticoat passenger by the extent to which he lams loose with his whip. Given what he deems is a she-sunburst, he shorely does maltreat the company's live stock shameful.

"'If,' observes Peets, as a bunch of us stands gossipin' round in front of the Red Light that time, watchin' the dust cloud draw nearer an' nearer—'if it's poss'ble to imagine the old sot as havin' a Cleopatra to freight over from Tucson, it's a cow pony to a Mexican sheep he'd kill one of the wheelers.'

"Thar ain't none of us knows who this yere Cleopatra the Doc refers to is, onless it's Colonel Sterett, who edits the *Daily Coyote*. Still, the compar'son is plenty convincin'. Accordin' to the Doc himself, this Cleopatra's a meteoric female party, as lively as she is lovely, who sets a passel of ancient sports to walkin' in a circkle back some'ers in the mists of time. Also, it's bloo chips to white, an' bet 'em higher than a cat's back, the Doc knows. The Doc is ondoubted the best eddicated gent that ever makes a moccasin track between Yuma an' the Raton Pass, an' when he onbuckles techin' any historic feachures, you can call for a gooseha'r pillow, an' go to sleep on it he ain't barkin' at no knot.

"Thar's a feeble form of young tenderfoot pesterin' about

the suburbs of the crowd. He's one of them hooman deficits, so plumb ornery as to be useless East, which their fam'lies, in gettin' rid of 'em, saws happ'ly off onto a onprotected West. This partic'lar racial disaster's been on our hands now mebbe it's six months, an' we-all is hopin' that in some p'intless sort o' way he'll brace up and do overt acts which entitles us to stampede him out of camp. But so far he don't.

"This yere exile comes wanderin' into the talk by askin'—his voice as thin as a curlew's:

"'Who is this old Monte you're alloodin' at?'

"'Whoever he is?' says Boggs. 'Which if you-all'd struck camp by way of Tucson, instead of skulkin' upon us in the low-down fashion you does along of the Lordsburg-Red Dog buckboard, you wouldn't have to ask none. He's the offishul drunkard of Arizona, Monte is. Which the same should be notice, too, that it's futile for you to go ropin' at that p'sition. I says this, since from the quantity of Old Jordan you've been mowin' away, I more'n half infers that you nourishes designs upon the place.'

"The feeble young shorthorn smiles a puny smile, and don't lunge forth into no more queries.

"Texas, who's been listenin' to what Boggs says, squar's 'round an' half-way erects his crest for an argyooment. Texas has had marital troubles, an' him ponderin' the same constant renders him some morbid an' morose.

"'From your tone of voice, Dan,' remarks Texas, 'I takes it you holds Monte's appetite for nose paint to be a deefect. That's whar

I differs. That old marauder is a drunkard through sheer excess of guile. He finds in alcohol his ark of refooge. I only wish I'd took to whiskey in my 'teens.'

"Boggs is amazed.

"Texas,' he says, plenty sorrowful, 'it wouldn't astonish me none if you finds your finish in a wickeyup deevoted to loonatics, playin' with a string of spools.'

"That's your onthinkin' way. Do you reckon now, if I'd been a slave to drink when that Laredo wife of mine first sees me, she'd have w'irled me to the altar an' made me the blighted longhorn you sees now? She wouldn't have let me get near enough to her to give her a bunch of grapes. It's my sobri'ty that's my ondoin', that an' bein' plumb moral. Which I onerringly traces them divorce troubles, an' her sellin' up my stock at public vandoo for cost an' al'mony like she does, to me weakly holdin' aloof from whisky when I'm young.'

"Which I shore,'—an' Boggs shows he's mighty peevish an' put out—'never meets up with a more exasp'ratin' conversationist! It's because you're sech an' egreegious egotist! You-all can't talk ten minutes, Texas, but what you're allers bringin' in them domestic affairs of yours. If you desires to discuss whiskey abstract, an' from what the Doc thar calls a academic standp'int, I'm your gent. But I declines to be drug into personal'ties, in considerin' which I might be carried by the heat of deebate to whar I gets myse'f shot up.'

"I sees your attitood, Dan; I sees your attitood, an' respects it.

Jest the same, thar's an anti-nuptial side to the liquor question, an' bein' a drunkard that a-way is not without its compensations.'

"'But he's bound to be so blurred,' reemonstrates Boggs, who by nacher is dispootatious, an' once started prone to swing an' rattle with a topic like a pup to a pig's y'ear: 'That drunkard is so plumb blurred.'

"'Blurred but free, Dan,' retorts Texas, mighty firm. 'Don't overlook no sech bet as that drunkard bein' free. Also, it's better to be free than sober.'

"'Goin' back to Monte,' says Boggs, returning to the orig'nal text; 'half the time, over to the O.K. Restauraw when Missis Rucker slams him down his chuck, he ain't none shore he's eatin' flapjacks or rattlesnakes. The other day, when Rucker drops a plate, he jumps three feet in the air, throws up his hands an' yells, "Take the express box, gents, but spar' my life!" It's whiskey does it. The old cimmaron thinks it's road agents stickin' him up.'

"Dispoote is only ended by the stage thunderin' in—leathers creakin', chains jinglin', bosses a lather of sweat an' alkali dust, Monte cocked up on the box as austere as a treeful of owls. He's for openin' the door, but Peets is thar before him. Let it get dealt down to showin' attentions to a lady, an' the brisket sport'll have to move some sudden, or the Doc'll beat him to it. Which he certainly is the p'litest drug sharp of which hist'ry makes mention!

"The Doc offers his hand to he'p her out, but she hits the ground onaided as light as any leaf. Nacherally we looks her over.

Take her from foretop to fetlocks, she's as lovely as a diamond flush. She's got corn-colored ha'r, an' eyes as soft as the sky in Joone. Peets calls 'em azure-bein' romantic. As for the rest of us, we don't call 'em nothin'. Thar's a sprightly look about 'em, which would shore jestify any semi-proodent gent in jumpin' sideways. Likewise, she's packin' a Colt's .45, an' clutchin' a winchester in her little claw, the same contreebutin' a whole lot toward makin' her impressive as a pageant.

"How are you, sports?' she says, tossin' her disengaged hand a heap arch. 'I gets word about you-all up in Vegas, an' allows I'll come trundlin' down yere an' size you up. My idee is you needs regen'ratin'.'

"Is thar anything we-all can he'p you to, Miss?' asks Enright, who takes the play away from Peets. 'If aught is wanted, an' thar's a lariat in the outfit long enough to reach, you-all can trust Wolfville to rope, throw an' hawg-tie the same accordin' to your wishes.'

"Yes,' adds Peets, 'as Sam says, if thar's any little way we-all can serve you, Miss, jest say the word. Likewise, if you don't feel like speakin', make signs; an' if you objects to makin' signs, shake a bush. All we reequires is the slightest hint.'

"Be ca'm,' says the young lady, her manner as se'f-confident as if she's a queen. 'Thar's nothin' demanded of you outlaws except to tamely listen. I'm a se'f-respectin', se'f-supportin' young female, who believes in Woman Suffrage, an' the equality of the sexes in pol'tics an' property rights. Which my name is

Bark, baptized Cynthiana, the same redooed by my old pap, while yet alive, into the pet name of Original Sin. It's my present purpose to become a citizen of this yere camp, an' take my ontrammed place in its commercial life by openin' a grogshop. Penden' which, do you-all see this?'—an' she dallies gently with a fringe of b'ar-claws she's wearin' as a necklace, the same bein' in loo of beads. 'That grizzly's as big an' ugly as him.' Yere she tosses a rose-leaf hand at Boggs, who breaks into a profoose sweat. 'I downs him. Also, I'll send the first horned-toad among you, who pays me any flagrant attentions, pirootin' after that b'ar. Don't forget, gents: my name's Bark, Cynthiana Bark, pet-named Original Sin, an' thar's a bite goes with the Bark.'

"Havin' conclooded this yere salootatory, Miss Bark, givin' a coquettish flourish to her winchester, goes trapsein' over to the O. K. Restauraw, leavin' us—as the story-writer puts it—glood to the spot. You see it ain't been yoosual for us to cross up with ladies who, never waitin' for us to so much as bat an admirin' eye or wag an adorin' y'ear, opens neegotations by threatenin' to shoot us in two.

"'Thar's a young lady,' says Peets, who's first to ketch his breath, 'that's got what I calls *verve*.'

"'Admittin' which,' observes Enright, some doubtful, havin' been thrown back on his hocks a whole lot; 'some of you-all young bucks must none the less have looked at her in a improper way to start her ghost-dancin' like she does.'

"Enright's eye roves inquirin'ly from Boggs to Texas, an' even

takes in Tutt.

"'Not me!' declar's Texas, plenty fervent; 'not me!—more'n if she's a she rattlesnake!'

"'As the husband of Tucson Jennie,' observes Tutt, his air some haughty—which he allers puts on no end of dog whenever he mentions his fam'ly—as the husband of Tucson Jennie, an' the ondoubted father of that public ornament an' blessin', little Enright Peets Tutt, I do not regyard it as up to me to cl'ar myse'f of no sech charges.'

"'Sam,' says Boggs, his voice reproachful, 'you notes how she makes invidious compar'sons between me an' that b'ar, an' how she beefs the b'ar? After which gratooitous slur it's preeposterous to s'ppose I'd go admirin' her or to takin' any chances.'

"'Then it's you,' says Enright, comin' round on the puny tenderfoot. 'Jack,' he continyoos, appealin' to Jack Moore, who's kettle-tender to the Strangers, of which arm of jestic Enright is chief—'Jack, do you reemark any ontoward looks or leers on the part of this yere partic'lar prairie dog, calc'lated to alarm a maiden of fastidious feelin's?'

"'Sir,' breaks in the feeble young tenderfoot, an' all mighty tremyoolous, 'as shore as my name is Oscar Freelinghuysen I never even glances at that girl. I ain't so much as present while she's issuin' her deefiances. I lapses into the Red Light the moment I observes how she's equipped, an' Black Jack, the barkeep, will ver'fy my words.'

"'All right,' warns Enright, plumb severe, 'you be careful an'

conduct yourself deecorous. Wolfville is a moral camp. Thar's things done every day an' approved of in Noo York which'd get a gent downed in Wolfville.'

""That Miss Bark mentions she's Woman Suffrage, Sam?" observes Boggs, in a questionin' way, as we stands sloppin' out a reecooperative forty drops in the Red Light.

""Shore!" replies Enright. "The Doc yere can tell you all about 'em. As I onderstands, they're a warlike bevy of women who voylently resents not bein' born men. Thar's one thing, however; I sincerely trusts that none of you young sports'll prove that forward an' onwary as to go callin' her by her pet name of Original Sin. Which she might take advantage of it. Them exponents of women's rights is plumb full of the onexpected, that a-way, an' it's my belief that all who ain't honin' to commit sooicide'll be careful an' address her as Miss Bark.'

""Be they many of that Woman Suffrage brand?" persists Boggs.

""Herds of 'em,' chips in Peets. "The Eastern ranges is alive with 'em. But they don't last. As a roole they gets married, an' that's gen'rally speakin' the end of their pernicious activ'ties. Wedlock is a heap apt to knock their horns off.'

"Faro Nell, Tucson Jennie an' Missis Rucker don't take to this Miss Bark's Woman Suffrage views.

""She's welcome,' says the latter esteemable cook an' matron, 'to her feelin's; but she mustn't come preachin' no doctrine to me, wharof the effects is to lower me to Rucker's level. I've

had trouble enough redoocin' that ground-hawg to where he belongs, an' I ain't goin' to sacrifice the work of years for no mere sentiments.'

"Which I shore agrees with you, Missis Rucker,' says Nell, lookin' up from some plum preserves she's backin' off the noonday board to consider Cherokee, who's settin' next; 'a woman has enough to do to boss one gent, without tryin' to roole broadcast over whole commoonities.'

"At this exchange of views Cherokee softly grins like a sharp who can see his way through. As for Rucker, who's waitin' on the table an' packin' in viands from the kitchen, he takes it as sullen as a sorehead dog. Personal, I ain't got no use for Rucker; but between us, Missis Rucker, one way an' another, does certainly oppress him grievous.

"Before the week is out we knows a lot more about Miss Bark than we does when she first comes prancin' out upon us from Monte's stage. Not that thar's aught ag'inst the lady. It's doo to Enright, who begins recollectin' things.

"Which I knows her pop,' explains Enright, 'now my mem'ry's assertin' itse'f, I knows him when he first comes bulgin' into the Pecos Valley, eighteen years ago. This Original Sin daughter an' her maw don't show up none till later. Thar's no more innocent form of tenderfoot than Bark ever comes weavin' into the Southwest. He's that ignorantly innocent, wild geese is as wise as serpents to him. But he's full of a painstakin' energy, all the same, an' mighty assidyuous to learn.'

"'Whatever does he turn to?' asks Texas.

"'He hires out to a peach ranch. An' this'll show you how industrious, that a-way, this Bark tarrapin is. The peach ranch party has a measly bunch of sheep. He keeps 'em nights in a box-tight board corral, so's the coyotes can't get to mingle with 'em none. Days he throws 'em loose to feed. The first evenin' the peach ranch gent tells this yere Bark to corral the sheep, an' then come in for supper. "An' be shore," says the peach ranch party, "you gets 'em all in."

"'An hour goes by, an' the peach ranch party is about through his feed, when this yere Bark drifts up to the table. His face is flushed, but he's w'arin' a look of triumph. "I hives 'em," says he, some exultant; "only one lamb does shore force me to extend myse'f a lot. I'll gamble I runs a hundred miles before I rounds him up."

"'Next mornin' the peach ranch party goes out to throw loose them sheep. As he cranes his neck over the corral fence to count the bunch he's amazed to see a jack-rabbit galumpin' about among 'em. "Gin'ral Jackson fit the English!" he exclaims; "however does that jack-rabbit get himse'f mixed in with them sheep?" An' he p'intes it out to Bark.

"'That ontootered person is all astonishment. "Jack-rabbit!" says he. "Why, I hopes next fall to vote the reepublican ticket an' die disgraced if I don't put it down for a lamb! That's the anamile which makes me run my laigs off roundin' of him up!"

"'Which, as you says, Sam,' reemarks Tutt, signin' up to Black

Jack to set out the bottles, 'in the face of sech a showin' that Bark party must have been plenty ardent.'

"I should shore yell!" coincides Boggs.

"But he learns in time, of course?" questions Nell.

"Learns, Nellie?" repeats Enright; 'it ain't three years before he identifies himse'f with the life about him to that degree he bumps off two kyard sharps who tries to cold-deck him in a poker game, an' finds besides his steady employment stealin' old John Chisholm's calves, tharby assistin' in plantin' the toomultous seed of what comes subsequent to be called the Lincoln County War.'

"What's the finish of this interestin' crim'nal?" asks Cherokee.

"Lynched," returns Enright. 'They puts him over the jump at Seven Rivers. You see this Rattlesnake—they calls him Rattlesnake Bark in them later years—is bunked down in one of these yere jim-crow, barn-board hotels. Thar's a resoundin' form of guest in the adjoinin' room, snorin' to beat four kings an' a ace. Rattlesnake tries poundin' on the partition, an' sw'arin' at him, an' callin' him a hoss thief. It's no avail. The snores of that boarder sounds like sawin' planks, an' fa'rly rocks the shack—they're that stormy. Final, when Rattlesnake's burdens gets to be more'n flesh an' blood can b'ar, he reaches for his .45, an' bombards that sleeper good an' plenty through the wall. It turns out it's the new jedge. In the mornin', when this joorist is discovered too dead to skin, the public is that mortified it takes Rattlesnake out as soon as breakfast's over, an' strings him to a limb.'

"Don't this pore Rattlesnake get no hearin'?" asks Nell.

"You see, Nellie,' Enright explains, 'what with maverickin' the Chisholm calves, an' a stage or two hold-up which p'int's to him, the close season's been out as to this Rattlesnake person for mighty like a year. Not but what he might have made preparations. Thar's a reeligious party present who asks Rattlesnake if he wants to pray some. "Which you'll cross the dark river all the easier," expounds the reeligious gent. But Rattlesnake reefuses his ministrations. "I'm what I be," he says; "an' as for that dark river you refers to, I ain't lookin' for no shallow ford."

"This Rattlesnake,' continyoos Enright, 'is willin' to learn to the last. It's his way. Spring a new game on him an' he's out instanter lookin' for information an' advice. That's why he comes on so fast. Thar bein' nothin' to stand him on for the purpose of bein' lynched, the Stranglers posed Rattlesnake atop of a stack of hay, which is heaped up onder the tree they're yootilizin'. When the lariat is round his neck, an' he's disposed of the reeligious party who attempts to turn the business into a pra'r meetin', Rattlesnake looks at the chief of the committee an' says, "This yere bein' hanged from hay-cocks is plumb new to me entire, an' tharfore I'm obleeged to ask whether you-all expects me to jump off or slide?"

"Well,' comments Jack Moore, drawin' a deep breath, 'the old murderer's game—misguided, mebbly, but game.'

"That may be as it may,' observes Boggs, plenty thoughtful, 'but after all I regyards these yere details which Sam onfurls as

chiefly valyooable as sheddin' a ray on this Miss Bark. On the chance that she takes after her old man, from now on I'm goin' to walk 'round her like she's a swamp.'

"It's ten days after Miss Bark hits camp that things begins to focus. An old Mexican, the color of a blacksmith's apron, an' his wife, who's the same prosaic tint, comes creakin' along with a six-mule team—two wagons, lead an' trail—loaded to the gyards with stock an' fixtures. Said par'fernalia havin' arrived, Miss Bark busts in the door of the old deserted Lady Gay, an' takes possession. Armstrong, who runs the Noo York store, is the owner of the Lady Gay, but onder the circumstances he allows it'd be the act of a barbarian to interfere.

"Besides, the attitooode of the young lady herse'f is plumb discouragin'.

"I'd shore admire,' she remarks, as, with the aid of her Mexicans, she goes tossin' things into p'sition, 'to see some male felon try to run a bluff about him havin' title to this Lady Gay structure, an' becomin' my landlord. Men have tyrannized a heap too long as it is over onprotected women, an' thar's one at least who's took in patient silence all she will.'

"When Miss Bark's organized, she tacks up over the door a sign which the painter at the stage station preepar's. It reads:

VOTES FOR WOMEN SALOON

"'Only get it straight,' says Miss Bark when she has us close-herded at chuck time in the dinin' room of the O. K. Restauraw; 'I ain't openin' this saloon none with a view to sordid gain. I got

money enough right now to buy an' burn this yere deboshed town of Wolfville, an' then prance over an' purchase an' apply the torch to that equally abandoned outfit, Red Dog. What I'm reachin' for is the p'litical uplift of this camp. Recognizin' whiskey as a permanency an' that saloons has come to stay, I aims to show folks how them reesorts should be run. I hopes to see the day when every s'loon'll be in the hands of ladies. For I holds that once woman controls the nosepaint of the nation the ballot is bound to follow.'

"Once it's started we-all manages to patronize the Votes For Women S'loon for a average of three drinks a day. Enright advises it as safer.

"'Otherwise she might resent it,' explains Enright, 'an' armed to the teeth like she is, an' possessin' them perfervid idees, thar's no tellin' whar she'd end.'

"None of us feels like hangin' out thar. The atmosphere is too plumb formal. Besides, this yere Miss Bark has rooles. No kyards is permitted; an', moreover, you've got to go outdoors to sw'ar. As to drinks, the soberest among us can't get lickier oftener than every other time, while Monte can't get none at all. That Votes For Women S'loon, considered as a house of call, is, an' put it mildest, certainly depressin'.

"When I speaks of us patronizin' Miss Bark for three daily drinks, that a-way, thar's exceptions. Monte, as I states, is barred by the lady personal on the grounds of him bein' a slave to drink; while Tutt is forbid by Tucson Jennie. Tutt chafes some at them

mandates of Jennie's; but bein' keenly alive as to what's comin' to her, as well as what she's cap'ble of, in her triple rôle of woman, wife an' mother, he yields.

"As for Texas, while he subscribes to them three diurnal drinks, he allers insists that he has company.

"'It's all right,' Texas'd say; 'I ain't intimatin' that this Miss Bark goes cherishin' designs. But it's my onbreakable roole, since them divoice experiences, to never enter the presence of onmarried ladies onless attended by witnesses.'

"Owin' to which, some of us allers trails in along with Texas when he visits the Votes For Women S'loon. Even when thus protected he onflaggin'ly confines his observations to 'Licker, Miss, please!' an' stops thar as dumb as graven images. Once the licker's before him he heaves it into himse'f same as if it's drugs, an' instantly pulls his freight a heap speedy, breathin' hard. An' all as scared as a jack-rabbit that's heard the howl of a wolf.

"Does Miss Bark go proselytin' 'round concernin' them Rights of Women? Which she shore does! You may say she omits no opportoonty. It's before Wolfville gets that effete it mixes drinks, an' any one who knows water from whiskey can 'tend bar. Wharfore, Miss Bark stands watch an' watch with her old Mexican, Pancho. The times she herse'f is min'sterin' to our needs she's preachin' Woman Suffrage incessant. Also, not bein' plumb locoed, we bows in concord tharunto. Enright an' Peets both concurs that it's the thing to do, an' we does it.

"'Whatever difference does it make?' says Enright; 'the price

of steers remains the same, three-of-a-kind continyoos to beat two pa'r, thar's still fifty-two kyards in a faro deck, an' every other law of nacher survives onteched. My notion is to agree with this Miss Bark, verbal, an' trust to Wolfville's unbeatable luck to pull us through.'

"This counsel sounds good to us, an' we follows it. When Miss Bark sets forth her woman's rights fulm'nations along with her nosepaint, we murmurs a hearty assent, an' drinks down both impartial. Boggs, who's 'motional an' easy worked on, even gets to whar he gives it out he's actchooally a convert.

"Miss Bark has been on the map for mebbly it's a week, then thar occurs a eeisode which, while it makes no profound impression, deceased bein' a Mexican, shows she ain't packin' her pap Rattlesnake's old Colt's .45 in a sperit of facetiousness. It's about third drink time one evenin' when thar's the dull roar of a gun from over in the Votes For Women S'loon. When we arrives we finds a dead greaser carelessly quiled up near the door, an' Miss Bark snappin' the empty shell out of her six-shooter.

"'He was roode,' is the only explanation she vouchsafes; an' Enright, after lookin' at Peets a spell, who's lookin' at the ceilin', says it's s'fficient.

"'Only,' says Enright, when we're all back safe in the Red Light, 'I sincerely trusts she won't get her hindsights notched up to whar she takes to bumpin' off *Americanos*. I shore don't know whatever in sech case we could do, vig'lance committees, in the very essence of their construction, possessin' no joorisdiction

over ladies.'

"That's right, Sam,' says Peets, plenty grave; 'if it ever gets to whar this Miss Bark turns her artillery loose on the camp permis'cus the only hope left would be to adjourn Wolfville *sine die*.'

"Miss Bark, however, never does grow homicidal toward any of us, an' the only effect of her puttin' that Mexican over is that it inclines folks gen'ral to step high an' softly on what occasions they're found plantigradin' about in her s'ciety.

"One week, two weeks, three weeks goes by, an' since a dead Mexican more or less ain't calc'lated to leave no oneefface'ble scars the incident is all but forgot, when a second uprisin' takes place in the Votes For Women S'loon. This time it's that sickly curlew-voiced Oscar who's the shriekin' center of eevents. Most of us is jest filin' out of the O. K. Restauraw, pickin' our teeth after our matootinal reepast, when we beholds this yere Oscar boilin' fo'th from the Votes For Women S'loon, all spraddled out. As he goes t'arin' down the street Miss Bark seelects a graceful p'sition in the door, an' ca'mly pumps three loads at him out of her winchester. When I says she pumps them bullets at Oscar it's to be took conserv'tive; for none of 'em hits him, but only tosses up the dust about his flyin' feet. At the last shot Oscar cripples down in a shiverin' heap; an' with that Texas an' Boggs, not knowin' the extent of his injuries, rolls him onto a blanket an' packs him to his room over at the O. K. House, so's Peets can prospect his frame all scientific locatin' the lead.

"Thar bein' no lead, as rerelated, Peets reeports final to that effect.

"'Only,' says Peets, 'he's scared up to sech extents that if our Joan of Arc had dusted his gaiters with so much as two more bullets he'd have been beyond medical skill.'

"Followin' the foosilade Miss Bark sends for Enright.

"'It's this way,' she goes on, when Enright arrives. 'That shorthorn Oscar comes lurchin' in, an' asks for nosepaint. As he stands thar, puttin' it onder his belt—me meanwhile swabbin' off the bar—he mentions that his paw's rich, an' his step-maw's jest died, leavin' him an' his paw alone. Then he calls attention to the presence in camp of that strayed sky-pilot, who preaches an' passes the hat the other evenin' over in the wareroom of the Noo York store. It's now, havin' got the bar tittivated to my taste, I has time to look this Oscar person's way, an' I finds him gloatin' over me in form an' manner not to be mistook. "Whatever be you leerin' at?" I deemands, bein' I'm in no mood for insults. Tharupon, he cuts loose a mouthful of platitooedes concernin' wedlock, an' about me bein' the soul of his soul. Havin' stood it a while, an' findin' my forbearance makes him worse, I grabs my winchester whar it's reposin' ready for eemergincies on the dripboard, an' you knows the rest.'

"'With your free consent, Miss,' says Enright, 'I'd like to put one query. Was you aimin' to down, or to simply skeer this Oscar?'

"'I was only skeerin' him up some,' replies Miss Bark coyly.

'W'y, if I was reely out for his skelp, I'd have shore got it a heap. You can pin a patch the size of a dollar on that disparin' lover's coat, an' I'll cut it nine times in ten, offhand, at a hundred yards.'

""Tests is not reequired,' Enright interposes, plenty hasty; 'it's part of the organic law of this yere camp that a lady's word, even about her age, is to be took onchallenged.'

""Which I'm flattered,' says Miss Bark. 'Now, is thar anything else?'

""Only this,' returns Enright. 'As long as he gives you cause, an' you can shoot like you says, why ever don't you down him?'

""Which I confesses,' says Miss Bark, a blush mantlin' her brow, 'that sech is my orig'nal intentions when I reaches for my weepion. But jest as I sees that Oscar through the sights it comes upon me that thar's nothin' in bein' preecip'tate, an' mebb'y I'd better give myse'f the needed time to think his offer over.'

""Enright shakes his wisdom-freighted head; when he relates his talk to Peets, the Doc shakes his head sim'lar in sapient yoonison.

""Which I'll bet a hatful of yellow chips,' says Boggs, who's stood listenin', 'ag'inst a handful of whites, that this yere Miss Bark makes herse'f an' that Oscar shorthorn man an' wife.'

""Now I wouldn't wonder none,' observes Peets, replyin' to the look in Enright's eye. 'That shootin' needn't count. A troo affection is freequent boisterous, that a-way.'

""An' in case,' says Enright, 'the kyards do fall in favor of matrimony, it'll most likely be the end of that Votes For Women

S'loon. I begins to see how this yere ongrateful outfit may yet get deep in debt to that egreegious Oscar.'

"None of us ever says so, but it's the common belief that Texas connives at this yere threatened Oscar's escape. In any case, the next mornin' Oscar goes catfoot out of the O. K. House before folks is up, an' takes to hidin' out. The fact is he's layin' for Monte an' the stage, about ten mile no'th of camp. Leastwise, he's thar a heap when Monte comes along, an' deemands that he be took up an' carried to Tucson.

"It ain't first drink time before this Oscar's missed, an' by second drink time the news has drifted over to Miss Bark. It's Peets who informs her, an' he tells us, when relatin' the incident, that the way that deeserted lady knits her brow is a caution to philos'phers.

"So,' she says at last, 'that onmitigated seedoocer thinks to leave me in this heartless way. He'll find before he's through that it's no light matter to charm into fervent life a love like mine.'

"It's the theery, Miss,' says Peets, 'of the best minds in camp that this Oscar's hit the Tucson trail afoot, with a plan of headin' off the stage.'

"Ten minutes an' Miss Bark is in the saddle, a lead pony gallopin' by her side, in hot pursoot of the dir'lect.

"That lead pony looks om'nous, Doc,' observes Enright, as the two stands watchin' Miss Bark's departure.

"It's prov'dential,' remarks Peets, as he heads the procession to the Red Light, 'that that sky-pilot's aboard the stage. Which

he ought to work in plumb handy.'

"Six hours later Miss Bark comes surgin' in with her Oscar foogitive, his heels tied onder the belly of the lead hoss. Any one can see by his benumbed expression that he's a married man. The two heads straight for the Votes For Women S'loon, an' after boltin' her new he'pmeet into the back room, Miss Bark takes a peek in the glass, pats down her ha'r, an' goes behind the bar as yoosual.

"'Yes,' she replies, an' all a heap modest an' artless, as Peets an' Enright—actin' on behalf of the camp—gyardedly inquires if they're to offer congratulations, 'I reckon you may. An' the best part is that my dear Oscar's so plumb ready an' willin'. Which I never knows a bridegroom, gents, who gets married with so little struggle.'

"'How soon, Missis Freelinghuysen,' says Peets, 'do you-all reckon on lettin' this Oscar husband out?'

"'Oh,' she returns, 'as soon as ever it's safe. Jest now he's some onstrung; but in a day or two I figger he'll begin to get reeconciled to his bliss. An' at that, my main idee in lockin' him up is one of reeform rather than restraint. Oscar's been over-drinkin' himse'f of late; an' I aims to get the whiskey out of him, so as I can form some reas'nable estimate of how much of a husband that a-way I've done roped up.'

"'Is thar any objections,' asks Enright, 'to our visitin' this modern pris'ner of Chillon? We binds ourselves to say nothin' that'll fret him, or set him to beatin' his life out ag'inst the bars.'

"'W'y, shore,' she replies, 'you-all is quite welcome. I only hopes you'll teach him to look at things in their proper light.'

"'It ain't so much,' says this Oscar husband, when Enright an' Peets calls upon him in his captivity, 'that I've been hurried, onregyardful of my feelin's, into the married state. But, gents, my parent is doo, accordin' to his last letter, to come curvin' in yere any minute; an' whatever do you-all reckon now he's goin' to say?'

"Enright an' Peets is so moved they promises the imprisoned Oscar their support, an' this leaves him, if not hopeful, at least some cheered.

"Monte gives his version of them nuptials when he returns from Tucson.

"'Which it's this a-way, pards,' says Monte. 'I'm twenty miles no'th of yere, when somethin' flashes by with a lead hoss, like arrows. Thinks I, "That's a hoss thief gettin' away with some stock"; an', allowin' Jack Moore'll be hard on his neefarious hocks, I'm lookin' back to see can I raise Jack's dust. The next I knows, an' all as sudden as a pan of milk from a top shelf, I hears a silv'ry voice remarkin': "Set your brake!" an' turnin' my head I finds a winchester p'intin' as squar' between my eyes as you-all could lay your finger. Gents, thar's something mighty cogent about a winchester that a-way, an' I shore shoves on the brake with sech abandon I snaps the shank short off.'

"'Wherever is this Oscar party?' asks Enright.

"'He's with me on the box; an' when this yere intrepid Miss

Bark takes to dom'neerin' at us with that rifle he collapses. "It's you, Oscar," observes this Miss Bark, shiftin' the muzzle to him. "Upon second thought I concloods to accept your offer of marriage."

"Which at that crisis," remarks Peets, 'this Oscar of course breaks into loud an' joyful cries.'

"Not exactly. In fact, his tones if anything is some low-sperited. "I takes it," he says, when he's able to command his feelin's, "that you declines them proffers with your winchester at the time when made." But the lady dismisses this as a quibble, an' merely sayin' that she won't be paltered with no farther, orders Oscar an' the Bible sharp who's ridin' inside to assemble by the edge of the trail. The Bible sharp attempts to lay the foundations of fresh objections by askin' Oscar does he do this of his own free will; but the muzzle of the winchester—which the bride all along reetains in her hands—begins movin' 'round in his direction, observin' which man'festation he pronounces 'em husband an' wife. "What heaven has j'ined together," says he, "let no man put asunder." After which he blesses 'em, an' reeports the last cinch fastened. "Pay him, Oscar," whispers the bride. Wharupon Oscar, his fingers tremblin', squars the Bible sharp with the price of a brace of steers, an' the deed is done. Now he's hers for better or worse, she ropes his heels together onder the belly of her lead hoss, an' the happy pa'r goes romancin' back for Wolfville, while I kicks loose what's left of the brake an' p'intns out ag'in for Tucson.'

"On the third day, by givin' his parole an' promising to fondly reeport to his spouse once every hour, Oscar is permitted to go reecreatin' about the camp.

"'Only,' says the lady, by way of warnin' to Black Jack, 'thar's to be no drinks.'

"These yere strained conditions preevails for mebbly it's five days, when, as the stage swings in to the post office one evenin', a stout florid old gent gets out. He comes puffin' up to Peets a heap soopercilious.

"'Do you-all know a addle-pated an' semi-eediotic young party,' says he, 'who's named Oscar Freelinghuysen?'

"'Why, yes,' returns Peets, 'I do. Onless my mem'ry's pulled its picket pin an' gone plumb astray he's the eboolient sharp who conclooded a somewhat toomultuous courtship last week by gettin' married. He's in the shank of his honeymoon as we stands chattin' yere.'

"The florid gent glares at Peets, his feachures the color of liver, his eyes stickin' out like the eyes of a snail.

"'Married!' he gasps, an' falls in a apoplectic fit.

"It takes a week an' all the drugs Peets has got before that apoplectic's able to sit up an' call for nosepaint. An' whatever do you think? His daughter-in-law, but onbeknownsts to him as sech, nurses him from soda to hock. Oscar Joonior? By advice of Enright that prodigal's took to cover over in Red Dog ontill we've made shore about the fatted calf.

"The former Miss Bark puts up that nursin' game with Peets,

an' day an' night she hangs over her apoplectic father-in-law like a painter over a picture. She's certainly as cunnin' as a pet fox! She dresses as quiet as a quail an' makes her voice as softly sober as a suckin' dove's. In the end she's got that patient hypnotized.

"After Peets declar's him out of danger, an' all propped up in his blankets he's subscribed to mighty likely it's the fifth drink, the apoplectic begins to shed tears a heap profoose, an' relate to his nurse—the former Miss Bark—how his two wives has died, leavin' him a lonely man. She, the former Miss Bark, is his only friend—he says—an' he winds up his lamentations by recommendin' that she become his third.

"You're the only hooman heart who ever onderstands me," he wails, gropin' for her hand, 'an' now my ongrateful boy has contracted a messalliance I shore wants you for my wife.'

"She hangs her head like a flower at night, an' lets on she's a heap confoosed.

"Speak," he pleads; 'tell me that you'll be mine.'

"Which I'd shore admire to, but I can't," she murmurs; 'I'm wedded to your son.'

"The old apoplectic asks for more licker in a dazed way, an' sends for Peets. The Doc an' him goes into execyootive session for most an hour; meanwhile the camp's on edge.

"At the close the Doc eemerges plumb radiant.

"Everything's on velvet," he says; 'thar's never a more joodicious convalescent. He freely admits, considerin' the sort of daughter-in-law he's acquired, that Oscar has more sense than

folks suspects.'

"Now that the skies is cl'ared, the bridegroom is fetched back from Red Dog, an' thar's a grand reeconciliation.

"'We'll all go back East together,' sobs father-in-law Freelinghuysen, holdin' both their hands.

"Two days later they starts, Missis Freelinghuysen Joonier lookin' after father-in-law Freelinghuysen same as if he's a charlotte roosse.

"The Votes For Women S'loon?"

"It's kept a secret, at Peet's su'gestion, him bein' apoplectic that a-way. The stock is bought by public subscription of the camp, an' when the Freelinghuysen household is out of sight an' hearin' we invites Red Dog over in a body an' onbelts in a mod'rate orgy. The sign, 'Votes For Women S'loon,' is now preeserved in the custody of the Wolfville Historical Society, which body is called into active bein' upon motion of Peets, while Red Dog an' us is drinkin' up the stock."

IV

OLD MONTE, OFFICIAL DRUNKARD

"Shore; Monte's the offishul drunkard of Arizona." The old cattleman was answering my question. "Or, seein' that mebbly Wolfville's joorisdiction won't be held none to reach beyond, let's say the offishul drunkard of Cochise County. That's Monte's civic designation; offishul drunkard, an' meant to fix his social place.

"Does he resent it?"

"Which he proudly w'ars that title like it's a kingly crown! It's as good as even money that to undertake to sep'rate him from it, or deny the same, is the one single thing he bristles up at an' give you a battle over.

"Which this yere last should mean a heap, since Monte's plumb pacific by nacher, an' abhors war to the mean confines of bein' timid. To be shore, he'll steam at the nose, an' paw the sod, an' act like he's out to spread rooin far an' wide—that he's doo to leave everything in front of him on both sides of the road. But in them perfervid man'festations he don't reely intend nothin' either high or heenious, or more'n jest to give his se'f-respect an outing that a-way. Let the opp'sition call him down, an' the crafty old cimmaron'll go to the diskyard instanter.

"Which at that, Monte ain't without his interestin' side. When onder the infloence of nosepaint, which last is constant, he has three distinct moods. About the fo'th drink, let a stranger show up, an'—all aff'ble an' garyoolous—Monte's right thar to do the honors. When the stranger, gettin' weary, kicks Monte off him, the same bein' shore to happen final since no one formed in the image of his Maker can put up with them verbal imbecil'ties of his beyond a given len'th of time, he'll arch his back an'—apparently—wax that f'rocious a wronged grizzly to him is as meek as milk. An' yet, as I tells you, it's simply a blazer; an' the moment the exasperated stranger begins betrayin' symptoms of goin' to a showdown, Monte lapses into his third mood of haughty silence, an' struts off like it's beneath him to bandy words.

"That's the savin' clause in Monte's constitootion; he may get drunk, but he never gets injoodicious. Thar's a sport from some'ers over 'round Shakespear in the dance hall one evenin', whose patience has been plenty trespassed on by Monte. By way of bringin' matters to a deecisive head, this yere Shakespear party tells Monte he's a liar. Do you reckon Monte hooks up with him? Not a chance! He simply casts on that maligner from Shakespear a look of disparagement, an' with nose held high, as markin' his contempt, moves away with the remark.

"That's something I refooses to discuss with you.'

"Which thar's no more real p'isin in Monte than in a hired girl.

"We has the chance once to try some experiments on Monte, an' it's the mistake of our lives we don't. Peets, whose regrets

is scientific, feels speshully acoote. Thar's a partic'lar bar'l of nosepaint gets trundled into camp, which is nothin' short of bein' the condensed essence of hostility. Black Jack, after years as barkeep, says himse'f he never sees nothin' like it. On the hocks of two drinks, folks gets that ornery Enright has it freighted back to Tucson in alarm, fearin' for the peace of the camp. At the time, none of us thinks of it; but later it's a subject of gen'ral regret that some of it ain't saved to try on Monte. Mebby that speshul brand of licker turns out to be the missin' ingredient, an' keys him up to deeds of heroism.

"Jest to show you some of the milder workin's of that licker. Boggs files away four inches of it onder his belt, an' next, when he's walkin' by the corral an' meets a Mexican, he reaches out in a casyooal an' abstracted way, collars that Greaser an' hefts him over a six-foot 'dobe fence, same as if he's a bag of bran; an' all apropos of nothin'. Boggs says himse'f he don't know why none. He's thinkin' of something else at the time, he declar's, an' the eepisode don't leave no partic'lar traces on his mem'ry. The trooth is, it's that veehement an' onmuzzled nosepaint, incitin' him to voylence.

"Is the Mexican hurt?"

"Which, if I remembers rightly, Peets does mention about a busted collarbone. But it don't create no interest—him bein' a Mexican. You see, thar's a feelin', amountin' fa'rly to a onwritten law, that Mexicans ain't got no rightful call to be seen in public no how; an' when one does go pirootin' round permiscus, in

voylation of this yere tenet, nacherally he takes his chances. You-all can gamble, though, that Boggs shore never would have reached for him, only he's actchooted by that whiskey.

"As modest an' retirin' a sperit as Cherokee, to whom any form of boastful bluff is plumb reepellant, subscribes to a mod'rate snifter of that licker; an' in less time than it takes to rope a pony, he's out in front of the Red Light, onbucklin' in a display of pistol shootin'. Thar's a brace of towerists in camp, an' Cherokee let's on he'll show 'em. Which he shore shows 'em! He tosses two tomatter cans on high, an' with a gun in each hand keeps 'em dancin' an' jumpin' about in the atmosphere ontill thar's six bullets through each. It's a heap satisfyin' as a performance, as far as them pop-eyed towerists is concerned, an' both leaves town that evenin' by speshul buckboard.

"Onaffected by that licker, Cherokee wouldn't have no more gone an' made sech a spectacle of himse'f, though urged tharunto by the yoonanimous voice of the outfit. When he so far recovers as to 'ppreciate what Faro Nell has to say of them exploits—an', while tender, she's plenty explicit—he comes mighty clost to blushin' himse'f to death.

"It's after we notes what it does to Cherokee, an' hears of them exhibitions of broote force by Boggs, that we gets timid about this yere whisky, an' Enright orders the bar'l sent back. An' right he is! S'ppose them Red Dogs was to have come prancin' over for a social call, an' s'ppose in entertainin' 'em we all inadvertent has recourse to that partic'lar licker, whatever do you-all reckon

'd have been the finish? Son, thar'd have been one of them things they calls a catyclism, an' nothin' short.

"It's shore a fightin' form of licker. Tutt reeserves out a tin cup of it, an' sets it down by a prairie dog's hole. Accordin' to Tutt, the dog comes out, laps it once, an' starts back same as if he's been shot with a '45. Thar he squats, battin' his eyes, wrinkl'n up his nose, an' cogitatin'. After thinkin' the thing over, the dog approaches, mighty gingerly, an' takes three or four more laps. Then he r'ars back, an' considers for quite a spell. It looks final like he gets his mind made up, an' with that he capers over, an' he'ps himse'f to what for a prairie dog is shore a big drink.

"Two minutes later, ha'r bristlin', whiskers standin' out like wire, eyes full of determination, that dog crosses over to another dog who's livin' neighbor to him, an' says—accordin' to Tutt:

"'Wherever can I locate that coyote who's been domineerin' round yere for mebby it's a month, harassin' folks into their holes? Whar's that coyote at?'

"Peets allers allows Tutt exaggerates, but havin' sampled that licker some myse'f, I'm a long ride from bein' so shore.

"That lack of war instinct in Monte ain't no specific drawback. Him drivin' stage that a-way, he ain't expected none to fight. The hold-ups onderstands it, the company onderstands it, everybody onderstands it. It's the law of the trail. That's why, when the stage is stopped, the driver's never downed. Which if thar's money aboard, an' the express outfit wants it defended, they slams on some sport to ride shotgun that trip. It's for this

shotgun speshulist to give the route agents an argyooment. Which they're licensed to go bombardin' each other ontill the goin' down of the sun. As for the driver, however, the etikette simply calls for him to set his brake, an' all peaceful hold his hands above his head. It's inside his rights, too, accordin' to the rooles, for him to cuss out the hold-ups, an' call 'em all the hard names of which he's cap'ble; an' stage drivers, who loves their art, spends their time between drinks practisin' new cuss words, an' inventin' onheard of epithets, so as to be ready when dooty an' o'casion calls. Havin' downed or driven off the shotgun sport, an' seen the bottom of the express box, the hold-ups tells the stage driver to pull his freight. Wharupon he picks up the reins, kicks free the brake, lets fly a loorid an' final broadside of vitooperation—he havin' carefully reeserved the same, by way of peroration—an' goes his windin' way.

"Wolfville's been on the map for most a year, when Monte first shows up. In the beginnin', an' ontill we-all gets adjusted to him, he's something of a bore. Leastwise, he ain't what you'd go so far as to call a boon companion. When it dawns on us that he's plottin' to make himse'f a permanency, it certainly does look for a spell that, what with his consumption of nosepaint an' what with his turrific genius for snorin', he's goin' to be a trifle more'n we can stand.

"Does Monte snore?"

"Not to create ondoo excitement, the bar'foot onclothed trooth is that his snorin' falls nothin' short of bein' sinful. Boggs

has plenty of countenance when he brings them snores to the attention of Enright.

"'Thar's shore a limit somewhar, Sam,' Boggs says, 'to this yere drunkard's right to snore. Which he's simply keepin' everybody over to the O. K. House settin' up. Onless something's done to check him, thar'll be a epidemic of St. Vitus dance. You ask Doc Peets; he'll tell you that this yere Monte with his snorin' is a scourge.'

"It's not alone their volume, but their quality, which makes them snores of Monte so undesir'ble. Some folks snores a heap deprecatory, an' like they're apol'gizin' for it as they goes along. Others snores in a manner ca'mly confident, an' all as though the idee that any gent objects would astonish 'em to death. Still others snores plumb deefiant, an' like they ain't snorin' so much for comfort, that a-way, as to show their contempt for mankind. It's to this yere latter hostile school that drunkard, Monte, belongs.

"After Boggs lodges complaint, Enright takes a corrective peek into the sityooation. Thar's two rooms over the O. K. kitchen, sort o' off by themselves. Upon Enright's hint, Missis Rucker beds down Monte in one, an' Deef Andy, who mends harness for the stage company an' can't hear nothin', in the other.

"'It's for the safety of your excellent car'vansary, Ma'am,' Enright explains. 'Which Dan's mighty easy moved; an' some mornin', unless you adopts them improvements, that somnolent sot you're harborin' 'll go too far with Dan. I takes it you-all don't want the shack all smoked up with Dan's six-shooter? In which

event you'll put that reverberant drunkard in the far-corner room, with Andy next.'

"Peets once mentions a long-ago poet party, named Johnson, who, speakin' of a fellow poet after he's dead an' down onder the grass-roots, lets on that he teches nothin' he don't adorn. You can go your ultimate simoleon that ain't Monte's style. The only things he don't upset is bottles; the only flooid he never spills is licker. This yere last would be ag'inst his religion. Wharever he goes, he's otherwise draggin' his rope, an' half the time he's steppin' on it.

"It's him that coaxes that onhappy Polish picture painter our way. This yere is long after he's drivin' stage, an' as Wolfville's offishul drunkard becomes a tol'rated feachure of the camp. This Polish artist person is as much out o' place in Arizona as a faro lay-out at a Sunday school picnic. Monte crosses up with him over at Tucson in the Oriental S'loon, an' while thar's no ties between 'em, more'n what nacherally forms between two gents who sets drinkin' together all night long, before ever they're through with each other that inspired inebriate lands the locoed artist party on our hands. Enright shore does go the limit in rebookin' Monte.

"'Why, Sam,' says Monte, an' he's that depreecatory he whines, 'I allows you'll look on him as a acquisition.'

"'All the same,' returns Enright, an' I never knows him more forbiddin', 'yereafter please confine your annoyin' assidooities to drivin' stage, an' don't go tryin' to improve the outlook of this

camp.'

"Monte, with this, gets that dismal he sheds tears. 'Which it shore looks like I can't do nothin' right,' he sobs.

"Then don't,' says Enright.

"From the start, Monte graves himse'f upon the mem'ry of folk as the first sport, to onroll his blankets in Cochise County, who consoomes normal over twenty drinks a day. Upon festal occasions like Noo Year's, an' Christmas, an' Fo'th of Jooly, an' Thanksgivin', no gent who calls himse'f a gent thinks of keepin' tabs on a fellow gent, no matter how frequent he signs up to Black Jack. On gala o'casions, sech as them noted, the bridle is plumb off the hoss, an' even though you drinks to your capac'ty an' some beyond, no one's that vulgar as to go makin' remarks. But that ain't Monte; he's different a heap. It looks like every day is Fo'th of Jooly with him, he's that inveterate in his reemorseeless hankerin' for nosepaint.

"Also, regyarded as to his social side, Monte, as I states former, is a nooisance. Knowin' folks, too, is his fad. Only so you give him licker enough, he'll go surgin' round accostin' every gent he sees. No matter how austere a stranger is, Monte'll tackle him. An' at that he never says nothin' worth hearin', an' in its total absence of direction his conversation resembles nothin' so much as a dog chasin' its tail.

"An' then thar's them footile bluffs he's allers tryin' to run. He's been pesterin' in an' out of the Red Light one evenin' ontill he's got Black Jack incensed. As he comes squanderin' along, for

say the twentieth time, Black Jack groans, an' murmurs,

"Yere's that booze-soaked old hoss-thief ag'in!"

"Monte gets the echo of it, same as folks allers does when it ain't wanted, but he's onable to say who. So he stands thar by the bar, glarin' 'round an' snortin'. Final, he roars:

"Who cuts loose that personal'ty?"

"Thar ain't no answer, an' Monte ag'in takes to pitchin' on his rope.

"Show me the galoot who insults me,' he roars; 'let him no longer dog it, but p'int himse'f out as the gent.'

"All right,' says Black Jack, whose indignation gets the best of his reespons'bilities as barkeep, 'which I'm the party who alloodes to you as a booze-soaked old hoss-thief.'

"An' so you're the gent,' says Monte, castin' a witherin' glance at Black Jack; 'so you're the would-be sooicide who calls me a booze-soaked old hoss-thief?'

"Which I'm the identical stingin' lizard. Now what is it you're so plumb eager to say?"

"What am I eager to say? I merely wants to remark that you ain't done nothin' to swell up over. You-all needn't go thinkin' you're the first barkeep who calls me a booze-soaked old hoss-thief.'

"Havin' la'nched this yere, Monte turns off as stiffly pompous as though he ain't left a grease-spot of Black Jack.

"When folks won't listen to him no longer, Monte goes bulgin' forth into the highways an' the byways, an' holds long an'

important discussions with signs, an' dry-goods boxes, an' sim'lar inan'mate elements of the landscape. Also, to mules an' burros. I remarks him myse'f, whisperin' in the onregyardful y'ear of a burro, an' said anamile as sound asleep as a tree. When that drunkard's through his confidences, he backs off, an' wavin' his paw plumb myster'ous at the burro says:

"Remember, now; I'm givin' you this yere p'inter as a friend.'

"That time Black Jack offends Monte, after the latter hits the sidewalk followin' what he clar'ly considers is his crushin' come-back on Black Jack, he gets the feelin' that Jack's ha'ntin' along on his trail. Before he's gone fifty foot, he w'irls about, an' shouts:

"Don't you-all follow me! Which, if you crowds me, them places that has knowed you won't know you no more forever.'

"When Monte gets off this menace, it seems like the Black Jack specter becomes intim'dated, an' tries to squar' itse'f.

"'What's that?' Monte asks, after listenin' mighty dignified to the spook's excuses; 'you begs my pardon? Not another word. If you-all keeps on talkin' now you'll sp'ile it. Thar's my hand,' givin' the fingers of the phantom a mighty earnest squeeze. 'I'm your friend, an' that goes.'

"Havin' established a peace, Monte insists that the Black Jack phantom b'ar him company to the O. K. Restauraw. In spite of all Missis Rucker can say or do, he plants the spook at the table, feeds it on the best that's in the kitchen, an' all as confident as if it's shorely troo. Also, he insists on payin' for two.

"When Missis Rucker tries to show him he's down wrong, he

refooses to have it that way.

"Do you-all reckon, Ma'am, that I can't trust my eyes none?" he demands. 'Which you'll tell me next that them airtights I tops of with is figments.'

"But thar's only one of you-all,' Missis Rucker persists.

"Ma'am,' returns Monte, his manner plumb s'picious, 'I don't jest quite sense your little game. Whatever it is, however, you-all can't play it on old Monte. You write back to my fam'ly an' the neighbors, an' the least flatterin' among 'em'll tell you that I'm as cunnin' as a squinch owl. Thar's two of us who feeds, an' for two of us I settles. Bein' a woman, you're too feeble-witted for reason, too mendacious for trooth.'

"Don't you go callin' me no woman,' says Missis Rucker, her eyes snappin', 'onless you're ready to cash in.'

"Women!" repeats Monte, sort o' addressin' the scenery, but still plenty cynical, 'what be they except a fleetin' show to man's deloosion given. Also, thar's nothin' to 'em. You opens their front door, an' you're in their back yard.'

"Texas has been givin' y'ear to the talk. It's before his Laredo wife starts ropin' for that divorce; but she's already makin' war medicine, an' the signs an' signal smokes which p'int to an uprisin' is vis'ble on every hill. Texas is careful not to let Missis Rucker hear him none, but as he walks away, he mutters:

"That ghost-seein' sport's got the treemors, but all the same I strings with him on them estimates of ladies.'

"Texas is that fav'rably affected about Monte, he talks things

over with Tutt, who himse'f ain't married to Tucson Jennie none as yet. Them nuptials, an' that onbiased blessin', little Enright Peets Tutt, who results tharfrom, comes along later.

"Which thar's good in that Monte maverick,' says Texas; 'only so we could get the nosepaint out of him.'

"Now, I wouldn't wonder none, neither,' says Tutt.

"He drinkt up two quarts an' a half yesterday,' says Texas.

"Ain't thar no steps which can be took?' Tutt asks. 'Two quarts an' a half, though, shore sounds like he's somethin' of a prop'sition.'

"These yere remarks is made in the Red Light, an' Tutt an' Texas appeals to Cherokee, whar that courtier of fortune is settin' in behind his lay-out. Cherokee waves 'em off, p'lite but firm.

"Don't ask me none,' he says. 'You-all knows my doctrines. Let every gent kill his own snakes.'

"That's my theology,' remarks Boggs, who has just come ramblin' in from the Noo York store, whar he's been changin' in a bundle of money for shirts; 'I recalls how, when I'm a prattlin' yearlin', hearin' Parson Ed'ards of the Cambellite Church quotin' whar Cain gives it out cold that he's not his brother's keeper; an' even at that onthinkin' age I fully endorses Cain's p'sition.'

"The talk takes in Black Jack, who, by virchoo of him bein' a barkeep, nacherally savvys a heap about the licker question. Jack relates how a sot he knows back in Arkansaw is shocked into never takin' a drink, by simply blowin' his hand off accidental while tanked up.

"Whang! goes the old Betsy,' says Jack, 'an' that slave to licker's shy his left hand. "Which it lets me out!" he exclaims; an' datin' from said catastrophe he'd no more tech nosepaint, that a-way, than he'd join the church.'

"But it's doubtful,' observes Tutt, 'if Enright stands to let us shoot this yere Monte drunkard's hand off.'

"It's ten to one he won't,' says Texas; 'still thar ought to be other schemes for shockin' a party into moral'ty, which stops short o' cripplin' him for life.'

"But is this yere inebriate worth the worry?' asks Boggs. 'Also, it shore strikes me as mighty gratooitous for us to go reorganizin' the morals of a plumb stranger, an' him not even asked.'

"Which he's worth the worry all right,' Texas replies. 'Thar's no efforts too great, when thar's a chance to save a party who has the same thorough onderstandin' of ladies which this gent has.'

"Up over the Red Light bar is a stuffed bobcat, the same bein' held as decorative. Only the day before Texas and Tutt stands talkin', a couple of Enright's riders comes packin' a live bobcat into town, which between 'em they ropes up over in the foothills of the Tres Hermanas, an' jams labor'ously into a pa'r of laiggin's. The same idee seizes on Texas an' Tutt yoonanimous. They sees that it only calls for the intelligent use of that Bar-8 bobcat, which them cow-punchers of Enright's ties down, to reegen'rate Monte, an' make him white as snow.

"Monte's ain't present none, bein' over to the O. K. House. By bein' plumb painstakin', Tutt an' Texas gets a collar onto

the captive Bar-8 bobcat, an' chains him up over the Red Light bar, in place of the stuffed bobcat, deeposed. The Bar-8 bobcat jumps off once or twict before he learns, an' comes mighty clost to lynchin' himse'f. But Black Jack is patient, an' each time pokes him back with a cha'r. After mebbby the third jump, it gets proned into the bobcat that thar's nothin' in it for him to go hurlin' himse'f into space that a-way, an' bein' saved from death by hangin' only through the cha'r-laig meditations of Black Jack. Acceptin' this yere view, he stands pat on his shelf. Likewise, he shore looks mighty vivid up thar, an' has got that former stuffed predecessor of his beat four ways from the jack.

"We're hankerin' around, now the Bar-8 bobcat's organized, waitin' for Monte to come amblin' up, an' be reformed.

"An' you can gamble,' Tutt says, 'that the shock it'll throw into him'll have a ben'ficial effect. Shootin' off a hand or so ain't in it with the way that drunkard's goin' to feel.'

"That's the way I figgers,' Texas remarks. 'One glance at that bobcat, him on the verge of the treemors, an' thar'll a thrill go through his rum-soaked frame like the grace of heaven through a camp meetin'. For one, I antic'pate most excellent effects. Whatever do you think, Doc?'

"Whatever do I think?' Peets repeats. 'Which I thinks that, as the orig'nators of this yere cure for the licker habit, it'll be up to you an' Dave to convey the patient to his room at the O. K. House, as soon as ever you can control his struggles.'

"Monte at last heaves in sight, an' comes shiverin' up to the

bar, every nerve as tight as a fiddle string. Black Jack shoves him the bottle.

"'What stuffed anamile sharp,' says Tutt, craftily directin' himself at Black Jack, 'mounts that bobcat up thar?'

"Monte nacherally raises his eyes. Thar's that Bar-8 feline, half-crouched, glarin' down on him with green eyes, big as moons.

"That settles it.

"Monte gives a yell which they hears in Red Dog. Wharupon the bobcat, takin' it for a threatenin' deemonstration, onfolds in an answerin' yell, an' makes a scramblin' jump at Monte's head. Shore, he don't land none, bein' brought up short, like a roped pony. Thar he swings, cussin' an' spittin' an' clawin', as mad as a drunken squaw, an' begins all over to hang himse'f afresh.

"Monte?

"That victim of appetite falls to the floor as dead an' flat as a wet December leaf.

"Actin' on them instructions, Tutt an' Texas picks Monte up an' packs him across to Peets, who, after fussin' over him for mebbly an hour, brings him round s'fficient so he goes from one convulsion into another, in what you-all might deescribe as an endless chain of fits. Thar's nothin' to it; Peets is indoobitable the best equipped drug sharp that ever breaks loose in Arizona. At that, while Monte lives, he don't but jest. He's shore close enough at one time to kingdom come to hear the singin'.

"For two weeks Monte's boilin' an' boundin' round in his

blankets, Texas an' Tutt, feelin' a heap reemorseful, standin' watch and watch. It's decided that no more attempts to reform him will be made, him bein'—accordin' to Peets—too far gone that a-way.

"'He's plumb onreform'ble,' explains Peets; 'whiskey's got to be so much a second nacher with him, that the only way you-all could cure him now is kill him.'

"By way of partial rep'ration for what he suffers, as soon as Monte can ag'in move about, Enright calls a meetin' of the camp, an' dooly commissions him 'Offishul Drunkard,' with a absolote an' non-reevok'ble license to go as far as he likes.

"'This yere post of offishul drunkard,' Enright explains to the meetin', 'carries with it no money, no power, an' means only that he's free to drink from dark to daylight an' to dark ag'in, oncriticized, onreproved, an' onsaved. Colonel Sterett imparts to us in the last *Daily Coyote* how them Hindoos has their sacred cobras. Cobras not bein' feas'ble none in Arizona, Wolfville in loo of sech accepts old Monte. Yereafter, w'arin' the title of offishul drunkard, he takes his place in the public regyard as Wolfville's sacred cobra.'

"When Monte learns of his elevation, his eyes fills up with gratified pride, an' as soon as ever he's able to stand the w'ar an' t'ar, he goes on a protracted public drunk, by way of cel'bration, while we looks tol'rantly on.

"'Gents,' he says, 'I thanks you. Yereafter the gnawin' tooth of conscience will be dulled, havin' your distinguished endorsement

so to do. Virchoo is all right in its place. But so is vice. The world can't all be good an' safe at one an' the same time. Which if we all done right, an' went to the right, we'd tip the world over. Half has got to do wrong an' go to the left, to hold things steady. That's me; I was foaled to do wrong an' go to the left. It's the only way in which a jealous but inscroot'ble Providence permits me to serve my hour. Offishul drunkard! Ag'in I thanks you. Which this yere's the way I long have sought, an' mourned because I found it not, long meter.'

"Boggs is the only gent who takes a gloomy view.

"That's fine for this yere egregious Monte,' says Boggs, talkin' to Enright; 'as Wolfville's pet drunkard an' offishul cobra, he's mighty pleasantly provided for. But how about the camp? Whar does Wolfville come in? We're a strong people; but does any gent pretend that we possesses the fortitooode reequired to b'ar up through all the comin' rum-soaked years?—an' all onder the weight of this yere onmatched inebriate, whom by our own act an' as offishul drunkard, we onmuzzles in our shrinkin' midst? Gents, this thing can't last.'

"Not necessar'ly, Dan,' retorts Enright, his manner trenchin' on the cold; 'not necessar'ly. Let me expound the sityooation. I need not remind you-all that Sand Creek Riley, who drives the Tucson stage, gets bumped off the other evenin', while preeposterously insistin' that aces-up beats three-of-a-kind. Realizin' the trooth of half what you has said, Dan, I this evenin' enters into strategic reelations with the stage company's agent; an'

as a reesult, an' datin' from now on, old Monte will be hired to fill the place of Sand Creek Riley, whom we all regrets. It's hardly reequyred that I p'int out the benefits of this yere arrangement. As stage driver, old Monte for every other night will get sawed off on Tucson. An' I misjedges the vitality of this camp if, with the pressure on it thus relieved, an' Tucson carryin' half the load, it's onable to live through. In my opinion, Dan, by the light of this explanation, you at least oughter hope for the best.'

""That's whatever!" says Boggs, who's plumb convinced; 'if I'd waited until you was heard, Sam, I'd never voiced them apprehensions. But the fact is, this yere Monte cobra of ours, with his bibbin's an' his guzzlin's, has redooced me to a condition of nervous prostration. It's all right now. Which I will say, however, that I can't reelected none without a shudder on what them Tucson folks'll say an' think, so soon as ever they wakes up to what's been played on 'em.'"

V

HOW THE MOCKING BIRD WAS WON

"Myst'ries?

"We lives surrounded by 'em. Look whar you will, nacher has a ace buried. Take dogs, now: Why is it when one of 'em, daylight or dark, cuts the trail of a anamile, he never makes the fool mistake of back-trackin' it, but is shore to run his game the way it's movin'? There must be some kind of head-an'-tail to the scent, that a-way, to give the dog the hunch. Myst'ry!—all myst'ry! The more a gent goes messin' 'round for s'lootions, the more he's taught hoomility an' that he ain't knee-high to toads.

"An' yet when it comes to things myster'ous everything else is bound to go to the diskyard compared to a lady's heart. Of course, I speaks only in a sperit of philos'phy, an' not as one who's suffered. I never myse'f am able pers'nal to approach closter to a lady's heart than across the street. Peets once reemarks that all trails leads to Rome. In that business of trails a lady's heart has got Rome left standin' sideways. Not only does every trail lead tharunto, but thar's sech a thing as goin' cross-lots. Take gettin' in love; thar's as many ways as cookin' eggs. While you'll see gents who goes skallyhootin' into that dulcet condition as straight as a arrer, thar's others who sidles in, an' still others who backs in. I

even knows a boy who shoots his way in.

"Which the lady in this case is the Mockin' Bird. That Mockin' Bird maiden has wooers by onbounded scores, but holds herse'f as shy an' as much aloof as if she's a mountain sheep. Not one can get near enough to her to give her a ripe peach. Along comes the eboolient Turkey Track, bulges headlong into her dest'nies, takes to menacin' at her with a gun an', final, to bombardin' her outright, an'—love an' heart an' hand—she comes a-runnin'.

"Wolfville's without that last evidence of advancement, a callaboose. It bein' inconvenient to shoot up or lynch everybody who infringes our rooles, Jack Moore invents a convincin' but innocuous punishment for minor offenders. Endorsed by Enright, he established a water trough—it's big enough to swim a dog—over by the windmill; an' when some perfervid cow-puncher, sufferin' from a overdose of nosepaint, takes to aggravatin' 'round Moore swashes him about in the trough some profoose, until he gives his word to live a happier an' a better life.

"It's like magic the way that water trough works. No matter how gala some pronghorn of a cowboy may feel, it shore lets the whey out of him. Given the most voylent, it's only a matter of minutes before he's soaked into quietood. Enright himse'f says Moore's entitled to a monyooment for the idee.

"Turkey Track's name is Ford, Tom Ford, but workin' that a-way for the Turkey Track outfit he nacherally gets renamed for the brand. Turkey Track an' two boon companions has been goin' to an' fro from the Red Light to the Dance Hall, until by virchoo

of a over-accumyoolation of licker they're beginnin' to step some high. Also, they takes to upliftin' their tired souls with yells, an' blazin' away at froote cans with their six-shooters.

"It gets so that Enright tells Moore to give 'em a call-down.

"'What them boys does,' says Enright, 'is done harmless an' light-hearted to be shore, an' nothin' radic'lly wrong is either aimed at or meant; but all the same, Jack, it's no more'n proodence to go knock their horns off. It ain't what them yooths is doin', but what they may be led to do, which makes the danger. It's like old Deacon Sopris at the Cumberland Methodist class meetin' says of kyard-playin'. "It ain't," explains the deacon, "that thar's any harm in the children playin' seven-up around the kitchen table of a winter's evenin' for grains of corn, but seven-up persisted in is shore to lead to dancin'." An' so with these young merry-makers. They'll keep on slamin' away at empty bottles an' former tomatter cans that a-way, ontill the more seedate element objects, an' somebody gets downed. Don't you agree with me, Doc?"

"'Nothin' shorer!' says Peets.

"Moore corrals Turkey Track an' his fellow revellers, an' tosses off a few fiats.

"'Quit that whoopin' an' shootin', boys,' says Moore. 'Likewise, keep your hardware in your belts, as more deecorous. So shore as I finds a gun in any of your hands ag'in, I'll shoot it out.'

"Turkey Track an' his *compadres* don't say nothin' back. They

savvys about the water trough, an' ain't hungerin' none to have their ardor dampened in no sech fashion. So they blinks an' winks like a passel of squinch owls, but never onbuckles in no argyooment. All the same, it irks 'em a whole lot, an' after Moore reetires they begins mod'rate to arch their necks an' expand 'round a little.

"They allows—talkin' among themselves in a quer'lous way—that they ain't hurtin' no one, an' for Moore to come shovin' 'round an' lecturin' on etiquette is a conceited exhibition of authority as offensive as it is onjest. Thar's doubts, too, about it's bein' constitootional.

"Whatever does that jim-crow sp'ile-sport of a marshal mean?" says Turkey Track. 'It looks like he's not only deefyin' the organic law of this country, but puttin' on a heap of dog. Does he reckon this yere camp's a church?'

"I moves we treats them mandates,' says one of the boys, who's a rider for the G-bar ranch, 'with merited contempt.'

"As how?' asks the third, who belongs with the Four-J brand. 'You ain't so locoed as to s'ggest we-all t'ars person'ly into this Jack Moore marshal none I hopes?'

"Which you fills me with disgust!" says the other, nettled at the idee of pawin' the onprofit'ble grass 'round Moore; 'but whatever's the matter with goin' up to the far end of the street, an' w'irl an' come squanderin' back jest a shootin'?'

"Great!" says Turkey Track, applaudin' the scheme. 'Which we-all nacherally shoots up their old prairie dog town, same

as if it's a Mexican plaza, an' then jogs on to our ranches, all triumphant an' comfortable.'

"The three rides up to the head of the street, an' then turns an'—givin' their ponies the steel—comes whizzin' down through the center of eevents, yelpin' like Apaches an' lookin' like fireworks. They've got a gun in each hand, an' they shakes the flame an' smoke out of 'em same as three volcanoes on hossback.

"Moore's standin' in front of the Noo York store, talkin' to Tutt. As you-all might imagine, it frets him to the quick to see how little them effervescent sperits cares for his injunctions. By way of rebooke—not wantin' to down 'em outright for what, take it the worst way, ain't nothin' more heen'ous than a impropriety—Moore gets his artillery to b'ar, an' as they flashes by like comets, opens on the ponies. It's hard on the ponies; but it won't do to let them young roysterers get away with their play. The example'll spread; an', onless checked at the jump, inside of a month thar'd be nothin' but a whoopin' procession of cow-punchers chargin' up an' down the causeways. Tenderfeet might acquire misgivin's techin' us bein' a peaceful camp, an' the thing op'rate as a blow to trade. It's become a case of either get the boys or get the ponies, an' onder the circumstances the ponies has the call.

"Thar's no more artistic gun-player than Moore in town, onless it's Cherokee, an' mebbly Doc Peets, who's a heap soon with a derringer. As the ponies flash by, Moore's six-shooter barks three times. Two ponies goes rollin'; the third—it's Turkey Track's—continyoos cavortin' down the street an' out of town.

Turkey Track never pulls up nor looks back. The last we sees of him is when he's two miles away, an' a swell rises up behind him an' hides him from view.

"The G-bar boy, an' him from the Four-J outfit, hits the grass twenty feet ahead of their ponies, like a roll of blankets chucked out of a wagon, an' after bumpin' an' tumblin' along for a rod or so, an' all mighty condoosive to fractures an' dislocations, they flattens out reespective same as a couple of cancelled postage stamps. Shore, the fall jolts the savvy plumb out of 'em.

"Bein' they're stretched out an' passive, Moore collects 'em an' sops 'em up an' down in the water trough for mebbly it's fifteen minutes. Which they're reesus'tated an' reeproved at one an' the same time. When them yooths comes to, they're a model to angels. To be shore, their intellects don't shine out at first none like the sun at noon, but continyoos blurred for hours. Even as late as the weddin' of Turkey Track with the Mockin' Bird—an' that ain't for all of eight weeks—the G-bar boy informs Boggs confidenshul, as they're takin' a little licker all sociable, that speakin' mental he's as yet a heap in eclipse.

"The maiden name of the Mockin' Bird is Loocinda Gildersleeve, but pop'lar pref'rence allers sticks to her stage title. She's a fav'rite at the Bird Cage Op'ry House, at which nursery of the drammy she's been singin' off an' on for somethin' like three years. She's a shore-enough singer, too, the Mockin' Bird is. None of your yeepin's an' peepin's, none of your mice squeaks an' tea-kettle tones an' cub coyote yelps. Which she's got a round,

meelod'yous bellow like a hound in full cry, an' while she's singin' thar ain't a wolf'll open his mouth within a mile of town. Which them anamiles is plumb abashed, the Mockin' Bird outholdin' 'em to that degree.

"You-all don't hear no sech singin' in the East. Thar ain't room, an' moreover the East's too timid. For myse'f, an' I ain't got no y'ear for music, them top notes of the Mockin' Bird, like the death yell of a mountain lion, is cap'ble of givin' me the fantods; while the way she hands out 'Home, Sweet Home' an' 'Suwannee River,' an' her voice sort o' diggin' down into the soul, sets eemotional sports like Boggs an' Black Jack to sobbin' as though their hearts is broke. She's certainly a jo-darter of a vocalist—the Mockin' Bird is, an' once when she renders 'Loosiana Loo' an' Boggs's more'n common affected, he offers to bet yellow chips as high as the ceilin' she can sing the sights off a Colt's .45.

"Which I enjoys one of the most mis'erable evenin's of my c'reer,' says Boggs to Faro Nell, when she expresses sympathy at him feelin' so cast down. 'I wouldn't have missed it for a small clay farm.'

"*Yo tambien'* says Black Jack, who's keepin' Boggs melancholly company while he weeps. 'Only I reckons the odd kyard in my own case is that, before I'm a man an' in some other existence, I used to be one of these yere ornery little fice dogs, which howls every time it hears a pianny. It's some left-over vestiges of that life when I'm a dog which sets me to bawlin', that a-way, whenever the Mockin' Bird girl sings. I experiences

pensive sensations, sim'lar to what comes troopin' over a gent, who's libatin' alone, on the heels of the third drink.'

"The Mockin' Bird looks as sweet as she sings. I mentions long ago about the phil'sophic old stoodent who says, 'They do say love is blind, but I'll be ding-danged if some gents can't see more in their girls than I can.' This yere wisdom don't apply none to the Mockin' Bird. Them woovers of hers, to say nothin' of Turkey Track, possesses jestification for becomin' so plumb maudlin'. Lovely? She's as pretty as a cactus flower, or a sunrise on the staked plains.

"Folks likes her, too. Take that evenin' when a barbarian from over to'ards the Cow Springs cuts loose to disturb the exercises at the Bird Cage Op'ry House with a measly fling or two. The public well nigh beefs him. They'd have shore put him over the jump, only Enright interferes.

"It's doorin' the openin' scene, when the actors is camped 'round in a half-circle, facin' the fiddlers. Huggins, who manages the Bird Cage, an' who's the only hooman who ever consoomes licker, drink for drink, with Monte, an' lives to tell the tale, is in the middle. Bowin' to the Mockin' Bird, an' as notice that she's goin' to carol some, he announces:

"The world-reenowned cantatrice, Mam'selle Loocinda Gildersleeve, cel'brated in two hemispheres as the Mockin' Bird of Arizona, will now sing the ballad wharwith she ravished the y'ears of every crowned head of Europe, the same bein' that pop'lar air from the op'ry of *Loocretia Borgia*, "Down in the

Valley."

"At this that oncooth crim'nal from the Cow Springs gets up:

"The Mockin' Bird of Arizona which you-all is bluffin' about,' he shouts, 'can't sing more'n a burro, an' used to sling hash in a section house over by Colton.'

"Never the less, notwithstandin',' replies Huggins, who's too drunk to feel ruffled, 'Mam'selle Loocinda Gildersleeve, known to all the world as the Mockin' Bird of Arizona, will now sing "Down in the Valley."

"Huggins would have let things go at that, but not so the Wolfville pop'lace. In the cockin' of a winchester they swoops down on that Cow Springs outcast like forty hen-hawks on a single quail, an' as I yeretofore observes, if it ain't for Enright they'd have made him shortly hard to find. You can gamble, the Cow Springs savage never does go out on that limb ag'in.

"While Turkey Track escapes the water trough, an' makes his getaway that time all right, the pore pony ain't got by Moore onscathed. The bullet hits him jest to the r'ar of the saddle-flap, an' out about a brace of miles he stumbles over dead.

"It's yere eevents begins to fall together like a shock of oats. The Mockin' Bird's been over entrancin' Tucson, an' the reg'lar stage with Monte not preecisely dove-tailin' with her needs, she charters a speshul buckboard to get back. Thar's a feeble form of hooman ground owl drivin' her, one of these yere parties who's all alkali an' hard luck, an' as deevoid of manly sperit as jack-rabbits onweaned.

"This yere ground owl party, drivin' for the Mockin' Bird, comes clatterin' along with the buckboard jest as Turkey Track strips the saddle an' bridle from his deefunct pony. Turkey Track is not without excecutoive ability, an' seein' he's afoot an' thirty miles from his home ranch, he pulls his gun an' sticks up the buckboard plenty prompt. At the mere sight of a weepoon the hands of that young owl-person goes searchin' for stars, an' he's beggin' Turkey Track not to rub him out—him thinkin' it's a reg'lar hold-up. That's all the opp'sition thar is, onless you counts the reemarks of the Mockin' Bird, who becomes both bitter an' bitin' in equal parts, but has no more effect on Turkey Track—an' him afoot that a-way—than pourin' water on a drowned rat. Shore, a cow-puncher'd fight all day, an' even face a enraged female, before he'd walk a hour.

"Turkey Track piles his saddle an' bridle onto the r'ar of the buckboard, an' settin' in behind on his plunder, commands the ground owl driver to head west till further orders. Likewise, he so far onbends as to say that them orders won't be decem'nated, none whatever, ontil he's landed at the Turkey Track home ranch. Since he backs this yere programme with his artillery, the ground owl ain't got nothin' to say, an' it's no time when the outfit's weavin' along a side trail in the sole int'rests of Turkey Track.

"What's worse, to dispell the ennui of sech a trip, an' drive away dull care, Turkey Track takes to despotizin' over the Mockin' Bird with his six-shooter, an' compels her to sing constant throughout them thirty miles. He makes her carrol

everythin' from 'Old Hundred' to 'Turkey in the Straw,' an' then brings her back to 'Old Hundred' an' starts her over. The pore harassed Mockin' Bird, what with the dust, an' what with Turkey Track tyrannizin' at her with his gun, sounds final like an ongreased wheelbarrow which has seen better days. She don't get her voice ag'in for mighty clost to a month, an' even then, as she says herse'f, thar's places where the rivets reequires tightenin'.

"It's pressin' onto eight weeks before ever Turkey Track is heard of 'round town ag'in. Also, it's in the Bird Cage Op'ry House he hits the surface of his times. The Mockin' Bird has jest done drove the vocal picket-pin of 'Old Kentucky Home,' when, bang! some loonatic shoots at her. Which the bullet bores a hole in the scenery not a foot above her head.

"Every one sees by the smoke whar that p'lite attention em'nates from, an' before you could count two, Moore, Boggs, an' Texas Thompson has convened themselves on top of that ident'cal spot. Thar sets Turkey Track, cryin' like a child.

"'It's no use, gents,' he sobs, the tears coursing down his cheeks, 'she's so plumb bewitchin', an' I adores her so, I simply has to blaze away or bust.'

"While he don't harm the Mockin' Bird none, the sent'ment of the Stranglers, when Enright raps 'em to order inform'ly at the Red Light an' Black Jack has organized the inspiration, favors hangin' Turkey Track. Even Texas, who loathes ladies by reason of what's been sawed off onto him in the way of divorce an' alimony, that a-way, by his Laredo wife, is yoonan'mous for

swingin' him off.

"That I don't believe in marryin' 'em,' says Texas, expoundin' his p'sition concernin' ladies in answer to Boggs who claims he's inconsistent, 'don't mean I wants 'em killed. But you never was no logician, Dan.'

"Cherokee's the only gent who's inclined to softer attitoodes, an' that leeniency is born primar'ly of the infloence of Nell. Nell is plumb romantic, an' when she hears how the Turkey Track's been enfiladin' at the Mockin' Bird only because he loves her, while she don't reely know what she does want done with that impossible cow-puncher, she shore don't want him hanged.

"It's sech a interestin' story!" says Nell, an' then capers across to Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie to c'llect their feelin's.

"Moore brings in Turkey Track.

"Be you-all tryin' to blink out this yere young lady?' asks Enright, 'or is that gun play in the way of applause?'

"It's love,' protests Turkey Track, his voice chokin'; 'it's simply a cry from the soul. I learns to love her that day on the buckboard while I'm lookin' at her red ha'r, red bein' my winnin' color. Gents, you-all won't credit it none, but jest the same them auburn tresses gets wropped about my heart.'

"Whatever do you make of it, Doc?' whispers Enright.

"This boy,' returns Peets, 'has got himse'f too much on his own mind. He's sufferin' from what the books calls exaggerated ego.'

"That's one way of bein' locoed, ain't it?'

"Shore. But him bein' twisted mental ain't no reason for not adornin' the windmill with his remains. The only public good a hangin' does is to scare folks up a lot, an' you can scare a loonatic quite as quick an' quite as hard as a gent whose intellects is plumb.'

"'Thar she stands,' Turkey Track breaks in ag'in, not waitin' for no questions, 'an' me as far below her as stingin' lizards is from stars! Then, ag'in, when folks down in front is a'plaudin' her, she wavin' at 'em meanwhile the gracious smile, it makes me jealous. Gents, I don't plan nothin', but the first I knows I lugs out the old .45 an' onhooks it.'

"The Mockin' Bird has come over from the O. K. House with Nell, Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie. As she hears Turkey Track's confession two drops shows in her eyes like diamonds. Clutchin' hold of Nell, an' with Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie flockin' along in the r'ar, she rushes out the front door.

"This manooover leaves us some upset, ontill Nell returns to explain.

"'She's overcome by them disclosures,' says Nell, 'an' goes outside to blush.'

"'The ontoward breaks of that songstress,' observes Enright oneasily, 'has a tendency to confoose the issue, an' put this committee in the hole.'

"'Thar's nothin' confoosin' about it, Sam Enright.' It's Missis Rucker who breaks out high an' threatenin', she havin' come back with Nell. 'This yere Mockin' Bird girl's in love with that gun-

playin' cowboy, an' it's only now she finds it out. Do you-all murderers still insist on hangin' this yere boy, or be you willin' to see 'em wed an' live happy ever after?'

"'Let's rope up a divine some'ers,' exclaims Boggs, 'an' have 'em married. If that Mockin' Bird girl wants Turkey Track she shall shore have him. I'd give her his empty head on a charger, if she asks it, same as that party in holy writ, she singin' "Suwannee River" like she does.'

"Cherokee, who's more or less rooled by Nell, thinks a weddin' the proper step, an' Tutt, who sees somethin' in Tucson Jennie's eye, declar's himse'f some hasty.

"Even Texas backs the play.

"'But make no mistake,' says Texas; 'I insists on wedlock over lynchin' only because it's worse.'

"'Which it's as well, Sam Enright,' observes Missis Rucker, blowin' through her nose mighty warlike, 'that you an' your marauders has sense enough to see your way through to that deecision. Which if you'd failed, I'd have took this Turkey Track boy away from you-all with my own hands. This Vig'lance Committee needn't think it's goin' to do as it pleases 'round yere-hangin' folks for bein' in love, an' closin' its y'ears to the moans of a bleedin' heart.'

"'My dear ma'am,' says Enright, his manner mollifyin'; 'I sees nothin' to discuss. The committee surrenders this culprit into the hands of you-all ladies, an' what more is thar to say?'

"'Thar's this more to say,' an' Missis Rucker's that earnest her

mouth snaps like a trap. 'You an' your gang, settin' round like a passel of badgers, don't want to get it into your heads that you're goin' to run rough-shod over me. When I gets ready to have my way in this outfit, the prairie dog that stands in my path'll shore wish he'd never been born.'

"Enright don't say nothin' back, an' the balance of us maintainin' a dignified silence, Missis Rucker, after a look all 'round, withdraws, takin' with her Tucson Jennie an' Nell, Turkey Track in their midst.

"'Gents,' observes Enright, when they're shore departed, an' speakin' up deecisive, 'ways must be deevised to 'liminate the feminine element from these yere meetin's. I says this before, but the idee don't seem to take no root. Thar's nothin' lovelier than woman, but by virchoo of her symp'thies she's oncap'ble of exact jestice. Her feelin's lead her, an' her heart's above her head. For which reasons, while I wouldn't favor nothin' so ondignified as hidin' out, I s'ggests that we be yereafter more circumspect, not to say surreptitious, in our deelib'rations.'

"Shore, they're married. The cer'mony comes off in the O. K. House, an' folks flocks in from as far away as Deming.

"'If you was a chemist, Sam,' says Peets, tryin' to eloocidate what happens when the Mockin' Bird learns she's heart-hungry that a-way for Turkey Track, 'you'd onderstand. It's as though her love's held in s'lotion, an' the jar of Turkey Track's gun preecip'tates it.'

"'Mebby so,' returns Enright; 'but as a play, this thing's got

me facin' back'ards. Thar's many schemes to win a lady, but this yere's the earliest instance when a gent shoots his way into her arms.'

""Well,' returns Peets, 'you know the old adage—to which of course thar's exceptions.' Yere he glances over at Missis Rucker. 'It runs:

"A woman, a spaniel an' a walnut tree,
The more you beat 'em the better they be."

"Boggs has been congratchoolatin' Turkey Track, an' kissin' the bride. Texas, as somber as a spade flush, draws Boggs into a corner.

""That Turkey Track,' says Texas, 'considers this a whipsaw. He misses hangin', an' he gets the lady. He feels like he wins both ways. Wait! Dan, it won't be two years when he'll discover that, compar'd to marriage, hangin' that a-way ain't nothin' more'n a technical'ty.'"

VI

THAT WOLFVILLE- RED DOG FOURTH

"By nacher I'm a patriot, cradle born and cradle bred; my Americanism, second to none except that of wolves an' rattlesnakes an' Injuns an' sim'lar cattle, comes in the front door an' down the middle aisle; an' yet, son, I'm free to reemark that thar's one day in the year, an' sometimes two, when I shore reegrets our independence, an' wishes thar had been no Yorktown an' never no Bunker Hill."

The old cattleman tasted his glass with an air weary to the borders of dejection; after which he took a pathetic puff at his pipe. I knew what had gone wrong. This was the Fifth of July. We had just survived a Fourth of unusual explosiveness, and the row and racket thereof had worn threadbare the old gentleman's nerves.

"Yes, sir," he continued, shoving a 'possum-colored lock back from his brow, "as I suffers through one of them calamities miscalled cel'brations, endoorin' the slang-whangin' of the orators an' bracin' myse'f ag'inst the slam-bangin' of the guns, to say nothin' of the firecrackers an' kindred Chinese contraptions, I a'preeciates the feelin's of that Horace Walpole person Colonel Sterett quotes in his *Daily Coyote* as sayin', 'I could love my

country, if it ain't for my countrymen.'

"Still, comin' down to the turn, I reckon it merely means, when all is in, that I'm gettin' too plumb old for comfort. It's five years now since I dare look in the glass, for fear I'd be tempted to count the annyooal wrinkles on my horns.

"It's mighty queer about folks. Speakin' of cel'brations, for thousands of years the only way folks has of expressin' any feelin' of commoonal joy, that a-way, is to cut loose in limitless an' onmeanin' uproar. Also, their only notion of a public fest'val is for one half of the outfit to prance down the middle of the street, while the other half banks itse'f ag'inst the ediotic curb an' looks at 'em.

"People in the herd ain't got no intelligence. We speaks of the lower anamiles as though we just has it on 'em completely in the matter of intelligence, but for myse'f I ain't so shore. The biggest fool of a mule-eared deer savvys enough to go feedin' up the wind, makin' so to speak a skirmish line of its nose to feel out ambushes. Any old bull elk possesses s'fficient wisdom to walk in a half-mile circle, as a concloodin' act before reetirin' for the night, so that with him asleep in the center, even if the wind does shift, his nose'll still get ample notice of whatever man or wolf may take to followin' his trail.

"That's what them 'lower anamiles' does. An' now I asks, what man, goin' about his numbskull dest'nies, lookin' as plumb wise as a too-whoow owl at noon, ever shows gumption equal to keepin' the constant wind in his face, or has the sense to go walkin' round

himse'f as he rolls into his blankets, same as that proodent elk? After all, I takes it that these yere Fo'th of Jooly upheavals is only one among the ten thousand fashions in which hoomanity eternally onbuckles in expressin' its imbecil'ty.

"Which I certainly do get a heap disgusted at times with the wild beast called man. With all his bluffs about bein' so mighty sagacious, I can sit yere an' see that, speakin' mental, he ain't better than an even break with turkey gobblers. Even what he calls his science turns finally out with him to be but the accepted ignorance of to-day; an' he puts in every to-morrow of his existence provin' what a onbounded jackass rabbit he's been the day before. It's otherwise with them lower anamiles; what they knows they knows."

Plainly, something had to be done to fortify my old friend. I fell back, quite as a matter of course, upon that first aid to the injured, another drink, and motioned the black waiter to the rescue. It did my old friend good, that drink, the first fruits of which easier if not better condition being certain fresh accusations against himself.

"The trooth is, I'm a whole lot onused to these yere Fo'th of Jooly outbursts; an' so I ondoubted suffers from 'em more keenly, that a-way, than the av'rage gent. You see we never has none of 'em in Wolfville; leastwise we never does but once. On that single festive occasion we shore stubs our toe some plentiful, stubs it to that degree, in fact, that we never feels moved to buck the game ag'in. Once is enough for Wolfville.

"Which it's the single failure that stains the fame of the camp. At that, the flat-out reely belongs to Red Dog; or at least to Pete Bland, for which misguided party the Red Dogs freely acknowledges reespons'bility as belongin' to their outfit.

"This yere Bland's dead now an' deep onder the doomsday sods. Also, he died drinkin' like he'd lived.

"'What's the malady?' Enright asks Peets, when the Doc comes trackin' back, after seein' the finish of Bland.

"'No malady at all, Sam,' says Peets, plumb cheerful an' frisky, same as them case-hardened drug folks allers is when some other sport passes in his checks—'no malady whatsoever. His jag simply stops on centers, as a railroad gent'd say, an' I'm onable to start it ag'in.'

"'Was Peets any good as a med'cine man? Son, I'm shocked! Peets is packin' 'round in his professional warbags the dipplomies of twenty colleges, an' is onchallenged besides as the best eddicated sharp personal on the sunset side of the Mississippi. You bet, he onderstands the difference at least between bread pills an' buckshot, which is a heap sight further than some of these yere drug folks ever studies.

"Colonel Sterett, who's fa'rly careful about what he says, reefers to Peets in his *Daily Coyote* as a 'intellectchooal giant,' an' thar ain't no record of any scoffer comin' squanderin' along to contradict. Mebby you'll say that the omission to do so is doo to the f'rocious attitooode of the *Daily Coyote* itse'f, techin' contradictions, an' p'int to how that imprint keeps standin' at the

head of its editorial columns as a motto, the cynicism:

"Contradict the *Coyote* and avoid old age!"

"Thar'd be nothin' in it if you do. That motto's only one of Colonel Sterett's bluffs, one of his witticisms that a-way. You don't reckon that, in a sparsely settled country, whar the pop'lation is few an' far between, the Colonel's goin' to go bumpin' off a subscriber over mebbly a mere difference of opinion? The Colonel ain't quite that locoed."

"But about your Wolfville-Red Dog Fourth of July celebration?" I urged.

"Which I'm in no temper to tell a story—me settin' yere with every nerve as tight as a banjo catgut jest before it snaps. To relate yarns your mood ought to be the mood of the racontoor—a mood as rich an' rank an' upstandin' as a field of wheat, ready to billow an' bend before every gale of fancy. The way yesterday leaves me, whatever tale I undertakes to recount would about come out of my mouth as stiff an' short an' brittle as chopped hay. Also, as tasteless. Better let it go till some other an' more mellow evenin'."

No; I was ready to accept the chances, and said as much. A chopped-hay style, for a change, might be found acceptable. Supplementing the declaration with renewed Old Jordan, I was so far victorious that my aged man of cattle yielded.

"Well, then," he began reluctantly, "I'm onable to partic'larly say which gent does make the orig'nal s'ggestion, but my belief is it's Peets. I'm shore, however, that the Cornwallis idee comes

from Bland; an', since it's not only at that Cornwallis angle we-all falls publicly down, but the same is primar'ly doo to the besotted obstinacy of this yere Bland himse'f, Wolfville, while ever proudly willin' to b'ar whatever blame's sawed off on to her shoulders proper, is always convinced that Red Dog an' not us is to be held accountable. However, Bland's gone an' paid what the sky scouts speaks of as the debt to nacher, an' I'm willin' to confess for one that when he's sober he ain't so bad. Not that them fits of sobriety is either so frequent or so protracted they takes on any color of monotony.

"Bland's baptismal name is Pete, an' in his way he's a leadin' infloence in Red Dog. He's owner of the 7-bar-D outfit, y'earmark a swallow-fork in both y'ears—which brands seventeen hundred calves each spring round-up; an' is moreover proprietor of the Abe Lincoln Hotel, the same bein' Red Dog's principal beanery. Bland don't have to keep this yere tavern none, but it arranges so he sees his friends an' gets their *dinero* at one an' the same time, which as combinin' business an' pleasure in equal degrees appeals to him a heap.

"Which it's the gen'ral voice that the best thing about Bland is his wife. She's shore loyal to Bland, you bet! When they're livin' in Prescott, an' a committee of three from one of them 'Purification Of The Home' societies comes trapesin' in, to tell her about Bland bein' ondooly interested in a exyooberant young soobrette who's singin' at the theayter, an' spendin' his money on her mighty permiscus, Missis Bland listens plenty ca'm until

they're plumb through. Then she hands them Purifiers this:

"Well, ladies, I'd a heap sooner have a husband who can take keer of two women than a husband who can't take keer of one.'

"After which she comes down on that Purification bunch like a fallin' star, an' brooms 'em out of the house. Accordin' to eye witnesses, who speaks without prejewdyce, she certainly does dust their bunnets strenuous.

"When Bland hears he pats Missis Bland on the shoulder, an' exclaims, 'Thar's my troo-bloo old Betsy Jane! She knows I wouldn't trade a look from them faded old gray eyes of hers for all the sobretts whoever pulls a frock on over their heads!'

"Followin' which encomium Bland sends to San Francisco an' changes in the money from five hundred steers for an outfit of diamonds, to go 'round her neck, an' preesents 'em to Missis Bland.

"'Thar,' he says, danglin' them gewgaws in the sun, 'you don't notice no actresses flittin' about the scene arrayed like that, do you? If so, p'int out them over-bedecked females, an' I'll see all they've got on an' go 'em five thousand better, if it calls for every 7-bar-D steer on the range.'

"'Pete,' says Missis Bland, clampin' on to the jooelry with one hand, an' slidin' the other about his neck, 'you certainly are the kindest soul who ever makes a moccasin track in Arizona, besides bein' a good provider.'

"Shore, this yere Bland ain't so plumb bad.

"An' after a fashion, too, he's able to give excooses. Talkin'

to Peets, he lays his rather light an' frisky habits to him bein' a preacher's son.

"Which you never, Doc,' he says, 'meets up with the son an' heir of a pulpiteer that a-way, who ain't pullin' on the moral bit, an' tryin' for a runaway.'

"At any rate, Pete,' the Doc replies, all cautious an' conservative, 'I will say that if you're lookin' for some party who'll every day be steady an' law abidin', not to say seedate, you'll be a heap more likely to find him by searchin' about among the progeny of some party who's been lynched.'

"Recurrin' again to that miserabul Fo'th of Jooly play we cuts loose in, it's that evenin' when we invites Red Dog over in a body to he'p consome the left-over stock of lickers in the former Votes For Women S'loon, an' nacherally thar's some drinkin'. As is not infrequent whar thar's drinkin', views is expressed an' prop'ositions made. It's then we takes up the business of havin' that cel'bration.

"Peets makes a speech, I recalls, an' after dilatin' 'round to the effect that Fo'th of Jooly ain't but two weeks ahead, allows that it'd be in patriotic line for us to do somethin'.

"Conj'intly,' says Peets, 'Red Dog an' Wolfville, movin' together with one proud purpose of patriotism, ought to put over quite a show. As commoonities we're no longer in the swaddlin' clothes of infancy. It's time, too, that we goes on record as a whole public in some manner an' form best calk'lated to make a somnolent East set up an' notice us.'

"Peets continyoos in a sim'lar vein, an' speaks of the settlement of the Southwest, wharin we b'ars our part, as a 'Exodus without a prophet, a croosade without a cross,' which sent'ment he confesses he takes from a lit'rary sport, but no less troo for that. He closes by sayin' that if everybody feels like he does Wolfville an' Red Dog'll j'ine in layin' out a program, that a-way, which'll shore spread the glorious trooth from coast to coast that we-all is on the map to stay.

"It's a credit to both outfits, how yoonanimously the s'ggestion is took up. Which I never does see a public go all one way so plumb quick, an' with so little struggle, since B'ar Creek Stanton is lynched; which act of jestic even has the absolote endorsement of B'ar Creek himse'f.

"Peets is no sooner done talkin' than Tutt stacks in.

"'Thar's our six-shooters,' says he, 'for the foosilade; an', as for moosic, sech as "Columbia the Gem" an' the "Star Spangled Banner," we can round up them Dutchmen, who's the orchestra over at the Bird Cage Op'ry House.'

"The talk rambles on, one word borryin' another, ontill we outlines quite a game. Thar's to be a procession between Wolfville an' Red Dog, an' back ag'in, Faro Nell leadin' the same on a *pinto* pony as the Goddess of Liberty.

"'An' that reeminds me,' submits Cherokee, when we reaches Nell; 'thar's Missis Rucker. It's goin' to hurt her feelin's to be left out. As the preesidin' genius of the O. K. Restauraw she's in shape to give us a racket we'll despise in eeent she gets her

back up.'

"'How about lettin' her in on the play,' says Boggs, 'an' typ'fyin' Jestice, that a-way?'

"'Thar's a idee, Dan,' says Texas Thompson, 'which plugs the center, a reecommendation which does you proud! Down in that Laredo Co't House whar my wife wins out her divorce that time, thar's a figger of Jestice painted on the wall. Shore, it don't mean nothin'; but all the same it's thar, dressed in white, that a-way, with eyes bandaged, an' packin' a sword in one hand an' holdin' aloft some balances in t'other. Come to think of it, too, that picture shore looks a lot like Missis Rucker in the face, bein' plumb haughty an' commandin'.'

"'Missis Rucker not bein' yere none,' says Enright softly, an' peerin' about some cautious, 'I submits that while no more esteemable lady ever tosses a flapjack or fries salt-hoss in a pan, her figger is mebbly jest a trifle too abundant. As Jestice, she'll nacherally be arrayed—as Texas says—in white, same as Nell as the Goddess. I don't want to seem technicle, but white augments the size of folks an' will make the lady in question look bigger'n a load of hay.'

"'Even so,' reemarks the Red Dog chief indulgently, 'would that of itse'f, I asks, be reckoned any setback? The lady will person'fy Jestice; an' as sech I submits she can't look none too big.'

"'In compliment to the Red Dog chief Enright, with a p'lite flourish, allows that he yields his objection with pleasure, an'

Missis Rucker is put down for Jestice. It's agreed likewise to borrow a coach from the stage company for her to ride on top.

"'Her bein' preecloseded,' explains Peets, 'from ridin' a hoss that a-way, as entirely ondignified if not onsafe. We can rig her up a throne with one of the big splint-bottom cha'rs from the Red Light, an' wrop the same in the American flag so's to make it look offishul.'

"Tucson Jennie, with little Enright Peets as the Hope of the Republic, is to ride inside the coach.

"Havin' got this far, Pete Bland submits that a tellin' number would be a sham battle, Red Dog ag'in Wolfville.

"Thar's opp'sition developed to this. Both Enright an' the Red Dog chief, as leaders of pop'lar feelin', is afraid that some sport'll forget that it ain't on the level, an' take to over-actin' his part.

"As the Red Dog chief expresses it:

"'Some gent might be so far carried away by enthoosiasm as to go to shootin' low, an' some other gent get creased.'

"'The same bein' my notion exact,' Enright chips in. 'Of course, the gent who thus shoots low would ondenyably do so onintentional; but what good would that do the party who's been winged, an' who mightn't live long enough to receive apol'gies?'

"'That's whatever!' says Jack Moore. 'A sham battle's too plumb apt to prove a snare. The more, since everybody's so onused to 'em 'round yere. A gent, by keepin' his mind firm fixed, might manage to miss once or twice; but soon or late he'd become preoccupied, an' bust some of the opp'sition before he

could ketch himse'f.'

"Bland, seein' opinion's ag'inst a sham battle, withdraws the motion, an' does it plenty graceful for a gent who's onable to stand.

"Enough said,' he remarks, wavin' a acquiescent paw. 'Ante, an' pass the buck.'

"The Lightnin' Bug, speakin' from the Red Dog side, insists that in the reg'lar course of things thar's bound to be oratory. In that connection he mentions a sharp who lives in Phoenix.

"Which I'm shore,' says the Bug, 'he'd be gladly willin' to assist; an' you hear me he's got a tongue of fire! Some of you-all sports must have crossed up with him—Jedge Beebe of Phoenix?'

"Jedge Beebe?' interjecks Monte, who's given a hostler his proxy to take out the stage because of thar bein' onlimited lickin'; 'me an' the Jedge stands drinkin' together for hours the last time he's in Tucson. But you're plumb wrong, Bug, about him bein' eloquent.'

"Wrong?' the Bug repeats, mighty indignant.

"Of course,' says Monte, rememberin' how easy heated the Bug is, an' that he looks on six-shooters as argyooments, 'I don't mean he can't talk none; only he ain't what the Doc yere calls no Demosthenes.'

"Did you ever hear the Jedge talk?' demands the Bug.

"Which I shore does,' insists Monte; 'I listens to him for two hours that time in Tucson. It's when they opens the Broadway Dance Hall.'

"'Whatever is his subject?' asks the Bug, layin' for to ketch Monte; 'what's the Jedge talkin' about?'

"'I don't know,' says Monte, wropped in his usual mantle of whiskey-soaked innocence; 'he didn't say.'

"The Bug's eyes comes together in a angry focus; he thinks he's bein' made game of.

"Tharupon Enright cuts in.

"'Bug,' he says, all sociable an' suave, 'you mustn't mind Monte. He's so misconstructured that followin' the twenty-fifth drink he goes about takin' his ignorance for information. No one doubts but you're a heap better jedge than him of eloquence, an' everything else except nosepaint. S'ppose you consider yourse'f a committee to act for the con'jint camps, an' invite this yere joorist to be present as orator of the day.'

"The Bug's brow cl'ars at this, an' he asshores Enright that he'll be proud to act as sech.

"'An', gents,' he adds, 'if you says he ain't got Patrick Henry beat to a standstill, may I never hold as good as aces-up ag'in.'

"The Red Dog chief announces that all hands must attend a free-for-all banquet which, infloenced by the tenth drink, he then an' thar decides to give at Bland's Abe Lincoln House.

"'Said banquet,' he explains, 'bein' in the nacher of a lunch to be held at high noon. If the dinin' room of the Abe Lincoln House ain't spacious enough, an I'll say right yere it ain't, we'll teetotaciously set them tables in the street. That's my style! I wants everybody, bar Mexicans, to be present. When I gives a

blow-out, I goes fo'th into the highways an' byways, an' asks the halt an' the lame an' the blind, like the good book says. Also, no gent need go prowlin' 'round for no weddin' garments wharin to come. Which he's welcome to show up in goat-skin laiggin's, or appear wropped in the drippin' an' offensive pelt of a wet dog.'

"The Red Dog chief, lest some of us is sens'tive, goes on to add that no gent is to regyard them cracks about the halt an' the lame an' the blind as aimed at Wolfville. He allows he ain't that invidious, an' in what he says is merely out to be both euphonious an' explicit, that a-way, at one an' the same time.

"To which Enright reesponds that no offence is took, an' asshores the Red Dog chief that Wolfville will attend the banquet all spraddled out.

"More licker, followed by gen'ral congratulations.

"Bland ag'in comes surgin' to the fore. This time he thinks that as a main feachure it would be a highly effective racket to reënact the surrender of Cornwallis to Washington.

"Tutt goes weavin' across to shake his hand.

"Some folks allows, Pete,' says Tutt, 'that you're as whiskey-soaked an old fool as Monte. But not me, Pete, not your old pard, Dave Tutt! An' you hear me, Pete, that idee about Cornwallis givin' up his sword to Washington dem'nstrates it.'

"You bet your life it does!' says Bland.

"But is this yere surrender feasible?' asks Texas. 'Which, at first blink, it seems some cumbrous to me.'

"It's as easy as turnin' jack,' declar's Tutt, takin' the play away

from Bland. 'I've seen it done.'

""As when an' whar?' puts in Cherokee.

""Thar's a time,' says Tutt—'it's way back—when I sets into a little poker game over in El Paso, table stakes she is, an' cleans up for about \$10,000. For mebbly a week I goes 'round thinkin' that \$10,000 is a million; an' after that I simply *knows* it is. These yere onnacheral riches onhinges me to a p'int whar I deecides I'll visit Chicago an' Noo York, as calk'lated to broaden me.'

""Noo York!—Chicago!" interrupts the Bug. 'I once deescends upon them hamlets, an' I encounters this yere strikin' difference. In Chicago they wouldn't let me spend a dollar, while in Noo York they wouldn't let anybody else spend one.'

""It's otherwise with me,' goes on Tutt, 'because for a wind-up I don't see neither. I'm young then, d' you see, an' affected by yooth an' wealth I takes to licker, with the result that I goes pervadin' up an' down the train, insistin' on becomin' person'ly known to the passengers.'

""An' nacherally you gets put off,' says Boggs.

""Not exactly, neither. Only the conductor, assisted by a bevy of brakemen, lays the thing before me in sech a convincin' shape that I gets off of my own accord. It seems that to be agree'ble, I proposes wedlock to a middle-aged schoolmarm, who allows that she sees no objection except I'm a perfect stranger. She says it ain't been customary with her much to go weddin' strangers that a-way, but if I'll get myse'f reg'larly introdooced, an' then give her a day or so to become used to my looks, she'll go me.

It's then the conductor draws me aside, an' says, "I've a son about your age, my ebullient young sport, which is why I takes your part. My theory is that if you sticks aboard this train until we reaches Rock Island, you'll never leave that village a single man."

"This sobers me," Tutt continyoos, 'an' I hides in the baggage kyar until we reaches a camp called Sedalia, whar I quietly makes my escape. I'm that reelected I gives the cabman \$20 to let me drive, an' then starts in to wake things up. Which I shore wakes 'em! I comes down the main street like the breath of destiny; an', say, you ought to see them Missourians climb trees, an' gen'rally break for cover! It costs me \$50; an' the judge gives me his word that, only it's the Fo'th of Jooly, he'd have handed me two weeks in the calaboose. I clicks down the fifty *pesos* some grateful, an' goes bulgin' forth to witness the cer'monies. She's a jo-darter, that Sedalia cel'bration is! As Pete yere recommends, they pulls off the surrender of Cornwallis on the Fair grounds. Also, it's plumb easy. All you needs is mebbly a couple of hundred folks on hosses, an' after that the rest's like rollin' off a log.'

"More is said as the drink goes round, an' Cornwallis surrenderin' to Washington takes hold of our imaginations. We throws dice, an' settles it that Red Dog'll be the English, with Bland as Cornwallis, while Wolfville acts as the Americans, Boggs to perform as Washington—Boggs bein' six foot an' some inches, besides as wide as a door. By the time we gets the stock of the Votes for Women S'loon fully dranked up everything's arranged.

"Unless you sees no objections, son, I'll gallop through the balance of this yere painful eepisode. The day comes round, bright an' cl'ar, an' the Copper Queen people gen'rously starts the ball a-rollin' by explodin' thirteen cans of powder, one for each of the orig'nal states. Then the procession forms, Nell in front as the Goddess. Thar's full two hundred of us, Wolfville an' Red Dog, on ponies. As to Missis Rucker, she's on top of the coach as Jestice, Tucson Jennie—with little Enright Peets lookin' like a young he cherub—inside, an' Monte pullin' the reins over the six hosses. We makes four trips between Wolfville an' Red Dog, crackin' off our good old '45s at irreg'lar intervals, Nell on her calico pony as the Goddess bustin' away with the rest.

"Little Enright Peets wants in on the pistol shootin', an' howls jes' like a coyote—as children will—ontil Boggs, who foresees it an' comes provided, gives him a baby pistol, a box of blank cartridges, an' exhorts him to cut loose. Which little Enright Peets shore cuts loose, all right; an', except that he sets fire to the coach a few times, an' makes Missis Rucker oneasy up on top—her fearin' that mebbly some of them blanks has bullets in 'em by mistake—he has a perfectly splendid time.

"The procession over, we eats up the Red Dog chief's banquet, wharat every brand of airtights is introdooced. That done, we listens to Jedge Beebe, who soars an' sails an' sails an' soars, rhetorical, for mebbly it's a hour, an' is that eloquent an' elevated he never hits nothin' but the highest places.

"The Red Dog chief makes a speech, an' proposes 'Wolfville';

to which Peets—by Enright's request—re-responds, an' offers 'Red Dog.' It's bottoms up to both sentiments; for thar's no negligence about the drinks, Black Jack havin' capered fraternally over to he'p out his overworked barkeep brother of the Red Dog Tub of Blood.

"When no one wants to further drink or eat or talk, we reepa'rs to a level place between the two camps to go through the Cornwallis' surrender. The rival forces is arrayed opp'site, Cornwallis Bland in a red coat, an' Washington Boggs in bloo an' buff, accordin' to the teachin's of hist'ry. Both of 'em has sabers donated from the Fort.

"When all's ready Washington Boggs an' Cornwallis Bland rides out in front ontill they're in easy speakin' distance. Cornwallis Bland's been over-drinkin' some, an' is w'arin' a mighty deefiant look.

"After a spell, nothin' bein' spoke on either side, Washington Boggs calls out:

"Is this yere Gen'ral Cornwallis?"

"Who you talkin' to?" demands Cornwallis Bland, a heap contemptuous an' insolent.

"Peets has done writ out words for 'em to say, but neither uses 'em. Observin' how Cornwallis Bland conducts himse'f, Washington Boggs waves his sword plenty vehement, which makes his pony cavort an' buckjump, an' roars:

"Don't you try to play nothin' on me, Gen'ral Cornwallis. Do you or do you not surrender your mis'erable blade?"

"Surrender nothin'!" Cornwallis Bland sneers back, meanwhile reelin' in his saddle. 'Thar's never the horned-toad clanks a spur in Cochise County can make me surrender. Likewise, don't you-all go wavin' that fool weepoon at me none. I don't valyoo it more'n if it's a puddin' stick. Which I've got one of 'em myse'f'—yere he'd have lopped off one of his pony's y'ears, only it's so dull—'an' I wouldn't give it to a yellow pup to play with.'

"For the last time, Cornwallis,' says Washington Boggs, face aflame with rage, 'I commands you to surrender.'

"Don't let him bluff you, Pete,' yells a bumptious young cow-puncher who belongs on the Red Dog-English side. 'Which we can wipe up the plains with that Wolfville outfit.'

"The Red Dog chief bats the young trouble-makin' cow-puncher over the head with his gun, an' quietly motions to the Lightnin' Bug an' a fellow Red Dog to pack what reemains of him to the r'ar. This done, he turns to reemonstrate with Cornwallis Bland for his obstinancy. He's too late. Washington Boggs, who's stood all he will, drives the spurs into his pony, an' next with a bound an' a rush, he hits Cornwallis Bland an' his charger full chisle.

"The pony of Cornwallis Bland fa'rly swaps ends with itse'f, an' Cornwallis would have swapped ends with it, too, only Washington Boggs collars an' hefts him out of his saddle.

"Now, you onwashed drunkard, will you surrender?' roars Washington Boggs, shakin' Cornwallis Bland like a dog does a rat, until that British leader drops all of his hardware, incloosive

of his pistol—'now will you surrender, or must I break your back across your own pony, as showin' you the error of your ways?'

"It looks like thar's goin' to be a hostile comminglin' of all hands, when—her ha'r streamin' behind her same as if she's a comet—Missis Bland comes chargin' up.

"'Yere, you drunken villyun!' she screams to Boggs, 'give me my husband this instant, onless you wants me to t'ar your eyes out!'

"'It's him who's to blame, ma'am,' says Enright mildly, comin' to Boggs' rescoo; 'which he won't surrender.'

"'Oh, he won't, won't he?'" says Missis Bland, as she hooks onto Cornwallis Bland. 'You bet he'll surrender to me all right, or I'll know why.'

"As the Red Dog chief is apol'gizin' to Enright, who's tellin' him not to mind, Cornwallis Bland is bein' half shoved an' half drug, not to mention wholly yanked, towards the Abe Lincoln House by Missis Bland.

"That's the end. This yere ontoward finale to our cel'bration gets wide-flung notice in print, an' instead of bein' a boost, as we-all hopes, Wolfville an' Red Dog becomes a jest an' jeer. Also, while it don't sour the friendly relations of the two camps, the simple mention of Fo'th of Jooly leaves a bitter taste in the Wolfville-Red Dog mouth ever since."

VII

PROPRIETY PRATT, HYPNOTIST

"Do I ever see any folks get hypnotized? Which I witnesses a few sech instances. But it's usually done with a gun. If you're yearnin' to behold a party go into a trance plumb successful an' abrupt, get the drop on him. Thar ain't one sport in a hundred who can look into the muzzle of a Colt's .45, held by a competent hand, without lapsin' into what Peets calls a 'cataleptic state.'

"Shore, son, I savvys what you means."

The last was because I had begun to exhibit signs of impatience at what I regarded as a too flippant spirit on the part of my old cattleman. In the polite kindness of his nature he made haste to smooth down my fur.

"To be shore I onderstands you. As to the real thing in hypnotism, however, thar arises as I recalls eevents but few examples in Arizona. The Southwest that a-way ain't the troo field for them hypnotists, the weak-minded among the pop'lacion bein' redooiced to minimum. Now an' then of course some hypnotic maverick, who's strayed from the eastern range, takes to trackin' 'round among us sort o' blind an' permiscus. But he never stays long, an' is generally tickled to death when some vig'lance committee so far reelents as to let him escape back.

"Over in Bernilillo once, I'm present when a mob gets its rope

onto one of these yere wizards, an' it's nothin' but the mercy of hell an' the mean pars'mony of what outcasts has him in charge, which saves him from bein' swung up. Mind you, it ain't no vig'lance committee, but a mob, that's got him.

"Whatever is the difference?"

"Said difference, son, is as a spanless gulf. A vig'lance committee is the coolest kind of comin' together of the integrity an' the brains of a commoonity. A mob, on the other hand, is a chance-blown convention of deestructionists, as savagely brainless as a pack of timber wolves. A vig'lance committee seeks jestic; a mob is merely out for blood."

"About this Bernilillo business?"

The old gentleman, as though the recital might take some time, signalled the black attendant to bring refreshments. The bottle comfortably at his elbow, he proceeded.

"I was thar, as I says, but I takes no part for either 'yes' or 'no,' bein' no more'n simply a 'looker on in Vienna,' as the actor party observes over in the Bird Cage Op'ry House. Thar's one of them hypnotizin' sharps who's come bulgin' into Bernilillo to give a show. Nacherally the local folks raps for a showdown; they insists he entrance some one they knows, an' refooses to be put off by him hypnotizin' what herd of hirelin's he's brought with him, on the argyooment that them humbugs is in all likelihood but cappers for his game.

"Thus stood up, the professor, as he calls himself, begins rummagin' 'round for a subject. Thar's a little Frenchman who's

been pervadin' about Bernilillo, claimin' to be a artist. Which he's shore a painter all right. I sees him myse'f take a bresh an' a batch of colors, an' paint a runnin' iron so it looks so much like wood it floats. Shore; Emil—which this yere genius' name is Emil—as a artist that a-way is as good as jacks-up before the draw.

"The hypnotic professor runs his eye over the audjence. In a moment he's onto Emil, an' begins to w'irl his hypnotic rope. It's Emil bein' thin an' weakly an' bloodless, I reckon, that attracts him. This yere Emil ain't got bodily stren'th to hold his own ag'in a high wind, an' the professor is on at a glance that, considered from standp'int's of hypnotism, he ought to be a pushover.

"Emil don't hone to be no subject, but them Bernilillo hold-ups snatches onto him in spite of his protests, an' passes him up onto the stage to the professor. They're plenty headlong, not to say boorish, them Bernilillo ruffians be; speshully if they've sot their hearts on anythin', an' pore Emil stands about the same show among 'em as a cottontail rabbit among a passel of owls.

"For myse'f, I allers adheres to a theery that what follows is to be laid primar'ly to the door of the Bernilillo pop'lace. Which it's themselves, not the professor, they'd oughter've strung up. You see this Emil artist person blinks out onder the spells of the professor, an' never does come to no more. The professor hypnotizes Emil, but he can't onhypnotize him. Thar he sets as dead as Davy Crockett.

"This yere Emil bein' shore dead, Bernilillo sent'ment begins to churn an' wax active. Thar ain't a well-conditioned vig'lance

committee between the Pecos an' the Colorado which, onder the circumstances, would have dreamed of stretchin' that professor. What he does, them Bernilillo dolts forces him to do. As for deceased, his ontimely evaporation that a-way is but the frootes of happenstance.

"What cares the Bernilillo pop'lace, wolf hungry for blood? In the droppin' of a sombrero they've cinched onto the professor, an' the only question left open is whether they'll string him up to the town windmill or the sign in front of the First National Bank.

"While them Bernilillo wolves is howlin' an' mobbin' an' millin' 'round the professor—who himse'f is scared plumb speechless an' is as white as a lump of chalk—relief pushes to the front in most onexpected shape. It's a kyard sharp by the name of Singleton, otherwise called the Planter, who puts himse'f in nom'nation to extricate the professor.

"Climbin' onto the top step in front of the bank, the Planter lifts up his voice for a hearin'.

"'Folks!' he shouts, 'I'm in favor of this yere lynchin' like a landslide. But, all the same, thar's a bet we overlooks. It's up to us not only to be jest, but to be gen'rous. This yere murderer, who's done blotted out the only real artist I ever meets except myse'f, has a wife down to the hotel. As incident to these festiv'ties she's goin' to be a widow. Is it for the manhood an' civic virchoo of Bernilillo to leave a widow of its own construction broke an' without a dollar? I hears the incensed echoes from the Black Range roarin' back in scornful accents "No!" Sech bein' the

sityooation, as preelim'nary to this yere hangin' I moves we takes up a collection for that widow. Yere's a fifty to 'nitiating the play'—at this p'int the Planter throws a fifty-dollar bill into his hat—'an' as I passes among you I wants every sport to come across, lib'ral an' free, an' prove to the world lookin' on that Bernilillo is the band of onbelted philanthropists which mankind's allers believed.

"Hat in hand, same as if it's a contreebution box an' he's passin' the platter in church, the Planter begins goin' in an' out through the multitood like a meadowlark through standin' grass. That is, he starts to go in an' out; but, at the first motion, that entire lynchin' party exhales like mist on the mornin' mountains. It's the same as flappin' a blanket at a bunch of cattle. Every profligate of 'em, at the su'gestion he contreebute to the widow, gets stampeded, an' thar's nobody left but the Planter, the professor, an' me.

"Which I shore knows how to tech them ground-hawgs on the raw,' says the Planter, as he onlooses the professor. 'If I was to have p'inted a gun at 'em now, they'd've give me a battle. But bein' to the last man jack a bunch of onmitigated misers, a threat leveled at their bankrolls sets 'em to hidin' out like quail!'

"The professor?

"The instant he's laig-free, an' without so much as pausin' to congrachoolate his preeserver on the power of his eloquence, he vanishes into the night. He's headin' towards Vegas as he's lost to sight, an' I learns later from Russ Kishler he makes that meetropolis more or less used up. No; he don't have no wife. That

flight of fancy is flung off by the Planter simply as furnishin' 'atmosphere.'

"Wolfville never gets honored but once by the notice of a hypnotist. This yere party don't proclaim himse'f as sech, but bills his little game as that of a 'magnetic healer,' an' allows in words a foot high that he's out to 'make the deaf hear, the blind see, the lame to walk an' the halt to skip an' gambol as doth the hillside lamb.' Also, on them notices, the same bein' the bigness of a hoss-blanket an' hung up lib'ral in the Red Light, the post office, the Dance Hall, an' the Noo York store, is a picture of old Satan himse'f, teachin' Professor Propriety Pratt—that bein' the name this yere neecromancer gives himse'f—his trade.

"These proclamations is tacked up a full week before Professor Pratt is doo, an' prodooces a profound effect on Boggs, him bein' by nacher sooperstitious to the brink of the egreegious. The evenin' before the Professor is to onlimber on us, he shows in Red Dog, an' Boggs is that roused by what's been promised in the line of mir'cles, he rides across to be present.

"'It ain't that I'm convinced none,' Boggs reports, when quaffin' his Old Jordan in the Red Light, an' settin' fo'th what he sees, 'but I must confess to bein' more or less onhossed by what this yere Pratt Professor does. He don't magnetize none of them Red Dog drunkards in person, for which he's to be exon'rated, since no self-respectin' magnetizer would let himse'f get tangled up with sech. He confines his exploits to a brace of dreamy lookin' ground owls he totes 'round with him, an'

which he calls his "hosses." What he makes these vagrants do, though, assoomin' it's on the squar', is a caution to bull-snakes. After he's got 'em onder the "infloence," they eats raw potatoes like they're roast apples, sticks needles into themselves same as though they're pincushions, an' at his slightest behest performs other feats both blood-curdlin' an' myster'ous.'

"We-all listens to Boggs, of course, as he recounts what marvels he's gone ag'inst in Red Dog, but we don't yield him as much attention as we otherwise might, bein' preeockepied as a public with word of a hold-up that's come off over near the Whetstone Springs. Some bandit—all alone—sticks up the Lordsburg coach, an' quits winner sixty thousand dollars. Nacherally our cur'osity is a heap stirred up, for with sech encouragement thar's no tellin' when he'll make a play at Monte an' the Wolfville stage, an' take to layin' waste the fortunes of all us gents. What is done to Lordsburg we can stand, but a blow at our own warbags, even in antic'pation, is calc'lated to cause us to perk up. We're all discussin' the doin's of this yere route agent an' wonderin' if it's Curly Bill, when Boggs gets back from Red Dog, with the result, as I says, that he onloads his findin's, that a-way, on a dead kyard. Not that this yere public inattention preys on Boggs. He keeps on drinkin' an' talkin', same as though, all y'ears like a field of wheat, we ain't doin' a thing but listen.

"'Also,' he observes, as he tells Black Jack to rebusy himse'f, meanwhile p'intin' up to the poster which shows how the devil is holdin' Professor Pratt in his lap an' laborin' for that hypnotist's

instruction; 'I shall think out a few tests which oughter get the measure of that mountebank. He won't find this outfit so easy as them Red Dog boneheads.'

"Professor Pratt has a one-day wait in Wolfville, not bein' able that evenin' to get the Bird Cage Op'ry House, the same bein' engaged by a company of histrions called the Red Stocking Blonds. Havin' nothin' else to do, the Professor wanders yere an' thar, now in the Red Light, now at the Noo York store, but showin' up at the O. K. Restauraw at chuck time both rav'nous an' reg'lar. Missis Rucker allows she never does feed a gent who puts himse'f outside of so much grub for the money, an' hazards the belief it's because of a loss of nervous force through them hypnotizin's he pulls off. Not that she's findin' fault, for the Professor, havin' staked her to a free ticket, has her on his staff in the shakin' of a dice-box.

"The Professor don't come bulgin' among us, garroolous an' friendly, but holds himse'f aloof a heap, clingin' to the feelin' mebbly that to preeserve a distance is likely to swell reesults at the Bird Cage door. Boggs, however, ain't to be stood off by no coldness, carin' no more for a gent's bein' haughty that a-way than a cow does for a cobweb. Which you bet it'll take somethin' more'n mere airs to hold Boggs in check.

"It's in the O. K. Restauraw, followin' our evenin' *frijoles*, that Boggs breaks the ice an' declar's for some exper'ments.

"'Which you claims,' says he, appealin' to the Professor, 'to make the deaf hear and the blind see. Onforchoonately we're

out of deaf folks at this writin', an' thar's nothin' approachin' blindness in this neck of woods which don't arise from licker. But aside from cures thus rendered impossible for want of el'gible invalids, thar's still this yere hypnotic bluff you puts up. What Wolfville hankers for is tests, tests about the legit'macy of which thar's no openin' for dispoote. Wharfore I yereby makes offer of myse'f to become your onmurmurin' dupe. I'll gamble you a stack of bloos you don't make me drink no water, thinkin' it's nosepaint, same as you pretends to do with them wretched confed'rates of yours.'

"The Professor is a big b'ar-built sport, an' looks equal to holdin' his own onder common conditions. But Boggs don't come onder the latter head. So the Professor, turnin' diplomatic an' compliment'ry, explains that sech powerful nachers as Boggs' is out of reach of his rope—Boggs bein' reepellent, besides havin' too strong a will.

"As to you, Mister Boggs, with that will of yours,' says the Professor, 'I might as well talk of hypnotizin' Cook's Peak.'

"One after another, Boggs makes parade of everybody in camp. It's no go; the Professor waves 'em aside as plumb onfit. Missis Rucker's got too much on her mind; in Rucker the tides of manhood is at so low a ebb he might die onder the pressure; Monte's too full of nosepaint, alcohol, that a-way, bein' a nonconductor.

"When the Professor dismisses Monte, the ground he puts it on excites that inebriate to whar it reequires the united energies

of Cherokee an' Tutt to kick him off the Professor. It's only the direct commands of Enright which in the end indooes him to keep the peace.

"'Let me at him!' he howls; 'let me get at him! Does any one figger I'll allow some fly-by-night charl'tan to go reelected on me? Stand back, Cherokee, get out o' the way, Dave, till I plaster the wall with his remains!"

"'Ca'm yourse'f, Monte,' says Enright, who's come in in time to onderstand the trouble. 'Which if this hypnotizer was reely meanin' to outrage your feelin's, it'd be different a whole lot, an' this sod-pawin' an' horn-tossin' might plead some jestification. But what he says is in the way of scientific exposition, an' nothin' said scientific's to be took insultin'. Ain't that your view, Doc?"

"'Shore,' replies Peets. The Doc's been havin' no part in the discussion, him holdin' that the Professor, with his rannikaboo bluff about healin', is a empirik, an' beneath his professional contempt. 'Shore. Also, I'm free to inform Monte that if he thinks he's goin' to lap up red licker to the degree he does, an' obleege folks in gen'ral to treat sech consumption as a secret, he's got his stack down wrong.'

"'Enough said,' ejacyoolates Monte, but still warm; 'whether or no, Doc, I'm the sot this outfit's so fond of picturin', I at least ain't so lost to reason as to go buckin' ag'inst you an' Enright. Jest the same, though, I'm yere to give the news to any magnetizing horned-toad who sows the seeds of dispoote in this camp that, if he goes about malignin' me, he'll shore find I'm preecisely the

orange-hued chimpanzee to wrop my prehensile tail around him an' yank him from his limb.'

"'Aside from aidin' the deaf an' the blind,' says the Professor, ignorin' Monte utter an' addressin' himse'f to Boggs an' the public gen'ral, 'my ministrations has been found eff'cacious wharever the course of troo love has not run smooth. I binds up wounds of sent'ment, an' cures every sickness of the soul. Which, if thar's any heart lyin' 'round loose yereabouts an' failin' to beat as one, or a sperit that's been disyoonited from its mate an' can't remake the hook-up, trust me to get thar with bells on in remedyin' sech evils.'

"The Professor beams as he gets this off, mighty benignant. Texas, feelin' like the common eye is on him, commences to grow restless.

"'Be you-all alloodin' to me?' he asks the Professor, his manner approaching the petyoolant. 'Let me give you warnin', an' all on the principle that a wink is as good as a nod to a blind mule. So shore as you go to makin' any plays to reyoonite me an' that divorced Laredo wife of mine I'll c'llect enough of your hypnotizin' hide to make a saddle-cover.'

"'Permit me,' says the Professor, turnin' to Texas some aghast, 'to give you my word I nourishes no sech deesigns. Which I'm driven to say, however, that your attitooode is as hard to fathom as a fifth ace in a poker deck. I in no wise onderstands your drift.'

"'You onderstands at least,' returns Texas, still morbid an' f'rocious, 'that you or any other fortune teller might better have

been born a Digger Injun to live on lizards, sage bresh an' grasshoppers than come messin' 'round in my mar'tal affairs with a view to reebuildin' 'em up. My hopes in that behalf is roined; an' whoever ondertakes their rehabil'tation'll do it in the smoke. What I'm out after now is the ca'm onbroken misery of a single life, an' I'll shore have it or have war.'

"My heated friend, I harbors no notion,' the Professor protests, 'of tryin' to make it otherwise. Your romancin' 'round single, that a-way, ain't no skin off my nose. An' while I never before hears of your former bride, I'm onable to dodge the feelin' that she herse'f most likely might reesent to the utmost any attempt on my part to ag'in bring you an' her together.'

"Texas formyoolates no express reply, but growls. The Professor, still with that propitiatin' front, appeals to the rest of us.

"Gents,' he says, 'this yere's the most reesentful outfit I'm ever inveigled into tryin' to give a show to. I certainly has no thought of rubbin' wrong-ways the pop'lar bristles. All I aims at is to give a exhibition of anamile magnetism, cure what halt an' blind—if any—is cripplin' an' moonin' about, c'llect my *dinero* an' peacefully hit the trail. An' yet it looks like a prejewdice exists ag'inst me yere.'

"Put a leetle pressure on the curb, thar,' interrupts Peets. 'You're up ag'inst no prejewdice. On that bill, wharwith you've done defaced the Wolfville walls, you makes sundry claims. An' now you r'ars back on your ha'nches, preetendin' to feel plumb

illyoosed, because some one seeks to put the acid on 'em.'

"'That's whatever!' adds Boggs; 'the Doc states my p'sition equilaterally exact. I sees your Red Dog show. I'll be present a whole lot at your show to-morry night. Also, I feels the need of gyardin' ag'inst my own credoolity. What I sees you do in Red Dog, while not convincin', throws me miles into the oncertain air; an' I don't figger on lettin' you *vamoos*, leavin' me in no sech a onsettled frame. Wharfore, I deemands tests.'

"'Yere,' breaks in Nell, who's been listenin', 'what's the matter of this occult party hypnotizin' me.'

"'The odd kyard in that deck,' says Cherokee, his manner trenchin' on the baleful—'the odd kyard in that deck is that onless this yere occultist is cap'ble of mesmerizin' a bowie to whar it looses both p'int an' edge, for him to go weavin' his wiles an' guiles 'round you, Nellie, would mark the evenin' of his c'reer.'

"Nell beams an' brightens at these yere proofs of Cherokee's int'rest, while the pore Professor looks as deeply disheveled mental as he does when Texas goes soarin' aloft.

"Little Enright Peets waddles up to tell his paw that Tucson Jennie wants him. As he comes teeterin' along on his short cub-bar laigs, fat an' 'round as forty pigs, the Professor—thinkin' it'll mebbly relieve the sityooation—stoops down to be pleasant to little Enright Peets.

"'Yere's my little friend!' he says, at the same time holdin' out his hands.

"'Later we-all feels some ashamed of the excitement we

displays. But the trooth is, the Professor offerin' to caress little Enright Peets that a-way sends us plumb off our feet. I never before witnesses any sech display of force. Every gent starts for'ard, an' some has pulled their guns.

"Paws off!" roars Enright to the pore dazed Professor, who comes mighty clost to rottin' down right thar; 'in view of them announcements'—yere Enright p'int to the bill, whar Satan an' the Professor is deepicted as teacher an' poopil—'do you-all reckon we lets sech a devil's baby as you go manhandlin' that child?'

"The Professor throws up his hands like he's growing desp'rate.

"'Folks,' he says, 'I asks, in all hoomility, is thar anythin' I can say or do in this yere camp without throwing away my life?'

"'Shore,' returns Boggs; 'all you got to do is give a deemonstration.'

"'However be I goin' to give a hypnotic deemonstration,' returns the Professor, apparently on the verge of nervous breakdown, 'when every possible subject is either too preeokyoopied, or too obstinate, or too weak, or too yoothful, or too beautiful, or too drunk? If it's healin' you're after, bring fo'th the sickest you've got. If he's blind an' his eye ain't gouged plumb out, I'll make him see; if he's lame an' his laig ain't cut plumb off, I'll make him walk. An' now, gents, I'm through. If these yere proffers don't suit, proceed with my bootchery. I care less, since one day with you-all exactin' tarrapins has rendered life so distasteful to me that I wouldn't turn hand or head to live.'

"Havin' got this off his mind, the harassed Professor sets down an' buries his face in his hands.

"'Why not introdooce him,' breaks in Rucker, who's nosin' about, 'to that aflickted shorthorn who comes groanin' in on the stage last night? He's been quiled up in his blankets with the rhoomatism ever since he hits camp. Which if this yere imposter can make him walk, it'll shore be kings-up with Missis Rucker, 'cause she wants to make the bed.'

"'Whar's this sufferer at?' demands Boggs, takin' the Professor by the sleeve an' with the same motion pullin' his six-shooter. 'This yere discussion's done reached the mark whar it's goin' to be a case of kill or cure for some sport.'

"Rucker leads the way up sta'rs, Boggs an' the Professor next, the rest trailin'. All hands crowds into the little dark bedroom. Thar on the bed, clewed up into a knot, lies the rhoomatic party. As we-all files in, he draws himse'f onder the blankets ontill nothin' but his nose sticks out.

"'Professor,' says Boggs, an' his six-shooter goes 'kluck! kluck!' mighty menacin', 'onfurl your game! I shore trusts that you ain't started nothin' you can't stop.'

"The pore Professor don't nurse no doubts. He thinks he's in the bubblin' midst of blood an' sudden death; wharfore, you bet, he throws plenty of sperit into his racket. Makin' some hostile moves with his hands—Boggs elevatin' his gun, not bein' quite content about them motions—the Professor yells:

"'Get up!'

"Talk of mir'cals! Which you should have seen that rhoomatic! With one turrific squawk he lands on his knees at the feet of Boggs, beggin' for mercy.

"'Don't kill me,' he cries; 'I'll show you whar I plants the money.'

"Whoever is that rhoomatic? Which he's the stoodent who stands up the stage over by Whetstone Springs. His rhoomatism's merely that malefactor's way of goin' onder cover.

"The Professor later offers to divide with Boggs on the two thousand-dollar reward the Wells-Fargo folks pays, but Boggs shakes his head.

"'You take the entire wad, Professor,' says he, wavin' aside that gen'rous necromancer. 'It's the trophy of your own hypnotic bow an' spear. What share is borne by my .45 is incidental. Which I'll say, too, that if I was playin' your hand I'd spread that cure on my posters as the star mir'cle of my c'reer.'"

VIII

THAT TURNER PERSON

"Talk of your hooman storm-centers an' nacheral born hubs of grief," observed the old cattleman, reminiscently; "I'm yere to back that Turner person ag'inst all competitors. Not but what once we're onto his angles, he sort o' oozes into our regards. His baptismal name is 'Lafe,' but he never does deerive no ben'fit tharfrom among us, him behavin' that eegregious from the jump, he's allers referred to as 'that Turner person.'

"As evincin' how swift flows the turbid currents of his destinies, he succeeds in focusin' the gen'ral gaze upon him before he's been in camp a day. Likewise, it's jest as well Missis Rucker herse'f ain't present none in person at the time, or mighty likely he'd have focused all the crockery on the table upon him, which you can bet your last *peso* wouldn't have proved no desid'ratum. For while Missis Rucker ain't what I calls onusual peevish, for a lady to set thar quiet an' be p'inted to by some onlicensed boarder as a Borgia, that away, would be more'n female flesh an' blood can b'ar.

"It's like this. The Turner person comes pushin' his way into the O. K. Restauraw along with the balance of the common herd, an' pulls a cha'r up ag'inst the viands with all the confidence of a oldest inhab'tant. After grinnin' up an' down the table as affable

as a wet dog, he ropes onto a can of airtights, the same bein' peaches. He he'ps himse'f plenty copious an' starts to mowin' 'em away.

"None of us is noticin' partic'lar, bein' engaged on our own hook reachin' for things, when of a sudden he cuts loose a screech which would have knocked a bobcat speechless.

"'I'm p'isened!' he yells; 'I'm as good as dead right now!'

"Followin' this yere fulm'nation, he takes to dancin' stiff-lyged, meanwhile clutchin' hold of the buckle on his belt.

"Thar should be no dissentin' voice when I states that, at a crisis when some locoed maverick stampedes a entire dinin' room by allowin' he's been p'isened, prompt action should be took. Wharfore it excites no s'rprise when Jack Moore, to whom as kettle-tender for the Stranglers all cases of voylance is *ex officio* put up, capchers the ghost-dancin' Turner person by the collar.

"'Whatever's the meanin' of this midprandial excitement?' demands Jack. 'Which if these is your manners in a dinin' room, I'd shore admire to see you once in church.'

"'I'm p'isened!' howls the Turner person, p'intin' at the airtights. 'It's ptomaines! I'm a gone fawnskin! Ptomaines is a center shot!'

"None of us holds Rucker overhigh, an' yet we jestifies that husband's action. Rucker's headin' in from the kitchen, bearin' aloft a platter of ham an' cabbage. He arrives in time to gather in the Turner person's bluff about 'ptomaines,' an' onderstands

he's claimin' to be p'isened. Shore, Rucker don't know what ptomaines is, but what then? No more does the rest of us, onless it's Peets, an' he's over to Tucson. As I freequently remarks, the Doc is the best eddicated sharp in Arizona, an' even 'ptomaines' ain't got nothin' on him.

"Rucker plants the platter of ham an' cabbage on the table, an' appeals 'round to us.

"'Gents,' he says, 'am I to stand mootely by an' see this tavern, the best j'int ondoubted in Arizona, insulted?' An' with that he's down on the Turner person like a fallin' tree, whar that crazy-hoss individyooal stands jumpin' an' dancin' in the hands of Moore.

"'What's these yere slanders,' shouts Rucker, 'you-all is levelin' at my wife's hotel? Yere we be, feedin' you on the fat of the land; an' the form your gratioode takes is to go givin' it out broadcast you're p'isened! You pull your freight,' he concloodes, as he wrestles the dancin' Turner person to the door, 'an' if you-all ever shows your villifyin' nose inside this hostelry ag'in I'll fill you full of buckshot.'

"To be shore, that crack about buckshot ain't nothin' more'n vain hyperbole, Rucker not possessin' the spunk of bull-snakes. The Turner person, however, lets him get away with it, an' submits tamely to be buffaloed, which of itse'f shows he ain't got the heart of a horned toad. The eepisode does Rucker a heap of good, though, an' he puffs up immoderate. Given any party he can buffalo, an' the way that weak-minded married man expands his chest, an' takes to struttin', is a caution to cock partridges.

An' all the time, a jack-rabbit, of ordinary resoolution an' force of character, would make Rucker take to a tree or go into a hole.

"Is the Turner person p'isened?"

"No more'n I be. Which it's simple that alarmist's heated imagination, aggravated by what deloosions is born of the nosepaint he gets in Red Dog before ever he makes his Wolfville deboo at all. Two hookers of Old Jordan from Black Jack renders him so plumb well he's reedic'lous.

"Most likely you-all'd go thinkin' now that, havin' let sech a hooman failure as Rucker put it all over him, this Turner person'd lie dormant a spell, an' give his se'f-respect a chance to ketch its breath. Not him. It's no longer away than second drink time the same evenin' when he locks gratooitous horns with Black Jack. To this last embroglio thar is—an' could be—no deefense, Jack bein' so amiable that havin' trouble with him is like goin' to the floor with your own image in the glass. Which he's shorely a long sufferin' barkeep, Jack is. Mebby it's his genius for forbearance, that a-way, which loores this Turner person into attemptin' them outrages on his sens'bilities.

"The Turner person stands at the bar, sloppin' out the legit'mate forty drops. With nothin' said or done to stir him up, he cocks his eye at Jack—for all the world like a crow peerin into a bottle—an' says,

"'Which your feachers is displeasin' to me, an' I don't like your looks.'

"Jack keeps on swabbin' off the bar for a spell, an' all as mild

as the month of May.

"'Is that remark to be took sarkastic?' he asks at last, 'or shall we call it nothin' more'n a brainless effort to be funny?'

"'None whatever!' retorts the Turner person; 'that observation's made in a serious mood. Your countenance is ondoubted the facial failure of the age, an' I requests that you turn it the other way while I drinks.'

"Not bein' otherwise engaged at the moment, an' havin' time at his command, Jack repairs from behind the bar, an' seizes the Turner person by the y'ear.

"'An' this is the boasted hospital'ty of the West!' howls the Turner person, strugglin' to free himself from Jack, who's slowly but voloominously bootin' him towards the street.

"It's Nell who tries to save him.

"'Yere, you Jack!' she sings out, 'don't you-all go hurtin' that pore tenderfoot none.'

"Nell's a shade too late, however; Jack's already booted him out.

"Shore, Jack apologizes.

"'Beg parding, Nellie,' he says; 'your least command beats four of a kind with me; but as to that ejected shorthorn, I has him all thrown out before ever you gets your stack down.'

"The Turner person picks himse'f out of the dust, an', while he feels his frame for dislocations with one hand, feebly menaces at Black Jack with t'other.

"'Some day, you rum-sellin' miscreent,' he says, 'you'll go too

far with me.'

"As showin' how little these vicisitoodes preys on this Turner person, it ain't ten minutes till he's hit the middle of Wolfville's principal causeway, roarin' at the top of his lungs,

"Cl'ar the path! I'm the grey wolf of the mountings, an' gen'ral desolation follows whar I leads!'

"Yere he gives a prolonged howl.

"The hardest citizen that ever belted on a gun couldn't kick up no sech row as that in Wolfville, an' last as long as a drink of whiskey. In half the swish of a coyote's tail, Jack Moore's got the Turner person corralled.

"This camp has put up with a heap from you,' says Moore, 'an' now we tries what rest an' reefflection will do.'

"I'm a wolf—'

"We savvys all about you bein' a wolf. Also, I'm goin' to tie you to the windmill, as likely to exert a tamin' infloence.'

"Moore conveys the Turner person to the windmill, an' ropes his two hands to one of its laigs.

"Thar, Wolf,' he says, makin' shore the Turner person is fastened secoore, 'I shall leave you ontill, with every element of wildness abated, you-all begins to feel more like a domestic anamile.'

"From whar we-all are standin' in front of the post office, we can see the Turner person roped to the windmill laig.

"What do you reckon's wrong with that party?' asks Enright, sort o' gen'ral like; 'I don't take it he's actchooally locoed none.'

"Thar's half a dozen opinions on the p'int involved. Tutt su'gests that the Turner person's wits, not bein' cinched on any too tight by nacher in the beginnin', mebbly slips their girths same as happens with a saddle. Cherokee inclines to a notion that whatever mental deeflections he betrays is born primar'ly of him stoppin' that week in Red Dog. Cherokee insists that sech a space in Red Dog shore ought to be s'fficient to give any sport, however firmly founded, a decisive slant.

"As ag'inst both the others, Boggs holds to the view that the onusual fitfulness observ'ble in the Turner person arises from a change of licker, an' urges that the sudden shift from the beverages of Red Dog, which last is indoobitably no more an' no less than liquid loonacy, to the Red Lights Old Jordan, is bound to confer a twist upon the straightest intellectyooals.

"'Which I knows a party,' says Boggs, 'who once immerses a ten-penny nail in a quart of Red Dog licker, an' at the end of the week he takes it out a corkscrew.'

"'Go an' get him, Jack,' says Enright, p'intin' to the Turner person; 'him bein' tied thar that a-way is an inhuman spectacle, an' if little Enright Peets should come teeterin' along an' see him, it'd have a tendency to harden the innocent child. Fetch him yere, an' let me question him.'

"'Front up,' says Moore to the Turner person, when he's been conveyed before Enright; 'front up now, frank an' cheerful, an' answer questions. Also, omit all ref'rences to bein' a wolf. Which you've worn that topic thread-bar'; an' besides it ain't calc'lated

to do you credit.'

"'Whatever's the matter with you?' asks Enright, speakin' to the Turner person friendly like. 'Which I begins to think thar's somethin' wrong with your system. The way you go knockin' about offendin' folks, it won't be no time before every social circle in the Southwest'll be closed ag'inst you. Whatever's wrong?'

"'Them's the first kind words,' ejacyoolates the Turner person, beginnin' to weep, 'which has been spoke to me in months. Which if you-all will ask me into yon s'loon, an' protect me from that murderer of a barkeep while I buys the drinks, I'll show you that I've been illyoosed to a degree whar I'm no longer reespons'ble for my deeds. It's a love affair,' he adds, gulpin' down a sob, 'an' I've been crooelly misonderstood.'

"'A love affair,' repeats Enright plenty soft, for the mention of love never fails to hit our old warchief whar thar't a palin' off his fence. 'I ain't been what you-all'd call in love none since the Purple Blossom of Gingham Mountain marries Polly Hawkes over on the Painted Post. Polly was a beauty, with a arm like a canthook, an' at sech dulcet exercises as huggin' she's got b'ars left standin' sideways. However, that's back in Tennessee, an' many years ago.'

"'Enright, breshin' the drops from his eyes, herds the Turner person into the Red Light an' signals to Black Jack.

"'Onfold,' he says; 'tell me as to that love affair wharin you gets cold-decked.'

"Nell abandons her p'sition on the lookout stool, an' shows up interested an' intent at Enright's shoulder.

"Ain't I in this?' she asks.

""Be thar any feachures,' says Enright to the Turner person, 'calc'lated to offend the y'ears of innocence?'

""None whatever,' says the Turner person. 'Which I'm oncapable of shockin' the most fastid'yous.'

""Is thar time,' asks Nell of Enright, 'for me to round up Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie? Listenin' to love tales, that a-way, is duck soup to both of 'em.'

""You-all can tell 'em later, Nellie,' returns Enright. Then, to the Turner person, 'Roll your game, *amigo*, an' if you needs refreshment, yere it is.'

""It ain't no mighty reecital,' says the Turner person loogubriously, 'an' yet it ought to go some distance, among fa'r-minded gents, in explainin' them vain elements of the weird an' ranikaboo which more or less enters into my recent conduct. I'm from Missouri; an' for a livelihood, an' to give the wolf a stand-off, I follows the profession of a fooneral director. My one weakness is my love for Peggy Parks, who lives with her folks out in the Sni-a-bar hills.

""The nuptual day is set, an' I goes hibernatin' off to Kansas City to fetch the license.'

""How old be you?' breaks in Enright.

""Me? I'm twenty-six the last Joone rise of the old Missouri. As I was sayin', I hitches my hoss in Market Squar', an' takes

to reconnoiterin' along Battle Row, wonderin' wharever them licenses is for sale, anyway. Final, I discovers a se'f satisfied lookin' party, who's pattin' a dog. I goes to talkin' about the dog, an' allowin' I'm some on dogs myse'f, all by way of commencin' a conversation; an' winds up by askin' whar I go for to get a license. "Over thar," says the dog party p'intin' across to a edifice he asshores me is a City Hall. "First floor, first door, an' the damage is a dollar."

"Thus steered, I goes streakin' it across, an' follows directions. I boards my dollar, an' demands action. The outcast who's dealin' the license game writes in my name, an' shoves the paper across. In a blur of bliss I files it away in my jeans, mounts my hoss, an' goes gambodin' back to Peggy, waitin' at ancestral Sni-a-bar.'

"Is your Peggy sweetheart pretty?" asks Nell.

"She's a lamp of loveliness! Sweet? Beetrees is gall an' wormwood to her.

"As to the weddin', it's settled Peggy an' me is to come flutterin' from our respective perches the next day. Doubtless we'd have done so, only them orange blossom rites strikes the onexpected an' goes glancin' off.

"It's the Campbellite preacher, who's been brought in to marry us, that starts it. The play's to be made at Peggy's paw's house, after which, for a weddin' trip, she an' me's to go wanderin' out towards the Shawnee Mission, whar I've got some kin. The parson, when he has the entire outfit close-herded into the parlor, asks—bein' a car'ful old practitioner—to see the license.

It turns it over, an' he takes it to the window to read. He gives that docyooment one look, an' then glowers at me personal mighty baleful. "Miserable wretch," says he, "do you-all want to get yourse'f tarred an' feathered?"

"In my confoosion I thinks this outbreak is part of the cer'mony, an' starts to say "I do!" Before I can edge in a word, however, he calls over Peggy's old man. "Read that!" he cries, holdin' the license onder old Pap Parks' nose. Old Parks reads, an' the next news I gets he's maulin' me with his hickory walkin' stick like he's beatin' a kyarpet.

"Without waitin' to kiss the bride or recover my license, I simply t'ars out the front of the house an' breaks for the woods. The next day, old Parks takes to huntin' me with hounds. Nacherally, at this proof of man's inhumanity to man, I sneaks across into Kansas, an' makes for the settin' sun.'

"An' can't you give no guess,' says Enright, 'at why old Parks digs up the waraxe so plumb sudden?'

"No more'n rattlesnakes onborn, onless his inordinate glee at gettin' me for a son-in-law has done drove him off his head.'

"Which it couldn't be that,' says Enright, takin' a hard, thoughtful look at the Turner person. Then, followin' a pause, he adds, 'thar's some myst'ry yere!'

"Ain't you-all made no try,' asks Nell, 'sech as writin' letters, or some game sim'lar, to cl'ar things up?'

"You-all don't know Pap Parks, Miss, in all his curves. Why, it's lucky he ain't wearin' his old bowie at that weddin', or he'd

a-split me into half apples. If I goes to writin' missives that a-way, he'll locate me; an' you can take my word that invet'rate old homicide 'd travel to the y'earth's eends to c'llect my skelp. That ain't goin' to do me; for, much as I love Peggy, I'd a heap sooner be single than dead.'

""That party ain't locoed,' says Texas, noddin' towards the Turner person, whar he sets sobbin' in a cha'r when Enright gets through examinin' him. 'He's simply a howlin' eediot. Yere he escapes wedlock by a mir'cle; an'—chains an' slavery!—now he can't think of no better way to employ his liberty than in cryin' his heart out because he's free. If I'm bitter, gents, it's because I speaks from hard experience. Considerin' how she later corrals that Laredo divorce an' sells up my cattle at public vandoo for costs an' al'mony, if when I troops to the altar with that lady whom I makes Missis Thompson, my gyardian angel had gone at me with a axe, that faithful sperit would have been doin' no more than its simple dooty in the premises.'

"Enright takes it onto himself to squar' the Turner person at the Red Light an' the O. K. Restauraw; an', since his ensooin' conduct is much within decent bounds, except that Rucker steps some high an' mighty when he heaves in sight an' Black Jack gives him hard an' narrow looks, nothin' su'gestive of trouble occurs. In less'n a week he shakes down into his proper place, an' all as placid as a duck-pond. He's even a sort o' fav'rite with Nell, Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie, they claimin' that he's sufferin' from soul blight because of a lost love. Certainly, thar's nothin'

in this yere fem'nine bluff, but of course none of us don't say so at the time.

"Boggs holds that the Turner person's only a pecooliarly gifted liar, an' refooses to believe in him. 'Because it's prepost'rous,' says Boggs, 'that folks would go in to frame up a weddin', an' then, led by the preacher, take to mobbin' the bridegroom on the very threshold of them nuptials.'

""It ain't by no means shore, Dan,' says Texas, to whom Boggs imparts his convictions, 'but what you've drove the nail. Which if that Parks household reely has it in for this Turner person, they'd have let him go the route. Could even the revenge of a fiend ask more than simply seein' him a married man?'

"In about a fortnight, that Turner person's got fully cooled out, an' the worst effects of what Red Dog lick he imbibes has disappeared. As he feels himse'f approachin' normal, as Peets puts it, he mentions to Enright casyooal like that, if the town sees nothin' ag'in it, he reckons he'll open an ondertakin' shop.

""Not,' he says, 'that I'm the man to go hintin' that what former foonerals has been pulled off in these yere parts ain't been all they should; but still, to get a meetropolitan effect, you oughter have a hearse an' ploomes. Let it be mine to provide them marks of a advanced civilization. It'll make villages like Red Dog an' Colton sing low, an' be a distinct advantage to a camp which is strugglin' for consid'ration. Yes, sir,' goes on the Turner person, warmin' with the theme, 'what's the public use of obsequies if you-all don't exhaust 'em of every ounce of good? An' how can any outfit

expect to do this, an' said outfit shy that greatest evidence of modern reeefinement, a hearse? Given a rosewood coffin, an' a black hearse with ploomes—me on the box—an' the procession linin' solemnly out for Boot Hill, if we-all ain't the instant envy of the territory, you can peg me out by the nearest ant hill until I pleads guilty to bein' wrong.'

"'Thar's no need for all this yere eloquence,' replies Enright, blandly. 'What you proposes has been a dream of mine for years. You open your game as fooneal director, an' if we can't find material for you local, we'll go rummagin' 'round as far as Lordsburg an' Silver City to supply the deficiency.'

"'Feelin' Enright is behind him, the Turner person goes to work with sech exyooberant enthoosiasm, that it ain't a month before he brings over his hearse from Tucson, said vehicle havin' been sent on from the East. She's shore no slouch for a catafalque neither, an' we p'rades up an' down the street with it, gettin' the effect.

"'Boggs voices the common feelin'.

"'Thar's a conveyance,' says he, 'that comes mighty close to robbin' death of half its sting. Any sport is bound to cash in more content, when he savvys that his last appearance is bound to be a vict'ry an' he'll be freighted to the sepulcher in a swell wagon like that.'

"'It is shore calc'lated to confer class on the deeparted,' assents Tutt.

"'These praises certainly exalts the sperits of the Turner person

a whole lot. He buys the old Lady Gay dance hall, which, since the goin' out of the Votes for Women S'loon, has again become the undisputed property of Armstrong, makes a double-door to back in the hearse, an' reopens that deefunct temple of drink an' merriment as a ondertakin' establishment. Over the front he hangs up his sign.

COFFIN EMPORIUM.

L. TURNER, FUNERAL DIRECTOR.

CORPSES SOLICITED.

"That sign so much uplifts the sperit of the town it mor'n doubles the day's receipts at the Red Light. Also, two or three shady characters vamooses for fear of what a nacheral public eagerness to see that hearse in action may do.

"It's the day next on the hocks of the installation of the Turner person in business, an' the fooneral director is lookin' out of the front window of his coffin emporium wishin' some gent'd start somethin' with his gun an' mebbly bump him off a load for his new hearse, when Enright eemerges from the post office with a iron look on his face. Peets is with him, an' the pa'r is holdin' a pow-wow.

"The rest of us might have taken more notice, only our sombreros is fittin' some tight on account of the interest we evinces the day prior in he'pin' la'nch the Turner person that a-way. As it is, we bats a lackluster eye, an' wonders in a feeble way what's done corr'gated Enright's brow.

"It don't go no further than wonder, however, ontill after a

few moments talk with Nell, Enright sends across for the Turner person. As showin' how keenly sens'tive are the female faculties that a-way, Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie is canvassin' some infantile mal'dy of little Enright Peets in the front room of the O. K. House, an' same as if they smells the onyoosual in the air, they comes troopin' over to the Red Light to note what happens next.

"'Young man,' says Enright, when the Turner person has been brought in, 'by way of starter, let me inquire, be you preepared to surrender your destinies, of which you're plumb onfitted to have charge, into disgusted albeit kindly hands?'

"The Turner person, some oneasy at seein' Moore, who's carelessly toyin' with a lariat, edgin' 'round his way, allows in tremblin' tones he is.

"'Thar be those,' goes on Enright, 'who with the best intentions in the world, has been explorin' the ins an' outs of your Sni-a-bar troubles, an' while the clouds is measur'ble lifted the fresh light shed on your concerns leaves you in a most imbecile sityooation. Which if I thought that little Enright Peets, not yet in techin' distance of his teens, hadn't got no more sense than you, much as I dotes upon that baby I'd shore vote for his demise. However, proceedin' with the deal, thar's this to say: Nellie thar, writes to your Peggy sweetheart, while I opens negotiations with old man Parks. I plans to read you them replies, but after advisin' with the Doc, an' collectin' the views of Nell, it's deemed s'fficient to tell you what you're goin' to do, an' then head you fo'th to its accomplishment. Our conj'int findin's, the same bein' consented

to by old Parks in writin', an' tearfully deesired by your Peggy sweetheart in what she commoonicates to Nellie, is that you proceed at once to Sni-a-bar, an' get them interrupted nuptials over. After which you'll be free to return yere with your bride, an' take up the hon'rabable an' useful c'reer you've marked out. As the preesidin' officer of the Stranglers, my word is that you be ready to start by next stage; which, onless Monte gets so deep in licker that he tips that conveyance over a bluff, should permit you to clasp your Peggy to your bosom an' kiss the tears from her cheeks by the middle of next week.'

""But,' interjects the Turner person, his voice soundin' like the terrified bleatin' of a sheep, 'can't you-all give me no glimmer of what's wrong that time? I don't hanker overmuch to go back in darkened ignorance, like a lamb to the slaughter. What guarantee have I got that old Parks won't lay for me with that bootcher knife of his'n? It ain't fair to leave me to go knockin' about, in the midst of perils sech as these, like a blind dog in a meat shop.'

""Your Peggy,' returns Enright, 'encloses a letter to you by the hand of Nellie yere, which may or may not set fo'th what insults you perp'trates upon her fam'ly. Also, said missive furnishes the only chance at this end of the trail of you findin' out the len'th an' breadth of your ignorant iniquities. For myse'f, the thought of what you-all does that time is so infooriatin' I must refuse to go over it in words. Only, if in his first reesentments old Parks had burned you at the stake, I would not have condemned him. As to your safety pers'nal, you can regyard it as ashshored. Your

Peggy will protect you, an' your footure parent-in-law himse'f acquits you of everything except bein' an eediot. It's, however, got down to whether he preefers to have a fool in his fam'ly or see his darter wretched for life, an' he's done nerved himse'f to take the fool.'

""Thar's your sweetheart's letter,' an' Nell puts an envelope which smells of voylets into the Turner person's hands.

""That ondertaker reads it; an' after bein' confoosed by shame for a moment, he begins to cheer up.

""Folks,' he says, kissin' his Peggy's letter an' stowin' it away in his coat, 'I trusts a gen'rous public will permit me, after thankin' them whose kindness has smoothed out the kinks in my affairs, to close the incident with onlimited drinks for the camp.' That's all he says; an' neither can we dig anything further out of Enright or Nell.

""We sees the Turner person aboard the stage, an' wishes him all kinds of luck. As Monte straightens out the reins over his six hosses an' cleans the lash of his whip through his fingers, Peets vouchsafes a partin' word.

""Neither I nor Sam,' says Peets, 'wants you to go away thinkin' that you an' your bride ain't goin' to be as welcome as roses when you an' she comes ramblin' in as one on your return.'

""That's whatever,' coincides Nell.

""Also,' breaks in Enright, 'should old Parks go to stampin' the sod or shakin' his horns, you-all are to put up with them deemonstrations an' not make no aggrevatin' reemarks. No one

knows better than you by now, how much cause you gives that proud old gent to feel harrowed.'

"Of course all of us is preyed on by anxiety to know whatever awful thing it is the Turner person does. In the end it's Missis Rucker who smokes Enright out.

"'Sam Enright,' says this yere intrepid lady, her manner plenty darklin', 'you mustn't forget that whenever the impulse moves me I can shet down utter on your grub. Likewise, as a lady, I not only knows my p'sition, but keenly feels my rights. Which I don't aim to coerce you, but onless you comes through with the trooth about this yere Turner person's felonies, some drastic steps is on their way.'

"'You will see, Missis Rucker,' says Enright, who's to be excoused for turnin' a bit white, 'that no present reason exists for threatenin' me when I asshores you that as far back as last evenin' I fully decides to lay bar' everything. I do this, onderstand, not through fear; but lest some folks go surmisin' round to the inj'ry of the innocent. As I recollects back, too, I can see how the Turner person slumps into that mistake, him first talkin' dog to that canine party in Battle Row, an' then askin' whar does he go for the weddin' license.'

"'Sam Enright,' interrupts Missis Rucker, whose flashin' eyes shows she's growin' hysterical, 'don't harass me with no p'intless speeches. You say flat what it is he does, or take the consequences.'

"'Why, my dear Missis Rucker,' an' Enright makes haste with

his reply, 'the thing is easily grasped. The paper he gives the preacher sharp is a dog license. Which that Turner person is seekin' to wed the belle of Sni-a-bar on a permit to keep a dog! The canine party he meets in Battle Row misonderstands a sityooation.'

"'All the same,' observes Texas to Boggs, as the two meets that evenin' in the Noo York store, 'thar's one feachure to a dog license, not perceivable in a marriage license, which is worth gold an' precious stones. Said docyoooment runs out in a year.'"

IX

RED MIKE

"Mebby you-all recalls about that Polish artist person?" suggested the old cattleman, tentatively; "him I speaks of former?" My gray old *campañero* was measuring out what he called his "forty drops," and, since this ceremony necessitated keeping one eye on his glass, while he endeavored to keep the other eye on me, the contradictory effort resulted in a wavering and uncertain expression, not at all in harmony with his usual positive air. By way of helping conversation, I confessed to a clear remembrance of the "Polish artist person," and wound up by urging him to give the particulars concerning that interesting exile.

"Well," he cautiously returned, "thar ain't nothin' so mighty thrillin' in his Wolfville c'reer. You see he ain't, for the most, no pop'lar figure—him bein' a furriner, that a-way, an' a artist, an' sufferin' besides from conceit in so acoote a form as to make it no exaggeration to say he's locoed. On account of these yere divers an' sundry handicaps, he don't achieve no social success, an' while he's with us, you'd hardly call him of us.

"Not that I objects to this de descendant of Warsaw's last champion, personal. Which I'm a heap like Enright in sech reespects, an' shore tol'rant. I finds out long ago that the reason

we-all goes fault-findin' about people, mostly is because we don't onderstand concernin' them folk's surroundin's. Half the things we arches our necks over, an' for which mebbly we feels like killin' 'em a whole lot, they can't he'p none. If we only savvys what they're reely up ag'inst, it's four for one we pities 'em instead.

"It's like one time 'way back yonder, when me an' Steve Stevenson has a sudden an' abrupt diffukulty with a buffalo bull. We're camped out on the edge of the Rockies near the Spanish Peaks, an' me an' Steve, in the course of a little *passear* we're takin', is jest roundin' a bunch of plum bushes when, as onexpected as a gun play in a Bible class, that devil's son an' heir of a bull—who's been hid by the bushes—ups an' charges. Which you should have seen me an' Steve scatter! We certainly do onbuckle in some hasty moves! He's bigger 'n a baggage wagon, an' as we leaves our guns ten rods away in camp, thar's nothin' for it but to dig out.

"Nigh whar I'm at is a measley *pinon* tree, an' the way I swarms aloft among that vegetable's boughs an' branches comes mighty clost to bein' a lesson to mountain lions. Steve, who's the onluckiest sport west of the Missouri, an' famed as sech, ain't got no tree. The best he can do is go divin' into a hole he sees in some rocks, same as if he's a jack-rabbit with a coyote in hot pursoot.

"Me an' Steve both bein' safe, an' reegyardin' that bull as baffled, I draws a breath of relief. That is, to be ackerate, I starts to draw it; but before I so much as gets it started, yere that inordinate Steve comes b'ilin' out of his hole ag'in like he

ain't plumb satisfied about that bull. The bull's done give him up, too, an' switchin' his tail some thoughtful has started to go away, when, as I tells you, that fool Steve comes surgin' out upon his reetreatin' hocks.

"Nacherally, what could any se'f-respectin' bull do but wheel an' chase Steve back? It's no use, though; Steve won't have it. No sooner does the bull get him hived that a-way, an' make ready to reetire to private life ag'in, than, bing! yere Steve comes bulgin' like a cork out of a bottle. An' so it continyoos, a reg'lar see-saw between Steve an' the bull. Steve'll go into his cave of refooge, prairie-dog fashion, a foot ahead of the bull's horns, only to be a foot behind the bull's tail as that painstakin' anamile is arrangin' to deepart.

"Which sech wretched strategy arouses my contempt.

"You dad-binged Siwash,' I yells down at Steve, 'whyever don't you-all stay in that hole, ontill the bull forgets whar you're at?'

"Go on!' Steve shouts back, as in he dives, head-first, for mebbly it's the twentieth time; 'it's as simple as suckin' aiggs, ain't it, for you up in your tree? You-all don't know nothin' about this hole; thar's a b'ar in this hole!'

"Which I allers remembers about that dilemmy of Steve's. An' now, when I beholds a gent makin' some rannikaboo break, an' everybody's scoffin' at him an' deenouncin' him for a loonatic or worse, I reeflects that mighty likely if we-all was to go examine the hole he's in, we'd find it plumb full of b'ar.

"Returnin' to the orig'nal proposition, the same bein' that Polack, let me begin by sayin' that whenever it comes to any utterances of his'n, I'm nacherally onable to quote him exact. What with him rollin' his 'Rs' ontill they sounds like one of them snare drums, an' the jiggerty-jerkety fashion wharin he chops up his English, a gent might as soon try to quote a planin' mill exact.

"That I'm able to give you-all his troo name is doo wholly to him passin' round his kyard a heap profoose, when he first comes ramblin' in, said cognomen as printed bein' 'Orloff Ivan Mitzkowanski, Artist and Painter of Portraits.' We perooses this yere fulm'nation two or three times, an' Peets even reads it out loud; but since the tongue of no ordinary gent is capable of ropin' an' throwin' it, to say nothin' of tyin' it down, we cuts the gordian knot in the usual way by re-christenin' him *pro bono publico* as Red Mike, which places him within the verbal reach of all.

"'Yes,' he says, as he ladles out them kyards, an' all with the manner of a prince conferrin' favors—'yes, I'm a artist come to you, seekin' subjects an' color. As you probably observes by my name, I'm a gallant Pole, one whose noble ancestors shrieks when Kosciusko fell.'

"Him bein' a stranger that a-way, an' no one, onless it's Peets, ever havin' heard about Poland, or Kosciusko, or whoever does that shriekin' the time when Kosciusko finds himse'f bumped off, we lets Mike get by with this yere bluff. Besides, his name of itse'f sort o' holds us. That anyone, an' specially any furriner, could come as far as he has, flauntin' a name like that in the

sensitive face of mankind, an' yet live to tell the tale, is shore plenty preepar'tory to believin' anything.

"When we lets it go that owin' to local conditions we'll be obleeged to call him 'Red Mike,' he's agree'ble.

"As you will, my friends,' he cries, bulgin' out his breast an' thumpin' it. 'What care I, who am destined for immortality, that barbarians should hail me as Red Mike? It is enough that I am not destroyed, enough that I still move an' have my bein'!'

"Mike,' interjecks Tutt, bristlin' a little, 'don't cut loose in no offensive flights. It's a heap onadvisable when addressin' us to overwork that word "barbarian." As you says yourself, you're lucky to be alive; which, bein' conceded, it'd be plenty proodent on your part not to go doin' nothin' to change your luck.'

"Steady thar, Dave,' says Enright, 'don't go exhibitin' your teeth to a pore benighted furriner, an' him not onto our curves.'

"Him bein' a furriner,' retorts Tutt, 'is but a added argyooment in favor of him takin' heed. Speakin' for myse'f, I in partic'lar don't want no furriner to step on my tail an' stand thar, same as if my feelin's ain't goin' to count.'

"Be composed, my friend,' says Mike, tryin' to follow Enright out an' squar' himse'f with Tutt—'be composed. I retract the "barbarians" an' suggest a drink.'

"That's all right, Mike,' returns Tutt, who's easy mollified; 'still I onreservedly says ag'in that in Arizona thar's nothin' in becomin' too difoose. All that this time lets you out, Mike, is that havin' jest had our feed we're happ'ly lethargic. Which if you'd

let fly that crack about barbarians, an' us not fed none, some gent not otherwise employed 'd have seized upon you as a mop-rag wharwith to wipe up the floor.'

"Thar's allers a dispoote as to whether or no Mike reely commits soocide that time. Tutt an' Texas holds to the last that his light gettin' blowed out like it does is accidental. Peets, however, insists it's a shore-enough soocide. Of course, Boggs goes with Peets. Whatever's the question at bay, Boggs never fails to string his play with the Doc's; it's Boggs's system. All you has to do to get a rise out o' Boggs is get some opinion out o' Peets. Once the Doc declar's himse'f, Boggs is right thar to back said declaration for his last dollar every time.

"As sustainin' his claim of soocide, Peets p'int's out that thar's no gent, not a howlin' eediot complete, but knows s'fficient of giant powder to be dead on to how it's cap'ble of bein' fired by friction.

"'Why,' he says, eloocidatin' his p'sition, 'even darkened savages is posted as to that. I once sees a South Sea Islander, in a moose-yum East, who sets a bunch of shavin's in a blaze by rubbin' together two sticks. An' this yere Mike is a eddycated sharp, eddicated at a Dutch outfit called Heidelberg. Do you-all reckon a gradyooate of sech a sem'nary ever walks out on a cold collar, him not wise, an' performs in the numbskull fashions as this yere Mike?'

"'That's whatever!' chimes in Boggs.

"As I tells you, any emphatic idee laid down by Peets instantly

sets Boggs to strikin' same as one of them cuckoo clocks.

"Enright?

"The old silver tip stands nootral, not sidin' with either Peets an' Boggs or Tutt an' Texas.

"Which this yere Mike bein' shore dead,' says Enright, 'strikes me as s'fficient. I plants my moccasins on that, an' don't go pirootin' an' projectin' about for no s'lootions which may or may not leave me out on a limb.'

"You recalls how it's Monte who, while gettin' drunk with him over to the Oriental S'loon in Tucson, deloodes Mike into p'intin' our way. Also, what Enright says to that deboshed stage driver for so doin'. Enright's shore fervent on that occasion, an' the language he uses would have killed two acres of grass. But that don't he'p none. After the dust Enright paws up has settled, thar's Mike still, all quiled up in the Wolfville lap.

"Thar's a worse feachure, the same bein' Mike's wife. She's as young, an' mighty nigh as lovely, too, as Nell; only she's blind, this yere Mike's girl wife is, blind as any midnight mole. Besides her, an' a armful of paint breshes an' pictures, about all Mike's got in the way of plunder is a ten-dollar bill. If it's only Mike, we-all might have thickened our hides a heap, an' let him go jumpin' sideways for his daily grub, same as other folks. But girls must be fed, speshully blind ones.

"Which this egreegious Mike, who calls her his 'little Joolie,' allows her bein' blind that a-way is why he marries her.

"It inshores her innocence,' he says; 'because it inshores her

ignorance of the world.'

"'Likewise,' remarks Peets, as we stands discussin' this yere reasonin' of Mike's in the Red Light, 'it inshores her ignorance of them onmitigated pictures he paints. Which if ever she was just to get one good look at 'em, he couldn't hold her with a Spanish bit. But you-all knows how it is, Sam?'—Yere Peets clinks his glass, an' all mighty sagacious, ag'inst Enright's—'The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb. On the whole, I ain't none convinced that her bein' blind, that a-way, ain't for the best.'

"To look at this little Joolie, you-all'd never know she can't see none. Her eyes is big an' soft an' deep, an nothin' queer about 'em except they has a half-blurred, baby look. Peets allows it's the nerve bein' dead which does it. But blind or not, little Joolie shore dotes on that Red Mike husband of hers, as though he's made of love an' gold. Which he's her heaven!

"While it's evident, after a ca'm an' onbiased consideration of his works, that from standp'int of art this yere Mike's about sign-painter size, little Joolie regyards him as the top-sawyer genius of this or any other age.

"'He'll revolutionize the world of art,' she declar's to Nell, who's mighty constant about goin' to see her; 'Ivan'—she pronounces it 'Vahn'—is ondoubted destined to become the founder of a noo school.'

"'An' her face,' goes on Nellie, as she tells us about it over to the O. K. Restauraw one evenin', after Mike an' his little Joolie wife's done pulled their freight for the night—'an' her face glows

with the faith of a angel! So if any of you-all boys finds occasion to speak of this yere Mike in her presence, you be shore an' sw'ar that, as an artist, he's got nacher backed plumb off the lay-out.'

"'The wretch who fails,' adds Missis Rucker, plenty fierce, 'don't wrestle his hash with me no more! You can gamble that marplot has tackled his final plateful of slapjacks at the O. K. House, an' this yere's notice to that effect.'

"It's a cinch, of course, that none of us is that obtoose as to go sayin' anything to pain this yere blind little Joolie; at the same time no one regyards it as feas'ble to resent them threats of Missis Rucker! She's a mighty sperited matron, Missis Rucker is, sperited to the verge of bein' vindictive, an' rubbin' her fur the wrong way is the same as rubbin' a bobcat's fur the wrong way. As a exercise thar's nothin' in it. Besides, we're plumb used to it, owin' to her threatenin' us about one thing or another constant. Menaces, that a-way, is Missis Rucker's style.

"Mike an' his Joolie wife don't live at the O. K. House, but only gets their chuck thar. He allows that to do jestic to his art he's got to have what he calls a 'no'th light,' an' so he goes meanderin' out on the no'th side of town, an' jumps a empty shack.

"Driv by a lack of money, mighty likely, Mike ain't in camp a week before he makes it plenty plain that, onless he's headed off or killed, he's goin' to paint Enright a whole lot. As a preelim'nary he loores a passel of us over to his wickeyup to show us samples.

"'That's my chef dever,' he says, bringin' for'ard a smudgy lookin' canvas, plastered all over with reds an' browns.

"We-all takes a slant at it, maintainin' ourselves meanwhile as grave as a passel of owls. An' at that the most hawk-eyed in the outfit can't make it look like nothin'. We-all hangs back in the straps, an' waits for Peets to take the lead. For thar is the pretty little blind Joolie wife, all y'ears an' lovin' int'rest, an' after what Nell an' Missis Rucker has done said the gent who lacerates her feelin's is lost. In sech a pinch Peets is our guidin' light.

"'Massive!' says Peets, after a pause.

"'Which she's shore a heap massive!' we murmurs, followin' Peets' smoke.

"'An' sech atmosphere!' Peets goes on.

"'Atmosphere to give away!' we echoes.

"'At these yere encomiyums the pore pleased face of little Joolie is beamin' like the sun. As for Mike, he assoomes a easy attitooode, same as though compliments means nothin' to him.

"'What's the subject?' Peets asks.

"'That, my friend, is the *Linden in October*,' returns Mike, as though he's showin' us a picture of heaven's front gate. 'Yes, the *Linden in October*.'

"'Which if this yere Pole,' whispers Texas to Cherokee, 'is able to make anything out of that smear, he can shore see more things without the aid of licker than any sport that ever spreads his blankets in Cochise County.'

"Texas is a heap careful not to let either Mike or the little Joolie girl ketch on to what he says.

"Also, it's worth recallin' that Mike an' the little Joolie is the

only wedded pa'r, of which the Southwest preeserved a record, that don't bring bilious recollections to Texas of his former Laredo wife.

"'Not but what thar's a wrong thar, Doc,' he insists, the time Peets mentions it; 'not but what this yere Red Mike-Joolie sityooation harbors a wrong. Only it's onavailable to 'llustrate the illyoosage I suffers at the hands of my Laredo wife.'

"After the *Linden* Mike totes out mebbly it's a dozen other smeary squar's of canvas. We goes over 'em one by one, cockin' our eyes an' turnin' our heads first one way an' then another, like a bloo jay peerin' into a knothole. When Peets lets drive something about 'sky effects,' an' 'fore-grounds,' an' 'middle-distance,' we stacks in all sim'lar. Thar's nothin' to it; Mike an' the little Joolie girl puts in a mighty pleasant hour.

"Mike, feelin' hospit'ble, an' replyin' to a thirsty look which Jack Moore sort o' sheds about the room, reegrets he ain't got no whiskey.

"'My little Joolie objectin',' he explains.

"'Oh, well,' speaks up Peets, who's plumb eager to bring them art studies to a wind-up, 'when thar's famine in Canaan thar's corn in Egypt. S'ppose we-all goes romancin' over to the Red Light an' licker up. Thar's nothin' like nosepaint, took internal, for bringin' out a picture's convincin' p'int.'

"'Right you be, Doc,' says Moore. 'It's only last week, when I myse'f cuts the trail of Monte, who, as the froote of merely the seventh drink, is sheddin' scaldin' tears over a three-sheet

poster stuck onto the corral gate. This yere stampede in color deepicts the death of "Little Eva," as presented in the *Uncle Tom* show ragin' over to the Bird Cage Op'ry House. Monte allows it's one of the most movin' things he's ever met up with, an' protests between sobs ag'inst takin' out the stage that day for its reg'lar trip. "Which it's a hour for mournin'," he groans; an' he's shore shocked when the company insists. As he throws free the brake he shakes the tears from his eyes, an' says, "These yere corp'rations ain't got no heart!"

"If thar's ever any chance of Enright bein' that weak the sight of them smudges an' smears settles it, an' while we stands shovin' the Old Jordan along the Red Light bar, he allows to Mike that on the whole he don't reckon he'll have himse'f painted none. Rememberin', however, that it's a ground-hawg case with Mike, who needs the money, Enright gives him a commission to paint Monte.

"Him bein' a histor'cal character, that a-way,' says Enright.

"Monte is over in Tucson, but you should have heard that drunkard's language when he's told.

"Whatever be you-all tryin' to do to me, Sam?' he wails. 'Ain't a workin' man got no rights? Yere be I, the only gent in camp who has actchool dooties to perform, an' a plot is set afoot behind my back to make me infamous!'

"It's to go over the Red Light bar,' explains Enright, 'to be a horr'ble example for folks with a tendency to over-drink. As for you yellin' like a pig onder a gate, who is it, I asks, that

beguiles this indigent artist party into camp, an' leaves him on our hands? Bein' he's yere, I takes it that even your whiskey-drowned intell'gence ree'lizes that this yere Mike, an' speshully the little blind Joolie, has got to be fed.'

"Well, gents,' returns Monte, gulpin' down his grief with his nosepaint, 'I reckons if it's your little game to use me as a healthful moral infloence, I'd lose out to go puttin' up a roar. All the same, as sufferer in chief, I'm entitled to be more consulted by you uplifters before ever you arranges to perpetchooate me to poster'ty as a common jeer.'

"Shore; these yere protests of Monte's ain't more'n half on the level. After a fashion, he's plenty pleased.

"For,' he says, confidin' in Black Jack over his licker, 'it ain't every longhorn of a stage driver whose picture is took by one of these yere gifted Yooropeans.'

"Black Jack agrees to this in full, for he's a good-hearted barkeep, that a-way.

"In doo time the picture's hung up back of the Red Light bar. Regyarded as a portrait it's shore some desp'rate, an' even Enright sort o' half reepents. Monte, after studyin' it a while, begins to get sore in earnest. Them scales, like the scriptoors say, certainly do fall from his eyes.

"Jack,' he says, appealin' to Moore, who happens to be present, 'does that thing look like me?'

"Why, yes,' Jack replies, squintin' his left eye a heap critical; 'to be shore it flatters you some, but then them artists gen'rally

does.'

"Jack, if I'm that feeble as to go believin' what you says, I'd borrow a shotgun from the express company and blow off the top of my head. That ain't the portrait of no hooman bein"—an' Monte raises a dispa'rin' hand at the picture; 'it's a croode presentation of some onnacheral cross between a coyote and a cowskin trunk.'

"Cherokee gets up from behind his lay-out, an' strolls over so's to get a line on the picture. He takes a long an' disparagin' survey.

"It ain't that I'm incitin' you to voylence, Monte,' he remarks final, 'but if you owes a dooty to s'ciety, don't forget that you owes also a dooty to yourse'f. You'll be lackin' in se'f-respect if you don't give Sam Enright two weeks to take that outrage down, an' if it ain't removed by then you'll bust it.'

"Black Jack is ag'in the picture, too.

"Not,' he says, 'that I wants to put the smother on it entire; only I figger it'd look better in the post office, folks not makin' it so much of a hangout. Regyarded commercial, it's a setback to the Red Light. Some gent comes trackin' up intent on drinks, an' feelin' gala. After one glance at Monte up thar it's all off. That reveller's changed his mind, an' staggers out into the open ag'in without a word. The joint is daily knocked for about the price of a stack of bloos, as the direct result of that work of art. Which I'd as soon have a gila monster in the winder.'

"Mike ain't present none when all this yere flattery is flyin'. If he was thar in person nothin' would have been said. Whoever'd be that hardened as to go harrowin' up the sens'tive soul of a

artist, even if his work don't grade as corn-fed?

"Some later tribyoote to his talents, however, reaches the y'ears of Mike. On the back of Black Jack's protests the Lightnin' Bug, who's come over from Red Dog for a little visit, drifts in. When he sees Monte's portrait his eyes lights up like a honka-tonk on Saturday night.

"'Rattlesnakes an' stingin' lizards!' he cries; 'which I'm a Mexican if you-all ain't gone an' got him painted! However do you-all manage? I remembers when we captures him it's the last spring round-up but one. Two weeks goes by before ever we gets him so he'll w'ar clothes! An' even then we-all has to blindfold him an' back him in!'

"'Whoever do you reckon that is, Bug?' asks Black Jack.

"'It's that locoed Digger Injun, ain't it?' says the Bug; 'him we corrals, that time, livin' on ants an' crickets, an' roots an' yarbs, over in Potato canyon?'

"'It's Monte.'

"'Monte! Does anybody get killed about it?'

"Black Jack mentions Mike as the artist.

"'What, that Dutch galoot with the long ha'r?' says the Bug.

"'Which he's a Pole.'

"'Pole or Dutchman, what's the odds? I sees a party back in Looeyville whose ha'r's most as long as his. We entices him to a barber shop on a bet to have it cut, an' I'm ag'in the union if four flyin' squirrels don't come scootin' out. They've been nestin' in it.'

"The Bug swings lightly into the saddle after a while, an' goes

clatterin' back to Red Dog. No notice would have been took of what he says, only Monte, who hears it from Black Jack, is that malev'lent he goes an' tells Mike.

"You-all will make trouble between 'em, Monte,' Nell reemonstrates, when Monte's braggin' in his besotted way about what he's done.

"That's all right, Nellie. Both of 'em's been insultin' me; Mike by paintin' me so I'm a holy show, an' the Bug by lettin' on to take me for a Digger buck. S'ppose the Bug downs Mike, or Mike does up the Bug? Either way it's oats in your uncle Monte's feed box. That's me, Nellie; that's your old uncle Monte every time! Which, when it comes to cold intrigue, that a-way, I'm the swiftest sport in our set.'

"On hearin' about the Bug from Monte Mike gets plenty intemp'rate. He goes plumb in the air, an' stays thar. He gives it out that he's goin' to prance over to Red Dog an' lay for the Bug. Nothin' but blood is goin' to do him.

"Thar's nothin' we can say or do to stop Mike, so after talkin' it over a spell we decides to throw him loose, Enright first sendin' word that he's harmless, an' not to be bumped off.

"Upon receivin' Enright's word the Red Dog chief passes on a warnin' to the Bug. Mike mustn't, onder no circumstances, be killed. Bein' he's a artist he's not reespons'ble.

"Me kill him!' cries the Bug, who's scandalized at the idee; 'me take a gun to sech a insect! Gents, I've too much reespect for them good old faithful .45's of mine to play it as low down

on 'em as all that.'

"Which there leeniencies I allers feels is on account of the little Joolie, an' the blind love she entertains for Mike. When the worst does come we carefully conceals from her the troo details, an' insists that the powder house goes off by itse'f.

"Then Nell, with Tucson Jennie and Missis Rucker to back her, carries the little Joolie girl the news. It's shore tough papers; an' Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie is kept racin' an' runnin' an' riotin' between the O. K. House an' Mike's wickeyup, freightin' over camphor an' sim'lar reestor'tives to the little Joolie all night long, while Nellie holds her head.

"Does Mike's kickin' the bucket leave the little Joolie broke? It's this a-way: You see we-all chips in, an' makes up a fa'rly moderate pile to buy the *Linden in October*.

"It's to remember your gifted husband by,' explains Enright, as him an' Peets an' Boggs goes over to clink down the gold, an' get the *Linden*. 'This yere transcendent spec'men shall never leave our hands.'

"Not while we live!" declar's Peets.

"It's a marv'lous picture!" returns the little Joolie girl, proud and tearful both at once.

"Marv'lous!" repeats Peets; 'it's got the *Angelus* beat four ways from the Jack.'

"Which I should remark!" puts in Boggs. 'Why, Doc, this yere *Linden* of ours shore makes that *Angelus* thing look like an old beer stamp.'

"These yere outpourin's of onrestricted admiration shore does set the little Joolie to smilin' through her tears. Also, the bankroll they brings her sends her back to her folks in style.

"So you don't regyard it as the proper caper to go deceivin' the little Joolie girl? That's preecisely the p'sition a Bible sharp over in Tucson takes, when some party's mentionin' the business.

"You go tell that doubtin' Thomas of a sky-pilot,' says Peets, on hearin' about it, 'that he can bet a ton of Watts' hymn books on it. You-all say, too, for his pulpit guidance, that what looks like deceit, that a-way, is often simple del'cacy, while Christian charity freequent w'ars the face of fraud.'

"But I'm gettin' ahead of the wagons. Mike, who's a heap heated, goes lookin' for the Bug in the Tub of Blood S'loon. The Bug don't happen to be vis'ble no whar in the scen'ry when Mike comes clatterin' in. By way of a enterin' wedge Mike subscribes for a drink. As the Tub barkeep goes settin' out the glasses Mike, with his custom'ry gifts for gettin' himse'f in wrong, starts fomentin' trouble. An' at that it's simply his ignorance, an' a conceited deesire to show off among them Red Dogs.

"As the Tub barkeep slams down the crockery Mike barks up sort o' sharp an' peevish:

"The ice! Ain't you people got no ice?"

"The Tub barkeep takes a sour squinch-owl look at Mike. Then he goes softly swabbin' off the counter.

"After a while he looks up an' says:

"Which you don't notice no swirlin' drifts of snow outside, do

you? You ain't been swallowed up in no blizzard, be you, comin' into town? No, my stilted, stiff-laigged sheep of the mountain, we ain't got no ice.'

"Mike, feelin' some buffaloes by the barkeep's manner, don't say no more. In silence he drinks his lick, an' then sets down at a table.

"The barkeep, with the tail of his eye, continyoos to look him over.

"'Whatever do you make of that crazy maverick,' he asks of a freighter, who's jest rolled in from Lordsburg. 'The idee of him askin' for ice in August!'

"'Mebby he's the ha'r-brained party they sends word about from Wolfville,' the freighter replies—'him who's out to crawl the Bug's hump a whole lot?'

"'That's the identical persimmon!' exclaims the barkeep, slammin' his hand on the counter. 'Which I ought to have knowed it without bein' told. I wonder if Peets, or some of them other Wolfville sports, puts him up to come bully-raggin' round yere about ice to insult us?'

"The freighter allows he'll edge into a pow-wow with Mike, an' feel him out.

"Planted at the same table, the freighter an' Mike is soon as thick as thieves. They're gettin' along like two pups in a basket, when in comes a disturbin' element in the shape of one of them half-hoss half-alligator felons, whose distinguishin' characteristic is that they're allers grouchy an' hostile. That's the

drawback to Red Dog. It certainly is the home camp of some of the most ornery reptiles, that a-way!

"The grouchy sorehead party, from the jump, gets dissatisfied about Mike's ha'r, which he w'ars a foot long same as all artists. Which a gent can't be no painter onless he's got ha'r like a cow pony. The sorehead party marches up an' down by the table whar Mike an' the freighter is swappin' lies, schemin' as to how he's goin' to make a warlike hook-up with Mike. After a spell he thinks he sees his way through, an' rounds to an' growls.

"'What's that? Does one of your onparalleled tarrapins say something deerog'tory about George Washin'ton?'

"Both the freighter an' Mike looks up some amazed, but pleads not guilty. They ain't, they says, even thinkin' of Washin'ton.

"'Which I begs your parding,' returns Sorehead, snortin' mighty haughty an' elab'rate; 'I fancies I hears some one make some onbecomin' remark about Washin'ton. Mighty likely it's that lickin' I drinkt last night.'

"Two minutes later he halts ag'in.

"'It ain't possible I'm mistook this time. An' at that I don't precisely ketch what you offensive ground-owls is observin' about Thomas Jefferson?'

"Mike an' the Lordsburg freighter insists vehement that thar's been no alloosion to Jefferson, none whatever.

"'Parding!' Sorehead snorts; 'ag'in I asks parding! As former, I finds I'm barkin' at a bunch of leaves. My y'ear deceives me into thinkin' that you two fool ground-owls is indulgin' in

reecrim'nations ag'inst Thomas Jefferson.'

"It's the third time, an' Sorehead's back, neck bowed an' fingers workin'.

"Now thar's no error! Which one of you cheap prairie dogs makes that low-flung statement about old Andy Jackson? Let him speak up, an' I'll give him a hundred dollars before devourin' his heart.'

"No one mentions Jackson,' says Mike, who's becomin' frightened an' fretted; 'whatever's the idee of any one talkin' about Jackson, anyhow?'

"Oh, ho! Perhaps, my bold galoot, you think old Andy ain't worth talkin' about!"

"Sayin' which, that sorehead malcontent reaches for Mike, an' the two go sailin' 'round the room permiscus. Sorehead picks Mike up, an' sweeps a cord or two of glasswar' off the bar with him. Then he employs him in bringin' down a picture from the wall. After which he nacherally tosses him hither an' yon in the most irrel'vant way.

"Sorehead has jest reached up with Mike, an' smashed a chandelier carryin' fourteen coal-oil lamps, when in t'ars the Lightnin' Bug, white an' frothin'. The Bug don't waste no time lookin' for holds, but casyoally, yet no less s'fficiently, snags onto Sorehead. Fixin' his ten claws in him, the Bug fo'thwith embarks upon sech feats in the way of ground an' lofty tumblin' with that gladiator, as to make what happens to Mike seem pooerile.

"Don't you-all know,' shouts the Bug, as, havin' done broke a cha'r with Sorehead, he proceeds to deevote what's left of him to smashin' a table—'don't you-all know, you abandoned profligate, that this yere artist you've been maltreatin' is a pers'nal friend of mine, yere present in Red Dog to confab with me on important affairs? An' is it for a houseless sot like you to take to minglin' with him malignant? Yereafter don't you-all so much as presooome to breathe without first gettin' my permission so to do in writin'!"

"As closin' the incident the Bug sends Sorehead hurtlin' through a window, sash an' all. After which he dusts off his hands an' says:

"Gents, let's licker.'

"The barkeep's that gratified he declar's the drinks is on the Tub.

"Also, the glass an' sash, Bug,' he adds.

"Bein' refreshed, the Bug tenderly collects Mike, who's in a frayed an' fragmentary condition, an' gently freights him over to us on a buckboard. It's a week before Peets allows he's ag'in ready for the show ring, an' he uses up enough co't plaster on him to kyarpet the Red Light. Little Joolie? We let's on to her that Mike meets up with a she grizzly an' her cubs, an' while he cleans up that fam'ly he nacherally gets chewed.

"Mike's shorely some abrated, ma'am,' explains Peets; 'but he's mendin' fast. When I first lays eyes on him, after he encounters that bevy of b'ars, it's a question if his skin'll hold his

principles. But don't take on, Ma'am; now I've got him headed right he'll be as good as new in a week. Don't forget, too, that he shore does land that band of grizzlies in the scrap-heap.'

"Mike emerges from the hands of Peets filled with a pecooliar furrin' form of wrath, an' talkin' about his honor. It's Sorehead he's after now. As a noble Pole, he says, he has been most contoomeliously used, an' insists upon a dooel. Not with the Bug, who's withdrew them orig'nal judgments concernin' old Monte's portrait, an' substitooted tharfor the view that said picture's bound to become the artistic pride an' joy of Arizona. Mike wants to fight the onreegen'rate Sorehead.

"In the flush of their new friendship Mike asks the Bug to heel an' handle him. Also, it's warmin' to your better nacher to note the enthoosiasm wharwith the Bug takes up his dooties.

"'It'll be six-shooters at ten paces,' he explains to Mike; 'an' if you only shoots like you paints, we'll send that tramp whar the wicked cease from troublin' an' the weary are at rest.'

"The Red Dog chief gives his word to Enright that Mike ain't in no danger.

"'Comin' down to cases,' says the Red Dog chief; 'it's even money that this yere Sorehead crawfishes. If he don't we've got it all set up to hand him the Bug, instead of that Red Mike artist of yours. So you see thar's lit'rally nothin' for you-all wolves to worry over at all.'

"'We-all wolves ain't in the habit of worryin' to any astoundin' extent,' returns Enright, some rigid; 'none the less, I allows I'll

take a look through the sights myse'f, merely by way of makin' shore which way the gun is p'inted. Thar's reasons, one of 'em a lovin' little blind girl, why we're not so plumb partic'lar about havin' this yere alleged artist party put over the jump.'

"The fight's a week away, an' by advice of the Bug, Mike decides to put a polish on his shootin'. This yere's reckoned a bright idee, the more since as near as we-all can judge Mike never does pull a trigger once since when his mother rocks his cradle an' warms his milk.

"'Only,' warns Enright, as Mike goes makin' prep'rations, 'don't you-all go aimin' towards town none. We don't want no neeophytes bombardin' the village, which y'ar in an' y'ar out sees bullets enough in the nacheral onfoldment of eevents.'

"Mike, not havin' no gun, borrys a .45 of Moore. Thus equipped, he secoores some cartridges at the Noo York store, an' la'nches forth. No one goes with him, since he allows he'll shoot better if he's by himse'f.

"Thar's a powder house, belongin' to the Copper Queen Mine, about a mile outside of town. It stands off by itse'f an' nothin' near it, no one honin' much to live neighbor to a ton or two of powder. It's about fifth drink time the mornin' Mike seelects for his practice shootin' when, like a bolt from the bloo, that Copper Queen powder house goes up with a most emphatic whang! What Peets calls the 'concussion' breaks windows in the Wells-Fargo office, an' shakes up the Red Light to that extent it brings down Monte's picture an' busts it to forty flinders on the bottles.

"'Which for a moment,' says Black Jack, commentin' on the gen'ral mess it makes, 'I thinks it's one of Colonel Sterett's *Coyote* editorials on the licker question.'

"That powder blow-up marks the onforchoonate last of Mike. Since he never does show up no more, an' a Mexican tendin' goats in the vicin'ty informs us he sees him pinnin' a target on the r'ar elevation of the powder house jest prior to the explosion, it's the common feelin' that the blow-up's caused by one of Mike's bullets, an' that Mike an' the powder reepos'tory takes flight simooltaneous. Only, as already set fo'th, Peets claims that Mike knows what's comin'. Mebby Peets is right, an' mebby Mike that a-way commits sooicide. Whichever it is, sooicide or accident, it's a mighty complete success; for the only trace we're able to find of either Mike or the powder house is a most elab'rate hole in the ground.

"'The same bein', as I holds, a most excellent feachure,' says Boggs, who loathes foonerals. 'This yere powder house way of cashin' in meets with my approval. It shore don't leave no reemains!'"

X

HOW TUTT SHOT TEXAS THOMPSON

"Which they starts the yarn in Red Dog that the shootin' that time between Tutt an' Texas is born of sectional feelin', an' because Texas is a southern gent, while Tutt comes from the No'th. Sech explanations is absurd—as Doc Peets well says. Also, I'm yere to go one word further an' state that, while it's like them Red Dogs, idle an' mendacious as they frequent be, to go fosterin' sech fictions, thar ain't a syllable of trooth tharin from soda to hock. The flareup has its start in them two children, Annalinda Thompson an' little Enright Peets, an' what sentiments of rivalry nacherally seizes on Tutt an' Texas as parent an' uncle reespective."

"Still there must have been some degree of sectional feeling among you," I said, more by way of stirring my old cattleman up than any nobler purpose; "coming some of you from the South, and others from the North, it would have been strange indeed had it been otherwise."

"Which it's shore strange, then. Them Wolfville pards of mine is one an' all United States men. They ain't Southern men, nor No'thern men, nor Eastern men, nor even Western men. Likewise, the improodent sport who'd go trackin' 'round,

undertakin' to designate 'em as sech, would get toomultuous action, plenty soon and plenty of it.

"Why, take Texas himse'f: Thar's a fly-by-night party pesterin' 'round camp for a space, who lets on he's from the same neck of woods as Texas. This yere annoyin' fraud is a heap proud of it, too, an' makes a speshulty of bein' caught a lot in Texas' company. He figgers it gives him a standin'.

"One mornin', when only a few of us is pervadin' 'round, he plants himse'f plumb comfortable an' important in a Red Light cha'r, an' followin' the 'nitial drink for the day goes to talkin' with Texas.

"As he sets thar, all fav'able an' free, thar comes trackin' in a aged Eastern gent, who's been negotiatin' with Armstrong about business concernin' the Noo York store. The aged Eastern shorthorn goes rockin' up to the counter, an' p'litely lets on to Black Jack that he'll lick. As he does so this yere firegilt party who boasts he's of the same range an' breed as Texas speaks up, sharp an' coarse, like the bark of a dog:

"'Yere, you! I wants a word or two with you-all!"

"With that for a start he onfurls what he preetends is his grievances, the same bein' because of somethin' the aged Eastern sport does or don't do comin' over on Monte's stage—which they're fellow passengers that time, it seems—an' next he cuts loose, an' goes to vitooperatin' an' reecrim'natin', an' pilin' insult on epithet, that a-way, to beat four of a kind. Which he certainly does give that aged Eastern person a layin' out! Shore; he's jest

showin' off at that, an' tryin' to impress Texas.

"At the beginnin' the aged Eastern gent stands like he's dazed, unable to collect himse'f. However, he gets his mental feet onder him, an' allowin' he won't stay none to listen to sech tirades, tucks away his nosepaint an' pulls out.

"After he's gone the vitooperative party wheels so's to face Texas, an' says—mighty pleasant an' agree'ble, like the object of the meetin's been most happ'ly accomplished:

""Thar, that shows you.'

""Whatever does it show?' Texas asks, some grim.

""Which it shows the difference between a No'thern gent an' a Southern gent. To be shore, that old cimmaron ain't half my size an' is twict my age, but all the same, Texas, if he's from the South, you bet, like you an' me, he'd tore into me, win or lose, if he'd got killed!'

""You think so?' says Texas, his eyes becomin' as hard an' glitterin' as a snake's. 'Now let me tell you something, my lionhearted friend. Thar's brave men South, an' brave men No'th. Also, thar's quitters; quitters at both ends of that No'thern-Southern trail who'll go into the water like a mink. Accordin' to my experiences, an' I've been dallyin' with hoomanity in the herd for quite some time, thar's nothin' in that geographical bluff of yours at all. Moreover, I reckons that before I'm through, seein' now you've got me goin', I'll prove it. For a starter, then, takin' your say-so for it, you're a Southern man?'

""Which that's shore c'rrect,' the other responds, but feeble;

'you an' me, as I says former, is both Southern men.'

'''*Bueno!* Now as calk'lated to demonstrate how plumb unfounded is them theories of yours'—yere Texas gets up, an' kicks his cha'r back so he's got room—'I has pleasure in informin' you that you're a onmitigated hoss-thief;—an' you don't dare stand up. Yes, sir; you're onfit to drink with a nigger or eat with a dog;—an' you'll set thar an' take it.'

''Which that aboosive party, pale as paper, certainly does 'set thar an' take it' preecisely as Texas prophecies; an' after glowerin' at him, red-eyed an' f'rocious for a moment, Texas sticks his paws in his jeans, an' sa'nters off.

''It's jest as well. Why, if that humbug so much as curls a lip or crooks a finger, after Texas takes to enunciatin' them prop'sitions in philosophy, Texas'd have tacked him to the table with his bowie an' left him kickin', same as them goggled-eyed professors who calls themselves nacheralists does some buzzin' fly with a pin.

''Which, if thar's anything,' Texas explains to Enright, 'that makes me tired partic'lar, it's them cracks about No'th an' South. If I was range boss for these yere United States I'd shore have them deescriptives legislated into a cap'tal offence.'

''Sech observations as that narrow tarrapin onbosoms,' comments Enright, 'only goes to show how shallow he is. Comin' down to the turn, even that old Eastern shorthorn's walkin' away from him don't necessar'ly mean a lack of sand. Folks does a heap of runnin' in this vale of tears, but upon various an' varyin'

argyooments. A gent runs from a polecat, an' he runs from a b'ar; but the reason ain't the same.'

"Thar's no sectionalisms in Tutt's differences with Texas, none whatever. Also, while it finds, as I holds, its roots in Annalinda an' little Enright Peets, it don't arise from nothin' which them babies does to one another. Two pups in the same basket, two birds on the same bough, couldn't have got along more harmon'ous. The moment Nell brings little Enright Peets over to see Annalinda them children falls together like a shock of oats, an' at what times they're onhobbled of fam'ly reestrictions an' footloose so to do, you'd see 'em playin' 'round from sun-up till dark, same as a pa'r of angels.

"Troo, Annalinda does domineer over little Enright Peets, an' makes him fetch an' carry an' wait on her; an' thar's times, too, when she shore beats him up with a stick or quirt some lib'ral. But what else would you expect? I even encounters little Enright Peets, down on all-fours, an' Annalinda ridin' him like he's a hoss. Likewise, she's kickin' his ribs a heap, to make him go faster. But that's nothin'; them two babies is only playin'.

"Not that I'm none so shore it ain't this yere last identical spectacle which gives Nell the notion of them two children marryin' at some footure day. That, however, is merest surmise, an' in a manner onimportant. What I'd like to get proned into you-all is that Texas an' Tutt lockin' horns like they does has its single cause in them latent jealousies an' struggles for social precedence, which is bound to occur between a only father an'

a only uncle wharever found. Which the single safegyard lies in sech a multitoode of fathers an' uncles as renders 'em common. To possess but one of each makes 'em puffed up an' pride-blown, an' engenders a mootual uppishness which before all is over is shore to man'fest itse'f in war.

"Thar's one boast we-all is able to make, however. That clash between Tutt an' Texas is the only shore-enough trouble which ever breaks out among the boys. You onderstands, of course, that when I says 'boys' that a-way, I alloodes to Enright an' Peets an' them others who constitootes Wolfville's social an' commercial backbone. Thar's other embroglios more or less smoky an' permiscus, which gets pulled off one way an' another, but they ain't held to apply to us of rights. For sech alien hookups, so to speak, we reefooses all reespons'bility. Which we regards them escapades as fortooitous, an' declines 'em utter. Tutt's goin' against Texas is the only war-jig we feels to be reely Wolfville's."

"You forget," I said teasingly, "the shooting between Boggs and Tutt, as incident to the Washerwoman's War."

"Which, that?" There was impatience tinged with acrimony in the tones. "That's nothin' more'n gallantry. It's what's to be looked for whar thar's ladies about, an' is doo to a overeffervescence of sperit, common to the younger males of our species when made gala an' giddy by the alloorin' flutter of a petticoat. Boggs an' Tutt don't honestly mean them bullets none. Also, if you-all is goin' to keep on with your imbecile interruptions, I'll quit."

Abject apologies on my part, supported by equally abject promises of reform.

The old gentleman, thus mollified, resumed:

"Goin' back to this yere Tutt-Texas collision, thar's no denyin', an' be fa'r about it, but what Tutt has grounds. For goin' on five years he's been looked up to as the only father in camp, an' for Texas to appear at what you-all might call the 'leventh hour an' go crowdin' disdainfully into the picture on nothin' more'n bein' a uncle, is preepost'rous. To prance 'round on sech a meager showin', puttin' on the dog he does, an' all in a somber, overbearin' way like he's packin' the world on his shoulders an' we-all's got to be a heap careful not to do nothin' to him to make him drop it, is inexcoosable to the verge of outrage. No rel'tive in the third or fo'th degree is jestified to assoome sech sooperiorities; an' Enright tells Texas so after Peets digs the lead out of the thick of his laig.

"Which we gets orig'nal notice about Annalinda, when a passel of us, as is our custom followin' first drink time in the evenin', drifts into the post office. Some gets letters, some don't; an' Texas, who, as a roole, don't have no voloominous correspondence, is sayin' that he has the same feelin' about letters he has about trant'lers, as bein' a heap more likely to sting you than anything else, when the postmaster shoves him out one.

"It's from Laredo, an' when Texas gets a glimpse at the mark on it he lets it fall onopened to the floor.

"'It's my former wife!' he says, with a shudder. 'Yere she is,

startin' in to get the upper hand of me ag'in.'

"'Nonsense!' says Peets, pickin' up the letter, 'it's from some lawyers. Can't you see their names yere up in the corner?'

"'That don't mean nothin',' Texas whispers—he's shore a heap shook; 'it'd be about her speed, as she goes plottin' afresh to ondermine me in my present peace, to rope up a law-wolf to show her how.'

"'Bein' urged by Peets, an' the balance of us asshorin' him we'll stand pat in his destinies come what may an' defend him to the bitter finish, Texas manages to open the envelope. As he stands thar readin' the scare in his face begins to fade in favor of a look of gloom.

"'Gents,' he says, at last, 'it's my brother Ed. He's cashed in.' We expresses the reg'lation reegrets, an' Texas continyoos: 'Ed leaves me his baby girl, Annalinda—she's my niece.' After a pause he adds: 'This yere shore requires consideration.'

"'These law sharps,' explains Texas, when we're organized all sociable in the Red Light, an' Black Jack's come through on right an' reg'lar lines, 'allows it's Ed's dyin' reequst that I take an' ride paternal herd on this infant child.'

"'But how about its mother?' urges Enright.

"'Which it ain't got none. Its mother dies two years ago. Now Ed's packed in, that baby's been whipsawed; it's a full-fledged orphan, goin' an' comin'.'

"'Ain't thar no rel'tives on the mother's side?' asks Nell, from over back of Cherokee's lay out.

"'Meanest folks, Nellie,' says Texas, 'bar none, between the Colorado an' the Mississippi. You see they're kin to my Laredo wife, me an' Ed both marryin' into the same tribe. Which it shows the Thompson intell'gence. Thar ain't a Thompson yet who don't need a guardeen constant.'

"After no end of discussion that a-way it's onderstood to be the gen'ral notion that Texas ought to bring Ed's orphan baby to Wolfville.

"'But s'ppose,' says Texas, 'that in spite of Ed wantin' me to cast my protectin' pinions over this yere infant, its mother's outfit, thinkin' mebbly to shake me down for some *dinero*, objects?'

"'In which case,' says Boggs, who's plumb interested, 'you sends for me, Texas, an' we mavericks it. You ain't goin' to let no sech callous an' onfeelin' gang as your wife's folks go 'round dictatin' about Ed's Annalinda child, be you, an' givin' you a stand-off? Which you're only tryin' to execoote Ed's dying behests.'

"It's settled final that Texas, ag'inst whatever opp'sition, has got to bring on Annalinda to us. That disposed of, it next comes nacherally up as a question how, when we gets Annalinda safe to Wolfville, she's goin' to be took care of.

"'Which the O. K. Restauraw won't do,' Texas says, lookin' anxious out of the tail of his eye at Enright an' Peets. 'Mind, I ain't hintin' nothin' ag'inst Missis Rucker, who hasn't got her Southwest equal at flapjacks, but I submits that for a plastic child that a-way, at a time when it receives impressions easy, to daily

witness the way she maltreats Rucker, is to go givin' that infant wrong idees of what's coming to husbands as a whole. I'm a hard man, gents; but I don't aim to bring up this yere Annalinda baby so that one day she's encouraged to go handin' out the racket to some onforchoonate sport, which my Laredo wife hands me.'

""Thar's reasons other than Missis Rucker,' Enright is quick to observe, 'why the O. K. House ain't the fittest place for infancy, an' any discussion of our esteemable hostess in them marital attitoodes of hers is sooperfluous. S'ppose we lets it go, without elab'ration, that the O. K. House, from nursery standp'int, won't do.'

"Cherokee thinks that mighty likely a good way'd be to have Annalinda live with Tutt an' Tucson Jennie.

"Peets shakes his sagacious head.

""Dave'll onderstand my p'sition to be purely scientific,' he says, glancin' across at Tutt, 'when I states that sech a move'd be a error. Tucson Jennie, as wife an' mother, is as fine as silk. But she's also a female woman, an' owns a papoose of her own. Thar's inborn reasons why woman, as sech, while sympathetic an' gen'rally speakin' plumb lovely, is oncapable onder certain circumstances of a squar' deal. In this yere business of babies, for example, thar's existed throughout the ages a onbridgable gulf in her eyes between her offspring an' other folks' offspring; an' while disclaiming all disloyalty to Tucson Jennie, I'm obleeged to say that as between Annalinda an' little Enright Peets, she wouldn't be cap'ble of a even break. Do I overstate the trooth,

Dave?'

'None whatever,' Tutt returns. 'What you discovers scientific, Doc, I learns more painfully as husband an' father. I fully agrees that when it comes to other folks' children no female mother can hold the onbiased scales.'

'Thar's French an' his wife?' chirps Nell, her elbow on the lay-out, an' her little round chin in her fist; 'thar's the Frenches, over to the corrals? French an' Benson Annie ain't got no children, an' they'd be pleased to death at havin' Annalinda.'

'But be they competent?' asks Texas, over whom a feelin' of se'f-importance is already beginnin' to creep like ivy on a wall. 'I don't want to be considered a carper, but as I sees it I'd be doin' less'n my dooty as a uncle if I fails to ask, Be them Frenches competent?'

'You'll have to rope up a nurse some'ers, anyhow, Texas,' Boggs puts in. 'Thar's dozens of them good-nached fat young senioritas among the Mexicans who'll do. The nurse would know her business, even if the Frenches don't.'

'Two nurses,' declar's Tutt. 'Bein' a father, I savvys the nurse game from start to finish. You'll need two; one to hold it, an' one to fetch it things.'

'But about them Frenches?' inquires Jack Moore. 'Ain't we goin' a little fast? Mebby they themselves has objections.'

'Which they'd look mighty well,' observes Cherokee, riflin' the deck an' snappin' it into the box plenty vicious, 'to go 'round objectin' after Nellie yere's done put 'em in nom'nation for this

trust.'

""Not that they'd reeject it haughty,' explains Moore; 'but, as Texas himse'f says, who's to know, they bein' mighty modest people, that they'll regyard themselves as comp'tent? The Frenches ain't had no practice, an' thar's nothin' easier than a misdeal about a youngone. Thar's a brainless mother saws her baby off on me over in Prescott one day, while she goes cavortin' into a store to buy a frock, an' you-all can go put a bet on it I'm raisin' the he'pless long yell inside of the first minute. This takin' charge of babies ain't no sech pushover as it looks. It's certainly no work for amatoors.'

""Thar's nothin' in them doubts, Jack,' Boggs chips in confidently. 'Even if them Frenches ain't had no practice, an' the nurses should fall down, thar's dozens of us who'll be ever at the elbow of that household; an' if in their ignorance they takes to bunglin' the play we'll be down on 'em in the cockin' of a winchester to give 'em the proper steer.'

""I reckon, Nellie,' says Texas, lookin' wistful across at Nell, 'that if some of the boys yere'll stand your watch as lookout, you'd put in a day layin' in a outfit of duds? You could be doin' it, you know, while I'm down in Laredo, treating with them hostiles for possession.'

""Shore,' an' Nellie smiles at the prospect. 'Which I'll jest go stampedin' over to Tucson for 'em, too. How old is Annalinda?'

""Texas gives Annalinda's age as three.

""She'll be four next fall,' says he; 'I remembers Ed writes me

she's born durin' the beef round-up.'

"'In that case,' comments Enright, 'she ought to stand about eight hands high. In clawin' together said raiment, Nellie, that'll give you some impression of size.'

"'An', Nellie,' continyoos Texas, 'my idee is you'll want to change in say a thousand dollars?'

"'Why, Texas, you talk like you're locoed. One hundred'll win out all the clothes she could sp'ile, w'ar or t'ar to pieces in a year.'

"'Shore,' coincides Tutt; 'take little Enright Peets. One hundred *pesos* leaves him lookin' like a circus.'

"'But Annalinda,' objects Texas doubtfully, 'is a She. It costs more for girls. That Laredo wife of mine'd blow in the price of sixty head of cattle, an' then allow she ain't half dressed.'

"'One hundred'll turn the trick,' Nell insists.

"'All that night we sets up discussin' an' considerin'. The more we talks the better we likes that Annalinda idee.

"'At sun-up, b'arin' the best wishes of all, Texas cinches a hull into his quickest pony, an' hits the trail for Tucson to take the railroad kyars for Laredo.

"'Which, onless they gives me more of a battle than I anticipates,' he remarks, as he pushes his feet into the stirrup, 'I'll be back by ten days.'

"'An', Texas,' says Boggs, detainin' him by the bridle rein, 'you-all beat it into that baby that I'm her Uncle Dan. It'll give you something to do comin' back.'

"'Which, jedgin' from what I goes through that day in

Prescott,' remarks Moore, mighty cynical, 'Texas'll have plenty to do.'

"Texas don't meet up with no partic'lar Laredo opposition, them relatives appearin' almost eager to give him Annalinda. One of 'em even goes the insultin' len'th of offerin' to split the expense, but withdraws his bluff when Texas threatens to brain him with a six-shooter.

"Boggs, hearin' of this Laredo willin'ness, can't onderstand it no how.

"'It's too many for me,' he says. 'If it's me, now, I'd have clung to that blessed baby till the cows come home. They must shore be deeficient in taste, them Laredo yahoos!'

"As exhibitin' how soon bein' moved into cel'bration as a uncle begins to tell on Texas he ups an' in the fullness of his vanity deecides, even before he arrives at Laredo, ag'inst the scheme which the camp's half laid out about the Frenches an' Annalinda, an' arranges to have a 'doby of his own. It's a blow to the Frenches, too, for since we notifies 'em, they has set their hearts on the racket.

"But Texas is immov'ble.

"'Ed's dyin',' says he, 'an' namin' me to be reespons'ble for Annalinda, creates a sityooation best met by me havin' a wickeyup of my own. I'm sorry to disapp'int, but after matoore reeflection, that a-way, I've conclooded to play a lone hand.'

"While he's away Texas goes projectin' 'round an' cuts out a couple of old black mammies from a day nursery over in Dallas,

an' brings 'em along. They an' Annalinda rides over from Tucson in the stage; but, bein' more familiar with the saddle, an' because he's better able tharfrom to soopervise an' go dictatin' terms to Monte, he himse'f comes on his pony.

"An', gents,' whines Monte, as, throwin' down the reins, he heads for the Red Light bar, 'between us he ain't the same Texas. That Annalinda child has shore changed him turrible. All the way from Tucson, when he ain't crowdin' up to the wheel to give orders to them Senegambians about how to hold or when to feed her, he's menacin' at me. That's why I'm three hours late. At rough places it looks like thar ain't no name mean enough for him to call me; an' once, when the front wheel jolts into a chuckhole an' Annalinda sets up a squall, he pulls a gun an' threatens in the most frenzied way to shoot me up. "You be more careful," he roars, "or I'll blow you plumb off your perch! Childhood, that a-way, is a fragile flower; an' if you figgers I'll set yere an', in the tender instance of my own pers'nal niece, see some booze-besotted drunkard break that flower short off at the stalk, I'll fool you up a whole lot." An' do you-all know,' Monte conclodes, almost with a sob, 'he never does let down the hammer of his .45 ag'in for most a mile.'

"Annalinda is plumb pretty. The whole camp goes her way like a landslide. Tucson Jennie approves of her—with reeservations, of course, in favor of little Enright Peets; Missis Rucker finds time to snatch a few moments, between feedin' us an' bossin' Rucker, to go see her every day; while, as for Nell, she's in an' out of

Texas' 'doby mornin', noon an' night to sech extents that half the time Cherokee ain't got no lookout, an' when he has it's Boggs.

"Nell brings over little Enright Peets, an' thar's no backin' away from it him an' Annalinda shore do constitoot a picture.

"Thar's a pa'r to draw to!' says Nell to Texas, her eyes like diamonds.

"Bein' romantic, like all girls, an' full of fancies that a-way, Nell indulges in playful specyoollations about Annalinda an' little Enright Peets gettin' married later on. Not that she intends anything, although Texas takes it plenty serious, which shows how his egotism is already workin' overtime.

"When Monte puts up them groans about how Texas is changed, we-all lays it to the complainin' habit which, on account of whiskey mebby, has got to be second nacher with him. He's always kickin' about something; an' so, nacherally, when he onbosoms himse'f of that howl about Texas, we don't pay no speshul heed. It ain't three days, however, before it begins to break on us that for once Monte's right. Texas has certainly changed. Thar's a sooperior manner, what you'd call a loftiness, about him, which is hard to onderstand an' harder to put up with. It gets to be his habit constant to reemark in a wearied way, as he slops out his drinks, that we-all'll have to excoose him talkin' to us much, because he's got cares on his mind, besides bein' played out on account of settin' up all night with Annalinda.

"Which she's sheddin' her milk teeth,' he'd say, 'an' it makes her petyoolant.'

"After which he'd turn away in dignified tol'ration, same as if we're too low an' dull to a'preeciate what he has to b'ar.

"Or, ag'in—an' always before the draw—he'd throw down his hand in a poker game, an' scramble to his feet, sayin':

""Heavens! I forgets about that Annalinda child!"

"An' with that he'd go skallyhootin' off into space, leavin' us planted thar with a misdeal on our hands, an' each one of us holdin' mebby better than aces-up, an' feelin' shore we could have filled. It's nothin' less'n awful the way he acts; an' that we lets him get away with it exhibits them sentiments of Christian charity which permeates our breasts.

"Thar's the way, too, he goes hectorin' at Boggs! Two occasions in partic'lar I reecalls; an' it's only Boggs' forbearance that hostil'ties don't ensoo. One time when Annalinda's out for a walk with her two old black mammies Boggs crosses up with the outfit an' kisses Annalinda. Wharupon Texas yells out from across the street, like he's been bit by a rattlesnake:

""Don't do that, Dan! You'll mebby give her something. In Mother Shrewsbury's "What Ails Babies and Why" it's laid down emphatic that you mustn't kiss 'em."

""But you kisses her," retorts Boggs.

""Me? But I'm her uncle. Besides, I only kisses her hands. Which I'll permit you-all to kiss her hands, Dan, if that'll do you. Only don't you go to overplay it none. Don't forget that hands is the limit, an' it's thar whar you gets off."

""Which I ain't none shore," says Boggs, who's some hurt,

as he's talkin' the thing over with Enright an' Cherokee in the Red Light—which I ain't none shore but Texas is right; only he oughtn't to throw out them rooles of health of his so plumb offensive. You'd have reckoned from the row he makes I'm eatin' Annalinda.'

"Another time Boggs gives Annalinda his six-shooter to play with, she havin' deemanded it with screams. Texas comes steamin' up.

"Dan,' he cries, grabbin' the weepion from Annalinda, 'sometimes I asks myse'f in all ser'ousness be you got common sense! Is this yere a snare you're settin' for this innocent child? Do you-all want her to blow her head plumb off?'

"But, Texas,' Boggs expostyoolates, 'thar ain't a chance. How's she goin' to cock that gun, an' the mainspring fifteen pounds resistance?'

"But she might drop it.'

"Which, if she does, it can't go off none; I sets the hammer between two shells on purpose.'

"Whoever's bringin' up this yere baby, you or me?' Texas deemands, as he tosses Boggs his gun. 'Please don't pass her no more artillery. If it's got to whar her existence is goin' to be a failure onless she's foolin' with a gun, I as her uncle preefers to furnish said hardware myse'f.'

"Shore, Boggs stands it, it's so evident Texas is onhinged.

"An' if you look at it straight it ain't no wonder, neither,' says Boggs, who's mighty forgivin' that a-way. 'It's apples to ashes if

you was to suddenly up an' enrich any of us with a niece like Annalinda, we-all in goin' crazy over her 'd give Texas kyards an' spades.'

"Texas, who's always readin' medicine books, likes to go bulgin' 'round eloocidatin' about measles an' scarlet fever an' whoopin' cough, an' what other maladies is allers layin' in wait to bushwhack infancy. At sech moments he's plenty speecious an' foxy, so's to trap us into deebates with him. Mebby it'll be about the mumps, an' what's to be done; an' then, after he gets us goin', he'll r'ar back the actchooal image of insult an' floor us with 'Mother Shrewsbury.' It ain't no overstatin' a sityooation to say he pursoos these yere tactics until he's the admitted pest of the camp, an' thar ain't one of us but would sooner see a passel of Apaches comin' than him. He can't confab two minutes about Annalinda but he grows so insultin' you simply has to hold onto your manhood by the scruff of the neck not to go for him.

"Even Enright ain't exempt. It comes out casyooally one evenin', as Texas goes layin' down the law about how he's r'arin' Annalinda, that Enright's mother was wont to sooth an' engage his infantile hours with a sugar-rag an' a string of spools. Which you should have shore seen Texas look at him! Not with reespect, mind you; not like he's heard anything worth while or interestin'. But like he's sayin' to himse'f, 'An' you sets thar offerin' yourse'f as a argyooment in favor of sugar-rags an' strings of spools! On the back of sech a warnin' you don't figger none I'll go givin' sugar-rags an' strings of spools to Annalinda, do you?' While he's

thinkin' this he grins that patronizin' it'd set your teeth on edge.

"Texas in a simple sperit of vain-glory'd take advantage of Tutt bein' a father that a-way to back him into a corner; an' then, ignorin' the rest of us as belongin' to the barb'rous herd, he'd insist on discussin' skunk oil as a remedy for croup. An' the worst of it is he finally has Tutt, who's bad enough before, gyратin' 'round, his addled nose to the sky in redoubled scorn of childless men. From the two sociablest sports in camp it gets so that the uncle in one an' father in the other so far supplants an' shoves aside the mere man in 'em that Job himse'f would have had to make a new record for meekness an' long sufferin' to get along with 'em. Which we-all suffers from both to that extent that when they does start to bombardin' each other the eepisode in some of its angles appeals to us as a welcome relief.

"Even Peets goes after Texas. It don't do no good. He's become that opinionated he ain't got no more reespect for Peets than for Monte. Texas mentions that Annalinda's got a ache some'ers, an' asks Peets what's his idee.

"'Thar's nothin' onder the firmament, Texas, the matter with that baby,' says Peets, 'but you. Which if you'd ever got to him as a yearlin' you'd a-killed Hercules himse'f! Quit yore fussin', an' give Annalinda a chance. Take a lesson from the cub coyote. Roll Annalinda out in the sand, an' let her scuffle. That's the way to bring a youngone up.'

"'Mother Shrewsbury don't agree with you,' says Texas. 'Also, thar's nothin' in them cub coyote claims of yours for r'arin'

children.'

"'Mother Shrewsbury,' retorts Peets, 'is nothin' but a patent med'cine outfit, which feeds an' fattens on sech boneheads as you.'

"'Excoose me, but scattered throughout that invalyooable work is the endorsements of doctors of divinity.'

"'Shore! Half the time a gold brick comes to you wrapped in a tract. All the same, Texas, the way you're carryin' on about Annalinda is fast bringin' your sanity into doubt.'

"Texas snorts his scorn at this, an' goes back to 'Mother Shrewsbury.'

"As I've already s'ggested, however, thar's a bitter drop in Texas' cup, an' Tutt's the drop. As a ondeniable father, Tutt can put it all over Texas or any other mere uncle whenever he feels like it, an' deep down in his heart Texas knows it. He struggles to hide the feelin', but any one can tell that the very sight of Tutt is wormwood to him.

"Likewise, Tutt fully ree'lizes his sooperiority, an' in no wise conceals the same. It comes as easy to Tutt as suckin' aiggs, he havin' had plenty of practice. Ever since little Enright Peets is born Tutt has conducted himse'f in a downhill manner towards all of us, an' been allowed to do so; as why not? This manner has become so much a part of Tutt that even after Texas inherits Annalinda an' sets up house for himse'f, while it makes the rest of us look up to him some, it don't he'p him none with Tutt. Tutt's too thoroughly aware of the difference between bein' a father an'

bein' a uncle. Likewise, he lets Texas see it at every twist in the trail.

"That time Nell takes to pa'rin' off little Enright Peets an' Annalinda, an' in a sperit of lightness speaks of how mebby some day they'll wed, she springs the notion on Texas, as stated, an' asks him what he thinks. Texas, who always has to have time to make up his mind about anything with Annalinda in it, is onable to say, first dash out of the box, whether he feels tickled or sore. He grows plenty solemn, as I mentions, grunts mighty elevated an' austere, an' mumbles about some things bein' a long shot an' a limb in the way, an' the wisdom of not crossin' a bridge till you gets to it.

"Ten minutes later, while he's still got Annalinda an' little Enright Peets on the skyline of his regyard, Texas comes upon Tutt, who's talkin' pol'tics to Armstrong. Armstrong has tossed off a few weak-minded opinions about a deefensive an' offensive deal with Russia, an' Tutt's ag'in it as solid as a sod house.

"'Yes, sir,' Tutt's saying; 'I'm ag'in any sech low alliance. I'd be ashamed to call myse'f a white man an' consent to sech open-eyed disgrace.'

"Texas turns white. It's among his deefects that he can't escape the feelin' that the whole world is always thinkin' an' talkin' about whatever he himse'f is thinkin' an' talkin' about. Overhearin' what Tutt says, he concloodes that Tutt's declarin' his sent'ments as to little Enright Peets marryin' Annalinda, an' is out to reeject all sech alliances as a disgrace to the Tutts. An' Texas foomes.

To be eat up by Tutt's sooperior station as a shore father is bad enough! An' now yere's Tutt, aggravatin' injury with insult! Which it's too much!

"Draw your weepion, Dave,' calls out Texas, bringin' his own gun to the front. 'Your bein' a father don't overawe me none, you bet! Likewise, if you're a Tutt I'm a Thompson, an' I've stood about all I'm going to.'

"Tutt, as a old experienced gun-player, sees at a glance that he ain't got no time to throw out skirmishers. For reasons onknown, but s'fficient, thar's Texas manoeoverin' to plug him. Wharupon, Tutt takes steps accordin', an' takes 'em some abrupt. So abrupt, in trooth, that Texas ain't got through oratin' before his nigh hind laig has stopped a bullet midway above the knee. Shore, he gets a shot at Tutt, but it goes skutterin' along in the sand a full foot to one side. Thar's only them two shots, Enright, Armstrong an' Jack Moore gettin' in between 'em, an' nippin' any further trouble in the bud.

"It's two hours later, an' Enright has come 'round to beat some sense into Texas.

"Accordin' to the Doc yere,' says Enright, as Peets ladles the invalid out a hooker of Old Jordan, 'that laig'll be so you can ride ag'in in a month. Pendin' which, while I don't preetend to savvy what's been goin' on between you an' Dave, nor what insults has been give or took, I no less tells you, Texas, that you're wrong.'

"As how?' growls Texas, gulpin' down the nosepaint.

"As to them airs which of late you dons. You know you

can't defend 'em none. Dave's been the sole onchallenged father in this yere outfit for crowdin' nigh five years; an' for you to come swaggerin' up, insistin' that he divide the pot with you an' you holdin' nothin' higher than a niece, nacherally exasperates him beyond endourance. Which you'd feel the same yourse'f in Dave's place.'

""But you don't onderstand, Sam. It's him connivin' round an' archin' his neck ag'inst them babies marryin' each other when they're growed up—it's that which sets my blood to b'ilin'. Wharever does Dave come in to get insultin' action at sech a prop'sition? It'll be a cold day when a Thompson ain't equal to a Tutt, an' I'll make that good while I can pull an' p'int a .45.'

""Which Dave,' interjecks Peets, as he goes cockin' up Texas' foot on a gooseha'r pillow, so's the shot laig'll feel it less—which Dave thinks right now, an' so informs me personal, that you-all starts to mussin' with him on account of pol'tics, an' him havin' been a reepublican back East. Armstrong b'ars him out, too.'

""Pol'tics?' gasps Texas, full of wonder. 'Whatever do I care about pol'tics? I shore ain't no nigger-lovin' reepublican. At the same time, I ain't no cheap hoss-thief of a democrat, neither, even if I does come from Texas. Why, Doc, takin' jedge an' opposin' counsel an' the clerk who records the decree, on down to that ornery auctioneer of a sheriff who sells up my stock at public vandoo for costs an' al'mony the time my Laredo wife grabs off her divorce, every stick-up among 'em's a democrat. An' while I don't know nothin' about pol'tics, an' never aims to, you can go

the limit on it I ain't nothin' them bandits be. Which I'd sooner be a prohibitionist!

"Enright an' Peets an' Texas keeps on discussin' until the misonderstandin' is laid bar', an' Texas is quick to admit that he's been mistook. Tutt, who's willin' an' ready, is brought in, an' the pa'r reeconciled.

"An', old man,' says Tutt, usin' both hands to shake with Texas, 'I'd on the level feel a heap better if it's me who gets busted in the laig.'

"Don't mention it, Dave,' returns Texas, who, now he reelizes what he's done, is deeply affected. 'I was plumb wrong; I sees it now. Also, if in the fullness of time Annalinda declar's in favor of weddin' little Enright Peets, I yereby binds myse'f to back them nuptials for a thousand head of steers.'

"Texas,' an' the water stands in Tutt's eyes, 'while it's the first I hears of sech a racket, yere's my hand that I'll go with you, steer for steer an' hoof for hoof.'

"What Peets calls 'the logic of the sityooation' p'int's to lick all around; an', as we-all drinks to the onclouded future of Annalinda an' little Enright Peets, Texas an' Tutt ag'in shakes mighty fervent for the second time."

XI

THE FUNERAL OF OLD HOLT

"That Turner person! Does he remain in Wolfville long?" The old cattleman repeated my question as though feeling for its bearings. "Well, he don't break no records. Which I should say now he sojourns with us mebby it's six months before he ups stakes an' pulls his freight back East. Oh, no; it ain't that any gent who's licensed to call himse'f a molder of public opinion, sech as Enright or Peets, objects to the Turner person's further presence none. Speakin' gen'ral, the heft of feelin' is in his favor. Not but what he has deeficiencies. It's no easy shot, offhand, to tell you preecisely whar this Turner person is camped in common esteem. Perhaps it's enough to say he's one of them parties who, while they don't excite your disapproval, is shore to keep you loaded with regrets.

"Ain't you met up frequent with that form of horned toad? Thar's nothin' you can lodge ag'inst 'em, nothin' at which a vig'lance committee can rope an' fasten; they're honest, well meanin', even gen'rous; an' yet thar they be, upholstered by nacher in some occult way with about the same chance of bein' pop'lar as a wet dog. Speakin' for myse'f, I feels sorry for these yere onforchoonate mavericks, condemned as they be at birth to go pirootin' from the cradle to the grave, meetin' everywhar

about the same welcome which awaits a polecat at a picnic.

"Thar's no predom'natin' element of evil in this Turner person. Which in his case the trouble swings an' rattles on the way he's built. His crownin' deefect, mighty likely, is that he's got one of them sidehill minds, an' what idees he does evolve can't find no foothold, but is robbed at the start of everything reesemblin' perm'nancy. I watches his comin's in an' goin's out for months on eend, an' I'm yere to say—at the same time ascribin' to him no ill intentions—that onder all condition an' on all o'casions he's as onreli'ble as a woman's watch.

"About that weddin' he goes east to consummate?

"Which it looks like, speakin' mod'rate, he quits winner. He travels back to Sni-a-bar as tame as tabby cats in persooance with Enright's commands, an', once thar, old man Parks an' the rest of 'em whistles him through the marital chute a heap successful. When he shows up among us, his blushin' Peggy bride on his arm, he's wearin' all the brands an' y'ear marks of a thor'ughly married man; to sech degrees, indeed, as renders Texas oncomfortable.

"'It recalls,' says Texas, 'them honeymoon days I passed with my Laredo wife before she wins out that divorce. It's like a icicle through my heart to look at him,' he goes on, aloudin' to the Turner person an' the fatyoous fog of deelight he's evident in. 'Thar he is, like a cub b'ar, his troubles all before him, an' not brains enough onder his skelp-lock to a'preciate his awful p'sition.'

"'Why, Texas,' remonstrates Nell as, the turn comin' trey-nine,

she picks a stack of bloos off the trey an' puts it in the check rack, 'you talks of wedlock as though that sacrament's a brace. Plenty of folks has beat the game. Thar's Tutt an' Tucson Jennie.'

"Them nuptials of Dave's an' Jennie's, Nell,' returns Texas, shakin' his head a heap gloomy, 'ain't far enough to the r'ar to afford a preecedent. Wait till Dave wakes up.'

"Till Dave wakes up?' says Boggs, who's busy at the lay-out, an' has jest planted a stack of reds coppered in the big squar'. 'Sech pess'mism, Texas, is reedic'lous. Bein' married that a-way, I takes it, is somethin' like walkin' a tightrope. It reequires care, but it can be did. To be shore, if anything happens, you're in for a jo-darter of a jolt. Still, the resk don't render the feat imposs'ble, an' a brave man disreyards it.'

"That's whatever,' comments Nell, as, the king fallin' to win, she draws down Boggs's reds.

"Thar's no chill on the reception we confers on the Turner person an' his Peggy bride. Monte has orders, in case they're aboard, to onlimber his shotgun a mile or two outside of camp, so's we gets notice an' is not caught off our gyard. For once the old drunkard is faithful to his trust, an' when we hears him whangin' away with both bar'ls, we turns out, as they say in Noo York, *en masse*. Every gent empties the six chambers of his gun as the stage pulls up, an' the Turner person he'ps out his Peggy bride into the center of a most joyful foosilade. We couldn't have done more if she's the Queen of Sheba.

"The Turner person an' his Peggy bride is in right from the

go. Missis Rucker declar's that the bride's a lady; Nell proclaims her as 'shore corn-fed,' while Tucson Jennie allows she's a whole lot too good for sech a jack-rabbit of a husband as she gets.

"Her beauty?

"Which you couldn't say it's calc'lated to blind.

"For mere loveliness she ain't a marker to Nell. To be frank, it's somethin' more'n a simple question that a-way if she splits even with Tucson Jennie. As for Missis Rucker, that matron bein' past her yooth ain't properly speakin' in the runnin', an' to go comparin' her with girls would be injustice.

"Once landed, an' havin' escaped from that ovation we prepar's, the Turner person an' his Peggy bride moves into the wickeyup okyoopied former by Cash Box Billie an' Missis Bill, an' opens up their domestic game. Hearin' nothin' to the contrary, no howls of anguish from him, no yelps of complaint from her, it's safe to say that in what joys is supposed to attend the connoobyal state, they coppers all of them loogubrious forebodin's of Texas, an' gets at least as good as a even break.

"Old man Parks back at Sni-a-bar?

"It looks like the Turner person, him bein' nacherally timid, exaggerates the perils which lurks in that aged cimmaron. Leastwise, old Parks don't offer no voylance to him, neither at the weddin' nor later. Some waifword does come creepin' along that durin' the cer'mony two of the guests has to hold old Parks, an' that he's searched for weepens by the preacher before ever said divine consents to turn his game at all. Which I'm free to

say, however, I never lends no credence to them yarns.

"The Turner person, now he's established as a married gent an' a cit'zen in full standin', gives himse'f horn an' hide to business that a-way. He's as prompt about openin' his coffin emporium as ever is Black Jack in throwin' wide the portals of the Red Light. Once thar, he stays until the evenin' lamps is lit, layin' for a corpse to use his new hearse on.

"Also, the Turner person has hopes: an' equally also he ain't without foundations wharon to build. That's an uncle of Armstrong who has come totterin' into camp, as he says himse'f, to die. Likewise, it's the onbiased view of every gent in the outfit that this rerelative of Armstrong possesses reasons. He's a walkin' wreck. Peets concedes that he's got every malady ever heard of, besides sev'ral as to which science is plumb in the dark.

"Nacherally, not alone the Turner person, but the public at large, figgers that this yere uncle'll shore furnish employment for the hearse, an' at no distant day. But it looks like that onmitigated invalid is out to test our patience. Mornin' after mornin' he comes scufflin' into the Red Light on two canes to get his matootinal nosepaint, an' this he keeps up until it begins to look like malice. Ree'lizin', too, the pecooliar int'rest we-all is bound to take in him onder the circumstances, he puts on airs, an' goes by us when he meets us as coldly haughty as a paycar by a tramp. Or, ag'in, he's prone to grin at us plenty peevish an' malev'lent, an' this he does partic'lar if the Turner person's hoverin' round.

"Which I shore deespises to keep you boys waitin', he'd say,

with a cacklin', aggravatin' laugh; 'but the way I feels it'd be preματοore to go greasin' up the hubs of that hearse.'

"Sech taunts he flings forth constant, ontill he comes mighty near drivin' Boggs frantic.

"'It seems,' says Boggs, 'like simply livin' ain't good enough for that old hoss thief. To be wholly happy he's obleeged to make his stay on earth a source of mis'ry to other folks. Which he ought to've been in his tomb ten years ago. Every day he draws his breath is so much velvet; an', instead of bein' thankful, all he thinks of is makin' mean reemarks an' sayin' bitin' things. He'll keep on till some over-provoked sport bends a six-shooter on his insultin' head.'

"Weeks of waitin' goes by. Armstrong's old badger of a uncle hangs on, an' no outside corpse falls in, Arizona, as you doubtless savvys, bein' scand'lously healthy that a-way. So far, too, from any el'g'ble subject arrivin' in the usual way, the town never experiences sech a period of rippleless an' onruffled peace. As showin', too, how far the public is willin' to go to he'p along the play, I need only mention that on two o'casions Boggs leaves out his best pony all night, himse'f sprawled in behind a mesquite bush with his winchester, hopin' some Mexican'll prove weak enough to want it. All is in vain, however. Thar we be, framed up to give a fooner from which Cochise County could date time, an' nothin' in the line of raw mater'al wharwith to pull it off. Which I never sees the gen'ral feelin' more exasperated. It's as though in a sperit of sarcasm our destinies is mockin' us.

"The Turner person, in the face of this yere disheartenin' idleness, takes refooge in a trottin' hoss, which form of equine is as strange to us as camelopards. Shore, we has our runnin' races, pony ag'inst pony, a quarter of a mile dash; but that's as far as we goes.

"The Turner person says that for himse'f he prefers trottin' races, an' after seein' him ride once I shore quits marvellin' at that pref'rence. You could no more keep him on a pony than you could keep him on a red-hot stove. We ties a roll of blankets across the horn of the saddle, an' organizes him with buckin' straps besides, an' in the face of all them safegyards he rolls off that hoss same as you'd expect some chambermaid to do.

"Accordin' to the Turner person, trottin' races is the sport of kings, an' actin' on this feelin' he sends back East for a hoss. He drives it in one evenin' behind the stage, an' we-all goes over to the corral to size it up. It's consid'rable of a hoss, too, standin' three hands higher than the tallest of our ponies. Also, it has a ewe neck an' lib'ral legs. It's name is 'Henry of Navarre,' but we sees at once that sech'll never do, an' re-christens him 'Boomerang Bob.'

"When this hoss arrives Boggs gets excited, an' him an' the Turner person lays out a track all around town like a belt. Boggs allows it's a mile long, or near enough, an' after a passel of Greasers cl'ars away the cactus an' mesquite an' Spanish bayonet, the Turner person hooks up Boomerang to a mountain wagon, an' sends him 'round an' 'round an' 'round at a pace that'd make

your eyes stick out so far you could see your sins. Old Boomerang is shore some eevanescent! When that Turner person shakes the reins an' yells 'Skoot!' you could hear him whizz. On sech occasions he's nothin' short of a four-laigged meteor, an' looks forty feet long passin' a given p'int.

"The big drawback is that thar ain't no quadrooped anywhar about to race Boomerang ag'inst. Leastwise, we don't hear of none for goin' on some months, an' when we do it's as far away as Albuquerque. Some consumptive tenderfoot, it looks like, has got a trottin' hoss over some'ers between Albuquerque an' Socorro, sech at least is the word which comes to us.

"When this pulmonary sport hears of Boomerang, which he does by virchoo of the overblown boastin's of the Turner person, he announces that his hoss, Toobercloses, can beat him for money, marbles or chalk. Then comes a season of bluff an' counter-bluff, the pulmonary party insistin' that the Turner person bring Boomerang up to Albuquerque, an' the Turner person darin' the pulmonary sport to fetch his 'dog,' as he scornfully terms Toobercloses, down to Wolfville.

"It's to be said for the Turner person that he'd have shore took Boomerang, an' gone romancin' off to Albuquerque, lookin' for that weak-lunged reprobate an' his hoss, only sent'ment is plumb ag'inst it. We-all don't propose to lose the camp the advantages of that contest, an' so to put an eend to discussion, we urges upon the Turner person that we-all'll shore kill him if he tries. This yere firmness gives us the pref'rence over Albuquerque, an' the

pulmonary sport allows final that he'll come to Wolfville, but don't say when.

"While events is thus a-whirl, an' the camp's all keyed up to concert pitch over the comin' race between Boomerang an' Toobercloses, the long-hoped for comes to pass an' the Turner person, as fooneal director, receives his 'nitial call. Over in Red Dog is a party named Holt. He ain't standin' none too high, him havin' married a Mexican woman, an' even them Red Dogs has the se'f-respect to draw the social line at Mexicans. One sun-up, however, she goes trapesin' across the line to visit her people down near Casa Grande, an' she never does come back. It looks like she's got enough of old Holt, which to gents who knows him don't go trenchin' on the strange.

"The long suit of this yere Mexican wife of old Holt's is thinkin' she's sick, she holdin' that she's got as many things the matter with her as is preyin' on Armstrong's uncle. When she breaks out of the corral an' goes stampedin' off to her tribe, she leaves behind mebbly it's a hundred bottles or more of patent med'cine, rangin' all the way from arnica to ha'r dye.

"Followin' her flight that a-way old Holt goes to takin' an account of stock by way of seein' what she cabbages an' what she leaves, an' the first flash he blunders upon this yere bushel or so of drugs. He's too froogal to throw 'em away, old Holt is, bein' plumb pars'monious that a-way, an' after revolvin' the play in his mind for a spell, he ups an' swallows 'em to save 'em.

"No one ever does figger out jest what individyooal med'cine

bumps old Holt off that time, an' thar's no sayin' whether it's the arnica or the ha'r dye or some other deecoction, or simply the whole clan-jamfrey in comb'nation. Not that any gent goes to reely delvin' for the trooth, the gen'ral interest pitchin' camp contentedly on the simple fact that old Holt's been shore put over the jump. Doc Peets? Old Holt's packed in before the Doc's half way to Red Dog. Shore; some of them bottled med'cines is as ack'rate an' as full of action as a six-shooter.

"Of course we-all is pleased to think the Turner person, as fooner director, ain't been born to bloom onseen, but the rift in the floote is that the corpse belongs to Red Dog. Old Holt ain't ours none, an' from whatever angle we looks at it it appears like Wolfville ain't goin' to get a look in.

"It's at pinches sech as this that Enright shows his genius for leadership. While all of us is lookin' bloo, to see how Red Dog beats us to it for our own hearse, our fertile old war chief is ribbin' up a game for pop'lar relief.

"The Red Dog del'gation, headed by the Red Dog chief, comes over to round up the Turner person an' his hearse to entomb old Holt. At their showin' up Enright begins to onkiver his diplomacy.

"Which we symp'thizes with you-all in your bereevement, gents,' says he to the Red Dog bunch, 'but it's ag'inst our rooles for this yere hearse to go outside of camp.'

"Ain't you actin' some niggardly about that hearse?' asks the Red Dog chief coldly.

"Not niggardly, only proodent. Death cometh as a thief in the night, speshully in Arizona, an' we-all'd be a fine band of prairie dogs to go lendin' our only hearse all over the territory, an' mebby have it skallyhootin' 'round som'ers up about the Utah line jest when we needs it at home. However, as refootin' your onjest charge of bein' niggards, if you-all Red Dogs wants to bring deceased over yere, our entire lay-out is at your disposal. Allowin' you can find your own sky-pilot, we stands ready to not only let you have our hearse, but furnish you likewise with moosic from the Bird Cage Op'ry House, cha'rs from the dance hall, the Noo York store to hold serv'ces in, to say nothin' to considerin' you-all as our guests from soda to hock, with every Red Light thing said term implies.'

"'Also,' observes Peets, who, from his place at Enright's elbow, is ridin' circumspect herd on the play—'also, we presents you-all, without money an' without price, a sepulcher in our buryin' ground on Boot Hill.'

"This yere last provokes a storm of protest, the Red Dog del'gation takin' turns exposchoolatin'. But Enright an' the Doc stands ca'mly pat.

"'Which now,' says the Red Dog chief, an' his tones is bitter—which now I begins to ketch onto your plot. You savvys as well as I do that old Holt don't ought to go into your pile at all. He belongs in our pile—to Red Dog's pile. An' let me reemind you intriguers that Red Dog owns its own cem'tery over in Headboard Hollow, an' ain't askin' graveyard odds of any outfit

west of the Spanish Peaks. This is a fine idee,' he concloods, turnin' sneerin'ly to his cohorts; 'not content with tryin' to grab off these yere obs'quies, they're brazenly manoeoverin' to purloin the corpse.'

"At these contoomelius reemarks Boggs, Tutt, Moore an' Cherokee takes to edgin' to the fore, but Enright reepresses 'em with a admon'tory wave of his hand.

"'Gents,' he says, to the Red Dog hold-ups, 'as vis'tors, even though se'f-invited, you're entitled to courtesy. But thar's a limit goes with courtesy even, an' you-all mustn't press it.'

"This last sets the Red Dog outfit back on its apol'getic ha'nches, an' after a few more footile but less insultin' bluffs, they retires to consult. The wind-up is that they yields to Enright's terms, incloosive of Boot Hill, an' after libatin' at the Red Light they canters off to freight over old Holt, so's to be ready to hold the fooneral next day.

"As I looks back to them prep'rations thar's no denyin' that as a fooneral director the Turner person proves himse'f plumb cap'ble of gettin' thar with the goods. Once he receives the word, everything goes off as measured an' steady as the breathin' of a sleepin' child. Even the Red Dog chief is moved to softer views, as gents frequent be followin' the eighth drink, an' whispers to Enright, confidenshul, that when all's in the only thing he deplores is that old Holt is bein' planted on Boot Hill instead of in Headboard Hollow. At this Enright, meetin' the Red Dog chief half-way, whispers back that later, if Red Dog desires the same,

we'll jump in an' move old Holt a whole lot to Headboard Hollow. At this lib'ral'ty the Red Dog chief squeezes Enright's hand a heap fraternal, an' chokes with emotion. He sobs out that this is the one thing wanted to reestore them former friendly reelations between the camps.

"The procession is one of the most exhil'ratin' pageants ever seen in the Southwest. At the head is the ploomed hearse, old Holt inside, the Turner person on the box. Next comes the stage coach, Monte drivin', an' Nell, Missis Rucker, Tucson Jennie, little Enright Peets, the Turner person's Peggy bride an' other ladies inside. The balance of us attends on our ponies, ridin' two an' two.

"As we're waitin' for the preacher sharp, who's goin' in the stage, to get tucked in among the ladies, a hollow-chested, chalk-cheeked, sardonic-lookin', cynical-seemin' bandit, drivin' a lean-laigged hoss to one of them spid'ry things they calls a quill-wheel, comes pirootin' along over to one side of the fooneral cortege at a walk. He's p'intin' in from over Red Dog way, but I savvys from the wonderin' faces of them Red Dog sports that he's as new to them as us. The cynical bandit skirts along our procession until he's abreast of the hearse. Then he pulls up, we-all not havin' had the word to start as yet.

"The Turner person has hooked up old Boomerang to the hearse, so as to confer on this his first fooneral all the style he can. Havin' halted his quill-wheel, the hectic bandit, coughin' a little, p'ints his whip at Boomerang an' says to the Turner person:

"Is this the skate you're tryin' to match ag'inst my Toobercloses?"

"Grizzly b'ars an' golden eagles!" exclaims Boggs, who's ridin' next to me, 'if he ain't that lungier from Albuquerque!' An' Boggs pulls out to the left, an' crowds up towards the hearse for a closer look.

"As fooneral director,' the Turner person replies to the hectic, quill-wheel bandit, whom he fathoms instantly—'as fooneral director, I must preeserve the decorums. But only you wait, you onblushin' outlaw, ontill I've patted down the sods on old Holt yere, an' I'll race you for every splinter you own.'

"That's all right,' retorts the hectic bandit, givin' another little cat-cough. 'Which you needn't get your ondertakin' back up none. Meanwhile, I'll nacherally string along with these obs'quies, so's to be ready to talk turkey to you when you're through.'

"Enright gives the signal an', with Boomerang an' the hearse at the head, the procession lines out at a seedate walk for the grave.

"Boot Hill's been located about a mile an' a half off, so as to give our foonerals doo effect. As we pushes for'ard, everything mighty solemn, the hectic bandit, keepin' a few feet off to one side, walks his hoss parallel with the hearse. Every now an' then his hoss, makin' a half bolt as if he's been flicked by the lash, would streak ahead a rod or two like a four-laigged shadow. Then he'd pull him down to a walk, an' sort o' linger along ontill the hearse comes up ag'in. He does this a half dozen times; an' all in

a hectorin' sperit that'd anger the pulseless soul of a clam.

"One way an' another it stirs up the feelin's of old Boomerang, who's beginnin' to bite at the bit an' throw his laigs some antic an' permiscus. The Turner person himse'f acts like a party who's holdin' onto his eemotions by the tail, so as to keep 'em from breakin' loose. His face is set, his elbows squar'd, an' he's settin' up on his hearse as stiff an' straight as a rifle bar'l, lookin' dead ahead between old Boomerang's two y'ears. So it goes on for likely half a mile, the hectic bandit seesawin' an' pesterin' an' badgerin' old Boomerang, now dartin' ahead, now slowin' back to let the hearse ketch up.

"As I yeretofore explains, the Turner person ain't arranged mental to entertain more'n one idee at a time. My own notion is that as the hectic bandit, with Toobercloses, commences to encroach more an' more upon his attention, he loses sight that a-way of old Holt an' the fooneral. Whatever the valyoo of this as a theery, thar comes a moment, about a mile from Boot Hill, when, as sudden as the crack of a rifle, away goes Boomerang with the rush of a norther. Toobercloses ain't a second behind. Thar they be, Toobercloses ag'inst Boomerang, quill-wheel ag'inst hearse, old Holt inside, racin' away to beat a royal flush.

"As hearse an' quill-wheel go t'arin' down the trail Monte gets the fever, an' sets to pourin' the buckskin into his three span, an' yellin' like forty Apaches. The six hosses goes into their collars like lions, an' the stage takes to rockin' an' boundin' an' bumpin' in clost pursoote of the hearse. Nor be we-all on ponies left

any behind, you bet. We cuts loose, quirt an' spur, an' brings up the r'ar in a dust-liftin', gallopin' half-moon. It's ondoubted the quickest-movin' fooneal that ever gets pulled off.

"Old Holt, an' put it lightest, is a one hundred an' eighty pounder, an' the hearse itse'f is as heavy as a Studebaker wagon. From standp'int of weight pore old Boomerang ain't gettin' a squar' deal. Which the old hero ain't got no notion of bein' beat, though. He's all heart an' bottom; an', game?—bald hornets is quitters to him!

"The load begins to tell at last, though, an' inch by inch Toobercloses starts to nose Boomerang out. It's then the flood-gates is lifted. Nell, head out of one of the coach windows, starts screamin' to Boomerang; Missis Rucker's got her sunbonnet out of another, expressin' her opinion of the hectic bandit an' Toobercloses; Tucson Jennie is shoutin' for Dave to come an' rescue her; the Turner person's Peggy is shriekin' with hysterics; the preacher sharp—who's tryin' to get at Monte—is talkin' scriptoorally but various, while little Enright Peets is contreebutin' his small cub-coyote yelps of exultation to the gen'ral racket.

"Back among us riders the bets is flyin' hither an' yon as thick as swallow birds at eventide, we offerin' hundreds on Boomerang an' them Red Dogs backin' Toobercloses. It's as the tech of death to the Wolfville heart when we sees Toobercloses slowly surgin' to the fore.

"Half-way to Boot Hill Boggs spurs up on the nigh flank of

Boomerang.

"Yere's whar we puts a little verve into this thing!" he roars; an' pullin' his guns he begins shakin' the loads out of 'em like roman candles.

"Wolfville an' Red Dog, every gent follows Boggs' example. It sounds like a battery of gattlings, the whole punctchoated by a whirlwind of 'Whoops!' that'd have backed a war party of Apaches over a bluff. They almost hears us in Tucson.

"Old Boomerang reesponds noble to Boggs's six-shooters. They was the preeceise kind of encouragement he's been waitin' for, an' onder their inspiration he t'ars by Toobercloses like a thrown lance. We sweeps on to Boot Hill, makin' a deemoniac finish, old Boomerang leadin' by the len'th of the hearse.

"Nobody's hurt, onless you wants to count that hectic bandit from Albuquerque. After he's beat cold, Toobercloses gets tangled up accidental in a mesquite bush, the quill-wheel swaps eends with itse'f, an' the hectic Albuquerque bandit lands head on in a bunch of cactus. He's shore a spectacle; an' Peets says private that for a while thar's hopes he'll die. As for the parson, who's the sorest divine in Arizona, he allows that the only bet he ever knows prov'dence to overlook is not breakin' the hectic bandit's neck.

"Nacherally, the Red Dogs feels some grouchy at the way things has gone, an' while they gives up their orig'nal thought of lynchin' the hectic bandit, they're plenty indignant at him for turnin' old Holt's fooneral into a hoss race. It ain't old Holt that's

frettin' 'em so much as that they feels like it's a disgrace on their camp.

"This yere Red Dog feelin' prodooces a onlooked for effect. They goes gloomin' an' glowerin' 'round, an' talkin' to themselves to sech a hostile extent it ups an' scares the Turner person. Plumb timid by nacher, he gets afraid the Red Dogs' indignation'll incloode him final, an' eend by drawin' their horns his way. It's no use tryin' to ca'm him. Argyooment, reemonstrance, even a promise to protect him with our lives, has no effect. The Turner person, in a last stampede of his nerve, is for dustin' back to Missouri—him an' his Peggy bride. He says it's more peaceful, more civ'lized thar, which shore strikes us as a heap jocose. In the end, however, we has to let him go.

"The hearse?

"We keeps the hearse, that an' Boomerang; Armstrong's uncle buys 'em. He says he don't aim to be sep'rated none from the only hearse within a hundred miles, an' him on the verge of the grave.

"'Which my only reason for livin' now,' says he, 'is to lac'rate Boggs, an' even that as a pastime is beginnin' to pall.'

"What time does Boomerang make?

"No one preetends to hold a watch. Thar's one thing, though, which looks like he was shore goin' some. Tutt on the way back picks up a dead jack-rabbit, that's been run over by the hearse."

XII

SPELLING BOOK BEN

"Which it's as you states." The old cattleman assumed the easy attitude of one sure of his position. "Reefinement, that a-way, will every now an' then hit the center of the table in manner an' form most onexpected. Thar's Red Dog. Now whoever do you reckon would look for sech a oncooth outfit to go onbeltin' in one reefined racket? An' yet thar's once at least when Red Dog shows it's got its silken side.

"An', after all, mebby I'm too narrow about Red Dog. Thar's times when I fears that drawn aside by prejewdyce I misjudges Red Dog utter, an' takes for ignorant vulgar'ty what comin' down to cases is merely noise. It's the whiskey they drinks, most likely. They're addicted to a kind of cat-bird whiskey over thar, which sets 'em to whistlin' an' chirpin' an' twitterin' an' teeterin' up an' down on the conversational bough, to sech a seemin'ly empty-headed extent it's calc'lated to mislead the ca'mest intellects into a belief that the c'rrect way to deal with Red Dog is to build one of these yere stone corrals 'round it, call it a loonatic asylum, an' let it go at that.

"Wolfville's whiskey?"

"We-all confines ourselves to Valley Tan an' Willow Run an' Old Jordan, all lickers which has a distinct tendency to make a

gent seedate, an' render him plumb cer'monious. I in no wise exaggerates when I avers that I freequent cuts the trail of parties who, after the tenth or mebbly it's the 'leventh drink across the Red Light bar, waxes that punctillious they even addresses a measly Mexican as 'Sir.'

"Recurrin' to Red Dog, that silken occasion which I has in mind occurs when, proceedin' without invitation an' wholly as volunteers, they strings up the book-keep sharp who bumps off Spellin' Book Ben. Thar's a brief moment when said action runs a profound risk of bein' misconstrooed into becomin' the teemin' source of complications. You see we ain't lookin' for nothin' in the way of a play from Red Dog more del'cate than the butt of a six-shooter, an' it ain't until the Red Dog chief himse'f onlimbers in planations, an' all plenty loocid, that we ketches fully on.

"Red Dog goes further an' insists on payin' over what money they wagers, an' all as honorable as though that contest which they bets on goes to a showdown. Enright won't have it, though, none whatever; an' what with one side heatedly profferin' an' the other coldly refoosin', it looks for a time like thar's goin' to be feelin'. Friction is averted, however, when Peets—who's allers thar with the s'lotion to any tangle—recommends that Red Dog an' Wolfville chip in half an' half conj'intly, to buy a tombstone for Spellin' Book, with a inscription kyarved tharon, the same to read:

TO
THE MEMORY OF

SPELLING BOOK BEN.
PREFERRING DEATH TO THE
APPEARANCE OF IGNORANCE,
HE DIED
A MARTYR TO LEARNING AND
BRAVELY
DEFENDING A RIGHTFUL ORTHOGRAPHY.
THE LANGUAGE MOURNS
HIS LOSS.

"Which we simply aims by this yere hangin',' says the Red Dog chief in makin' them explanations, the same bein' addressed to Enright, 'to save you-all from a disagree'ble dooty.'

"As how?' deemands Enright, who's a heap deefensive by instinct, an' never puts down his stack while the kyards is in the hands of the dealer.

"As how to wit,' returns the Red Dog chief. 'Troo, this book-keep malefactor ain't by rights no shore-enough Red Dogger, seein' he's a importation of the express company's an' at best or worst no more'n a sojourner within our gates. But, considerin' how he trails in yere this evenin' in our company, we feels respons'ble. Wharfore, allowin' that mebbly—you-all standin' towards us visitors, that a-way, in the light of hosts—your notion of hospital'ty gets its spurs tangled up in your deelib'rations so it impedes the march of jestic, we intervenes. Which I shorely trusts that no gent present regyards Red Dog as that ontaught as to go cuttin' in on what's cl'arly a alien game onasked. Red Dog ain't quite that exyooberantly bumptious, not to say croodly gay.

It's only to relieve the shoulders of you-all from a burden that we strings said offender up.'

"*Bueno!*" replies Enright, followin' a dignified pause, like he's weighin' the Red Dog chief's eloocidations. 'A gent, onless his hand is crowded by some p'int of honor, allers takes the word of a fellow gent. In view of which, the execootion you pulls off is yereby accepted as kindly meant, an' as sech is kindly took. I'm preepared on behalf of Wolfville to regyard the same as performed in a sperit of del'cate courtesy. Whatever, Doc, do you-all say?'

"Like yourse'f, Sam,' says Peets, 'I grasps an' a'preeciates the Red Dog attitooode. Also, I holds that the business thus constrooded is calc'lated to cement relations between the two camps which, havin' their roots in mutyooal esteem, is shore to b'ar froote in fraternal affection.'

"The Doc then goes on an' onbends in flatterin' asshorances that nothin' could be finer worded than the Red Dog chief's oration, onless it's Enright's reply.

"As a jedge of diction,' he concloods, 'an' a lover of proper speakin', I'm onreserved in the view that the statements of both ought to be preeserved as spec'mens of English ondeefiled.'

"Thar havin' been talk enough, an' Enright an' Peets contendin' that it's Wolfville's treat, both sides goes weavin' over to the Red Light an' onbends in quite a frolic.

"It'd shore been better if we had first cut down the corpse, an' tharby dodged the wrath of Missis Rucker. It's certainly a

oversight. Bar that single incident, thar arises nothin' to mar the good feelin' which everywhar preevails. Forchoonately, that don't occur none ontill noon next day; an' by that time the Red Dog folks has all gone home, leastwise all who can go without fallin' out of the saddle. Which if them Red Dogs is present, an' able to form opinions, them intemp'rate exhibitions of Missis Rucker, an' what she says an' threatens ag'inst us, speshully Enright, would have mortified us to death.

"As showin' the vagaries of the female mind, Missis Rucker seelects that lynchin' as a topic at chuck time, an' she shore does carry on scand'lous. We ain't but jest filed into the dinin' room, when she t'ars loose at Enright like a cyclone in a calico dress. Son, she certainly does curry our old Lycurgus frightful!

"What does Enright do?

"Whatever can he do more'n mootely arch his back, same as a mule in a storm of hail, an' stand it?

"When Missis Rucker has done freed her feelin's, an' got them reecrim'nations dealt down to the turn, she shakes a finger onder Enright's subdooed nose, an' fulm'nates a warnin'.

"I tells you once before, Sam Enright,' she says, 'an' I tells you now ag'in, that you-all drunkards is either goin' to cease pesterin' me the way you does, or I'm bound I'll make some among you plenty hard to locate. Now don't you go tellin' me nothin',' she shouts, as Enright starts to say somethin'; 'don't go harrowin' me up with none of your fabrications. It's nothin' but your egreegious pompos'ty that a-way, an' a gen'ral deesire to put on dog an' lord

it over us pore females with meals to cook an' water to draw, which sets you-all to hangin' parties to the windmill whar they're plumb in the way. An' all after me takin' my hands out of the dough, too, the time you Stranglers puts that B'ar Creek Stanton over the jump, an' goin' in person to the stage corral to p'int out a beam which is a heap better adapted.'

"'But, ma'am,' expostyoolates Enright, 'you've done followed off the wrong wagon track entire. It ain't us none; it's them Red Dog savages. So far as Wolfville's concerned, him bein' swung to the windmill, that a-way, is plumb fortooitous.'

"'Jest the same,' returns Missis Rucker, who's merciless an' refooses to be softened, 'you better take heed a heap. This once I lets you get away with that Red Dog crawl-out. But if ever I finds another party suspended to the windmill so's I can't get no water, thar's a passel of sots, of whom you, Sam Enright, is the onregen'rate chief, who'll shore get their grub fortooitous.'

"'Peets, at this yere crisis, jogs Enright's elbow, by way of signin' up to him to draw out; an', except from her domineerin' over Rucker more'n common for a couple of days, she ceases her demonstrations.

"'Not but what Missis Rucker has some rights on her side. What with feedin' forty of us folks three times a day, she's got a lot on her mind; an' to find some sooperfluous sport hangin' in her way, when she goes to fill her bucket, necessar'ly chafes her.

"'An' yet the Stranglers is up ag'inst it, too. Hangin' a culprit, dooly convicted, is a public game; an' the windmill's the

only piece of public property in sight, besides bein' centrally sityooated. Also, thar's nothin' in that corral bluff of Missis Rucker's. The beam she alloodes to ain't big enough, an' is likewise too low.

"Boggs, who sympathizes with Missis Rucker, once when we has a hoss thief we don't need on our hands, su'gests we rope him up to the sign over Armstrong's Noo York store. But thar's rival trade interests, an' Enright fears it'll be took invidious as a covert scheme for drawin' custom to Armstrong's emporium.

"'Personally,' says Enright, 'I favors Dan's idee. But since Armstrong's a member of the committee, you-all sees yourselves that for us to go execootin' culprits on his sign that a-way, the direct effects of which distinguishes him an' booms his game, would shore breed jealousies.'

"'How would it do,' asks Texas, 'if we takes them marts seeriatim, an' one after another yootilizes all their signs?'

"'With doo deference to Texas,' interjecks Tutt, 'this swingin' round from sign to sign, with deeds of jestic, is a heap likely to subtract from the deterrent effects. It's better we stick to the windmill, an' takes chances on beddin' them resentments of Missis Rucker's down.'

"'That's all right for you, Dave,' retorts Boggs; 'you're a married man, an' eats at home. You wouldn't feel so plumb gala about quietin' Missis Rucker if you-all was obleeged diurnal to depend upon that easily exasperated matron for your *frijoles*, same as us. Tucson Jennie's the best cook in Cochise County,

an', bein' her husband that a-way, you ain't in no place to jedge.'

'''Dan's right, Dave,' declar's Peets; 'surrounded as you be, you can't sense our peril, that is, sense it proper. Admirable as Tucson Jennie is as wife an' mother, an' I says this onbiased by bein' one of two after whom little Enright Peets is named, she's still more admirable in her rôle of cook. For which reason, Dave, you-all, when Missis Rucker threatens us, ain't able, as Dan says, to rightly gauge said menaces.'

'''Them coolinary compliments to Tucson Jennie placates Tutt. He's half started to bow his neck at Boggs, but they mollifies him.

'''Mighty likely you're correct, Doc,' he returns, his face cl'arin'; 'an' I begs Dan's pardon for some things I was goin' to say. My wife is shore an exempl'ry cook, an' mebbly I ain't no fit jedge. None the less, you-all'll find, as to them hangin's, that this yere goin' about from pillar to post with 'em is doo to rob 'em of their moral side.'

'''I feels like Dave,' observes Enright, comin' in on the pow-wow. 'Lynchin's, to have weight an' be a credit to us, ought not to be erratic. A lack of reg'larity about 'em would shake our standin' as a camp.'

'''Monte starts the business that time when Red Dog astounds us with its del'cacy, by comin' bulgin' in one evenin' with word about how the leadin' infloences in Tucson is broke out in a perfect deebauch of spellin' schools.

'''An' I'm yere to remark,' says he, in his conceited, rum-soaked way, 'that these yere contests contreebootes a mighty

metropol'tan atmosphere.'

"'Who orig'nates spellin' schools, anyway?' asks Boggs, whose curiosity is allers at half-cock. 'Which it's the first time I hears of sech things.'

"'Spellin' schools ain't nothin' new,' Peets replies. 'They're as common as deelirum treemons in the East.'

"'Which they certainly be,' corroborates Enright. 'Back along the Cumberland, as far away as when I'm a boy, we has 'em constant same as chills an' fever. We-all young bucks attends 'em mighty loyal, too, an' fights to see who-all goes home with the girls. When it comes to bein' pop'lar, spellin' schools is a even break with gander pullin's.'

"'Thar's a Tucson kyard sharp,' continyoos Monte, 'over to the Oriental s'loon, who tells me them spellin' schools is likewise all the rage in Prescott an' Benson an' Silver City. That Lightnin' Bug tarrapin' from Red Dog is loafin' about, too, while the kyard sharp's talkin', his y'ears a-wavin' like a field of clover. You don't figger thar's a chance that Red Dog gets the notion, Sam, an' takes to holdin' them tournaments of learnin' itse'f?'

"'What Monte says sets us thinkin'. As a roole we don't pay much heed to his observations, the same bein' freequent born of alcohol. But that bluff about Red Dog sort o' scares us up a lot. Good can come out of Nazareth, an' even Monte might once in a while drive the center as a matter of luck.

"'It wouldn't do us, Doc,' says Enright, who's made some oneasy by the thought—which it shore wouldn't do us, as an

advanced camp, to let Red Dog beat us to them spellin' schools.'

"'I should confess as much!' admits Peets, mighty emphatic. 'Speakin' from commoonal standp'int, it'd mark us as too dead to skin.'

"The sityooation takes shape in a resolootion to hold a spellin' school ourselves, an' invite Red Dog to stand in. Sech steps is calc'lated, we allows, to head off orig'nal action on the Red Dog part.

"'Let's challenge 'em to spell ag'in us,' says Texas. 'That's shore to stop 'em from holdin' spellin' schools of their own, an' it'll be as simple as tailin' steers to down 'em. I'll gamble what odds you please that, when it comes to edyoocation that a-way, we can make them Red Dogs look like a bunch of Digger Injuns.'

"'Don't move your stack to the center on that proposition, Texas,' observes Tutt, 'ontil you thoroughly skins your hand. Edyoocation ain't wholly dead in Red Dog. Thar's a shorthorn over thar, him who keeps books for the Wells-Fargo folks, who's edyoocated to a razor edge.'

"'Him?' says Boggs. 'That murderer ain't no book sharp speshul. Put him ag'in the Doc or Col'nel Sterett, an' he wouldn't last as long as a quart of whiskey at a barn raisin'. Which he's a heap sight better fitted to shine in a gun-play than a spellin' contest.'

"'But Col'nel Sterett ain't here none,' Tutt urges, 'havin' gone back to see his folks; an' as for the Doc, he'll be needed to put out the words. Some competent gent's got to go back of the box

an' deal the game, an' the Doc's the only stoo'dent in town who answers that deescription.'

"Armstrong, who's happened along lookin' for his little old forty drops, lets on he knows a party down in El Paso who can spell any word that ever lurks between the covers of a dictionary.

""That's straight,' Armstrong declar's. 'This yere El Paso savant can spell anything. Which I've seen him spell the hind shoes off a shavetail mule for the drinks. He's the boss speller of the Rio Grande, so much so they calls him "Spellin' Book Ben.'"

""Let's rope him up,' Peets suggests. 'Which them Red Dogs never will quit talkin' if we-all lets 'em down us.'

""Do you-all reckon,' asks Enright, appealin' to Armstrong, 'you could lure that El Paso expert up yere to partic'pate in this battle of the intellects?'

""It's as easy as playin' seven-up,' Armstrong replies. 'Which I'll write him I needs his aid to count up the stock in my store, an' you bet he'll come a-runnin'.'

""But s'ppose,' argues Tutt, 'these Red Dog crim'nals wakes up to it that this yere Spellin' Book Ben's a ringer?'

""In that event,' declar's Texas, 'we retorts by beltin' 'em over the heads with our guns. Be they, as guests, to go dictatin' terms to us?'

""Not unless they're tired of life,' says Boggs. 'While I can't spell none to speak of, seein' my Missouri youth is more or less neglected by my folks, showin' some Red Dog felon whar he's in wrong is duck soup to me. In a play like that I sees my way

triumphant.'

"'Shore!' Texas insists, mighty confident; 'let Red Dog wag one feeble y'ear, an' we buffaloes it into instant submission.'

"'They can't make no objections stick,' Enright observes, after thinkin' things over. 'This Spellin' Book Ben person'll be workin' for Armstrong, an' that, as the Doc says, makes him a *pro tem*. citizen of the camp. As sech he's plumb legit'mate. Red Dog couldn't lower its horns at him as a hold-out, even if it would.'

"It's settled, an' from then on thar's nothin' talked of but spellin' schools. We issues our deefiance, Peets b'arin' the same, an' Red Dog promptly calls our bluff. Regyardin' themselves as entrenched in that gifted Wells-Fargo book-keep, they're mighty eager for the fray. The *baile* is set two weeks away, with Peets to hold the spellin' book.

"After the time is fixed Monte comes squanderin' along an' gets Enright to move it one day further on.

"'Because, Sam,' the old sot urges, puffin' out his chest like he amounts to somethin', 'that partic'lar evenin' you pitches upon I'll be at the other end of the route, an' I proposes to get in on this yere contest some myse'f.'

"'You?' says Boggs, who overhears him, an' is nacherally astonished an' contempchoous at Monte's nerve. 'Whatever be you-all talkin' about? You can't spell none no more than me. The first word the Doc names'll make you look like a pig at church.'

"'All the same'—for Monte's been drinkin', an' allers gets stubborn in direct proportion to what licker he tucks onder his

belt—'all the same, Dan, as to this yere spellin', I proposes to ask for kyards. Even if I ain't no Bach'lor of Arts, so long as the Doc don't fire nothin' at me worse'n words of one syllable, an' don't send 'em along faster than two at a clatter, your Uncle Monte'll get thar, collars creakin', chains a-rattlin', with both hoofs.'

"Red Dog not only accepts our challenge, but gets that brash it offers to bet. Shore, we closes with the prop'sition. It ain't no part of our civic economy to let Red Dog get by with anything. I reckons, up one side an' down the other, we puts up the price of eight hundred steers. Texas and Boggs simply goes all spraddled out at it, while Cherokee calls down one eboolient Red Dog specyoolator for three thousand dollars. It's Wolfville ag'inst Red Dog, the roole to govern, 'Miss an' out!'

"The excitement even reaches the gentler sect.

"'Which onless girls is barred,' declar's Nell, speakin' from her lookout cha'r the second evenin' before the spellin' school is held, 'I've a notion to take a hand.'

"'It wouldn't be a squar' deal, Nellie,' says Texas. 'With you in, everybody'd miss a-purpose.'

"'I don't see why none,' says Nell.

"'For two reasons; first, because you're dazzlin'ly beautiful; an', second, because Cherokee's too good a shot.'

"'Shore,' says Boggs, plantin' a stack of reds open on the high kyard. 'Them contestants'd all lay down to you, Nellie. You certainly don't reckon Cherokee'd set thar, him all framed up with a Colt's .45, an' be that ongallant as to permit some clown

to spell you down?'

"Nell don't insist, an' the turn fallin' 'king-jack,' she nacherally moves Boggs's reds to the check-rack.

"On the great evenin' Red Dog comes surgin' in upon us, snortin' an' prancin' an' pitchin'. Which it certainly is a confident band of prairie dogs. Wolfville's organized and ready, Armstrong's Spellin' Book Ben party havin' come over from El Paso three days prior.

"Seein' how mighty se'f-possessed them Red Dogs feel, Boggs begins to grow nervous.

"You don't reckon, Dave,' says he, speakin' to Tutt, 'that them miscreants has got anything up their sleeve?—any little thing like a ace buried?'

"Which they wouldn't dare. Also, since you brings the matter up, Dan, I now gives notice that for myse'f I shall regyard success on their part as absolote proof of perfidy. That settled, I sacks that hamlet of Red Dog, an' plows an' sows its deboshed site with salt.'

"That's the talk!' says Boggs. 'Let 'em win once, an' you an' me, Dave,'ll caper over in our individyooal capac'ty, an' lay waste that Red Dog hamlet if it's the last act of our lives.'

"The spellin' school is schedjooled for the r'ar wareroom of the Noo York store, whar the Stranglers convenes. All Red Dog is thar, dressed up like a hoss, their Wells-Fargo book-keep in their exultant midst. Enright calls the meetin' to order with the butt of his six-shooter; our old warchief allers uses his gun as a

gavel that a-way, as lookin' more offishul. Also, since the dooty of a presidin' officer is to preserve order, it's in line to begin with a show—not too ondecorous—of force.

"Enright states the object of the gatherin', an' Peets, spellin' book in hand, swings into the saddle an' in a moment is off at a road gait. The words falls thick an' sharp, like the crackin' of a rifle. Which they shore does thin out them contestants plenty rapid! Boggs goes down before 'Theery,' spellin' it with a extra 'e.' Tutt lasts through three fires, but is sent curlin' like a shot jack-rabbit by 'Epitaph,' which he ends with a 'f.' Texas dies on 'Definite,' bein' misled by what happens to Tutt into introdoocin' tharin a sooperfluuous 'ph.'

"'I ain't none astonished,' Texas says sadly, when Peets informs him that he's in the diskyard; 'since ever my former Laredo wife acquires that divorce, together with al'mony an' the reestoration of her maiden name, the same bein' Suggs, I ain't been the onerrin' speller I once was.'

"Cherokee has luck, an' lasts for quite a time. It's the 'leventh word that fetches him. An' at that thar's a heap to be said on the side of Cherokee.

"The word's 'Capitol,' as Peets lets it fly.

"'C-a-p-i-t-a-l,' spells Cherokee.

"'Dead bird!' Peets says, plenty sententious.

"'Whatever kind o' capital?'

"'Capitol of a State.'

"'Then I misonderstands you. Which I takes it you're referrin'

to a bankroll.'

"The Doc, however, is obdoorate, an' Cherokee shoves back.

"'I think,' says Nell, whisperin' to Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie, who, with little Enright Peets, is off to one side—'I think the Doc's a mighty sight too contracted in his scope.'

"Monte falls by the wayside on 'Scenery,' an' is that preepost'rous he starts to give Peets an argyooment. Monte spells it 'Seenry.'

"'Whar do you-all get your licence, Doc,' he demands, when Peets tells him how it's spelled, 'to jam in that misfit "c"? Me havin' drove stage for twenty years, I've seen as much scenery as any gent present, an' should shore know how it's spelled. Scenery is what you sees. "S-e-e" spells see; an' tharfore I contends that "S-e-e-n-r-y" spells scenery. That "c" you springs on us, Doc, is a solecism, an' as much out of place as a cow on a front porch.'

"Enright raps Monte down. "'Scenery" is spelled any way which the Doc says,' declar's Enright, his eye some severe, 'an' I trusts no gent'll compel the cha'r to take measures.'

"'Say no more,' responds Monte, plenty humble and prompt. 'What I urges is only to 'licit information. I still thinks, however, that onder the gen'ral welfare clause of the constitootion, an' with an onfenced alphabet to pick an' choose from, a sport ought to have the inalienable right to spell things the way he likes. Otherwise, whatever is the use of callin' this a free country? If a gent's to be compelled to spell scenery with a fool "c," I asks you why was Yorktown an' wharfore Bunker Hill?'

"Monte, havin' thus onloaded, reetires to the r'ar, coverin' his chagrin by hummin' a stanzy or two from the well-known ditty, 'Bill, of Smoky Hill.'

Bill driv three spans of hosses,

An' when Injuns hove in sight,
He'd holler "Fellers, give 'em hell!

I ain't got time to fight."

But he chanced one time to run ag'in

A bullet made of lead,
An' when they brung Bill into town,

A bar'l of tears was shed.

"While Texas an' Boggs an' Tutt an' Cherokee an' Monte an' the rest of the Wolfville outfit is fallin' like November's leaves, them Red Dog bandits is fadin' jest as fast. If anything, they're fadin' faster. They're too p'lite or too proodent to cavil at the presence of Spellin' Book Ben, an' by third drink time after we starts thar's no gents left standin' except that Wells-Fargo book-keep sharp for Red Dog, an' Spellin' Book for us. It's give an' take between 'em for mebbly one hundred words, an' neither so much as stubs his orthographic toe.

"The evenin' w'ars into what them poets calls the 'small hours.'

Missis Rucker is wearily battin' her eyes, while little Enright Peets is snorin' guinea-pig snores in Tucson Jennie's lap.

"Thar comes a pause for Black Jack to pass the refreshments, an' Nell takes advantage of the lull.

"'Hopin' no one,' says Nell, 'will think us onp'lite, we ladies will retire. Jedgin' from the way little Enright Peets sounds, not to mention how I feels or Missis Rucker looks, it's time we weaker vessels hits the blankets.'

"'Yes, indeed,' adds Missis Rucker, smothering a yawn with her hand; 'T'd certainly admire to stay a whole lot, but rememberin' the hour I thinks, like Nellie, that we-all ladies better pull our freight.'

"Enright settin' the example, we gents stands up while the ladies withdraws, little Enright Peets bein' drug along between Nell an' Tucson Jennie plumb inert.

"Peets resoomes his word-callin', an' them two heroes spells on for a hour longer.

"At last, however, the Wells-Fargo book-keep sharp commences to turn shaky; the pressure's beginnin' to tell. As for Spellin' Book Ben, he's as steady as a church.

"'By the grave of Moses, Dan,' Tutt whispers to Boggs, 'that Red Dog imposter's on the brink of a stampede.'

"Peets gives out 'colander'; it's Spellin' Book Ben's turn. As he starts to whirl his verbal loop the Red Dog adept whips out his gun, an' jams it ag'inst Spellin' Book's ribs.

"'Spell it with a "u,'" says the Red Dog sharp, 'or I'll shore send

you shoutin' home to heaven! Which I've stood all of your dad-binged eryoodition my nerves is calk'lated to endoore.'

"Spellin' Book Ben's game, game as yaller wasps. With the cold muzzle of that book-keep murderer's hint to the onconverted pushin' into his side, he never flickers.

"'C-o,' he begins.

"But that's as far as he ever gets. Thar's a dull roar, an' pore Spellin' Book comes slidin' from his learned perch. It's done so quick that not even Jack Moore has time to hedge a stack down the other way.

"'It's too late, Doc,' says pore Spellin' Book, as Peets stoops over him; 'he gets me all right.' Then he rolls a gen'ral eye on all. 'Gents,' he says, 'don't send my remainder back to El Paso. Boot Hill does me.'

"Them's Spellin' Book's last words, an' they does him proud.

"It's the Lightnin' Bug who grabs the murderin' book-keep sharp, an' takes his gun away. Then he swings him before Enright.

"'He's your pris'ner,' says the Red Dog chief, actin' for his outfit, an' Enright bows his acknowledgments.

"Son, it's a lesson to see them two leaders of men. Enright never shows up nobler, an' you can wager your bottom peso that the Red Dog chief is a long shot from bein' a slouch.

"Jack Moore takes the Wells-Fargo book-keep homicide in charge, while Enright, who declar's that jestic to be effectyooal must be swift, says that onless shown reason he'll convene the committee at once. He adds, likewise, that it'll be kindly took if

the Red Dog chief, an' what members of his triboonal is present, will b'ar their part.

"In all p'liteness, the Red Dog chief deeclines.

"This is your joorisdiction,' he says, 'an' we Red Dogs can only return the compliment which your su'gestion implies by asshorin' you-all of our advance confidence in the rectitooode of what jedgments you inflicts.'

"Speak your piece,' says Enright to the Wells-Fargo book-keep culprit, when stood up before him by Moore. 'Whatever prompts you to blow out this Spellin' Book Ben's candle that a-way?'

"Let me say,' exclaims the Wells-Fargo book-keep murderer, an' his manner is some torrid, 'that I has five hundred dollars bet on this yere contest—'

"That is a question,' interrupts Enright, suave but plenty firm, 'which will doubtless prove interestin' to your execooter. This, however, is not the time nor place. I asks ag'in, whatever is your reason for shovin' this yere expert in orthography from shore?'

"Do you-all think,' returns the Wells-Fargo murderer, 'that I'll abide to see a obscoority like him outspell me?—me, who's the leadin' speller of eight States and two territories, an' never scores less than sixty-five out of a poss'ble fifty? Which I'd sooner die.'

"So you'd sooner die?' repeats Enright, as cold an' dark an' short as a November day. 'Well, most folks don't get their sooners in this world, but it looks a heap like you will!' Turnin' to Moore, he goes on: 'Our friends from Red Dog'll hold your captive, Jack,

while you-all goes rummagin' over to the corral an' gets a rope, the committee havin' come onprovided.'

"Moore gives the Wells-Fargo homicide to the Red-Dog chief, an' tharupon, we Stranglers bein' ready to go into excecyootive session, all hands except Enright an' the committee steps outside. We're in confab mebby it's ten minutes, an' Enright has jst approved a yoonanimous vote in favor of hangin', when thar's a modest tap at the door.

"It's the Lightnin' Bug.

"'It ain't,' he says, when we asks his mission, 'that we-all aims to disturb your deelib'rations none, gents, but the chief'd like to borry Doc Peets for five minutes to say a few words over the corpse.'

"Upon this yere hint we-all gambols forth, an' finds what's left of the Wells-Fargo book-keep murderer adornin' the windmill. Thar's whar their del'cacy comes in; that's how them Red Dogs saves us from a disagree'ble dooty.

"We plants Spellin' Book Ben on Boot Hill as per that sufferer's last request, an' Red Dog graces the obsequies to a man. Thar Spellin' Book lies to-day; an' the story of his ontoward takin' off, as told on that tombstone conj'intly erected as aforesaid by Wolfville an' Red Dog, is anyooally read by scores of devotees of learnin' who, bar'-headed an' mournful, comes as pilgrims to his grave."

THE END