



The Ten Greatest Thinkers

By Will Durant

Author of "The
Story of Philosophy"

The American Magazine

March, 1927

MERLE CROWELL, *Editor*
JAMES C. DERIEUX, *Managing Editor*

Vol. CIII

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE CROWELL PUBLISHING COMPANY AT SPRINGFIELD, OHIO, U. S. A.

John E. Miller, *Vice President*
Alfred D. Mayo, *Secretary*

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EXECUTIVE and EDITORIAL OFFICES, 250 PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

25c a Copy, \$2.50 per Year, in the United States and Canada.

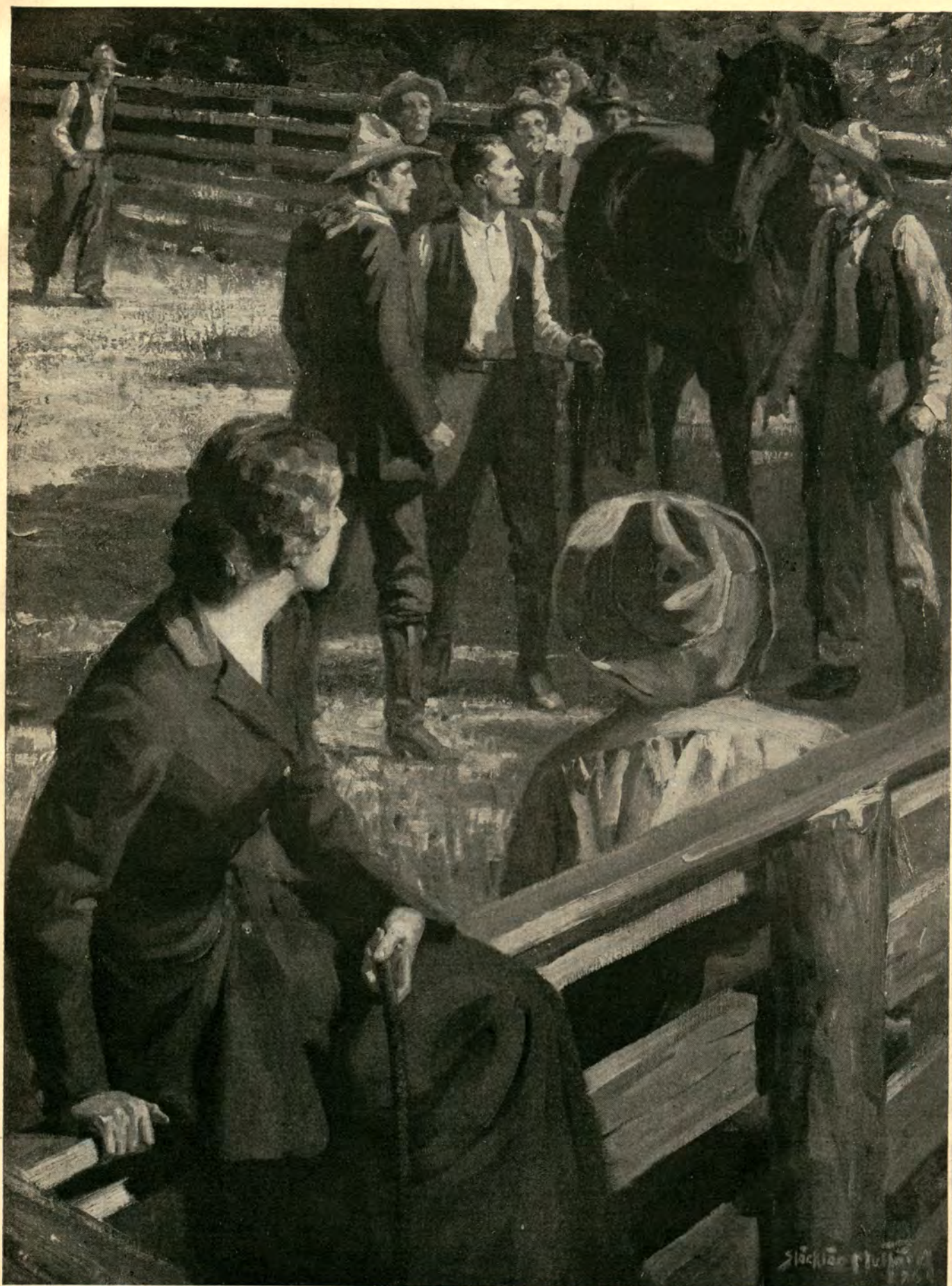
Foreign subscriptions, \$3.75 per Year.

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Subscribers are notified that change of address must reach us five weeks in advance of the next day of issue.

Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, Springfield, Ohio, under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry as second-class matter at Albany, N. Y., Harrisburg, Pa., San Francisco, Cal., Los Angeles, Cal., Seattle, Wash., Portland, Ore., Omaha, Neb., St. Paul, Minn., Milwaukee, Wis., Galesburg, Ill., and Des Moines, Iowa. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office Department, Canada.

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"I'm askin' thet you look at these marks on Red, Boss," replied Raidy. "If you won't, I reckon I'll take it as a slap at me. An' I'll quit you cold"

"Nevada"

A romance of the West

By Zane Grey

ILLUSTRATED BY STOCKTON MULFORD

Synopsis of the Four Preceding Instalments

BEN IDE and his sister Hettie had sold their fertile ranch in California, on the shores of Tule Lake, and journeyed overland to the newer country of Arizona with their family, Ben's brother-in-law, Marvie Blaine, and a long train of men, wagons, and horses. There were three reasons for this move: their mother's health, Ben's longing for a return to pioneer living, and the hope in his heart and in Hettie's that in a frontier country they might find the man they both loved.

Six years before he had come to them a stranger, known to them only as "Nevada." For two years he had helped Ben in his wild-horse hunting; he had shared in the capture of the great stallion, California Red; he had fallen in love with Hettie. And then he had recognized in Less Setter a scoundrel he had known in years past, and had seen through Setter's schemes to ruin the Ide family. He met Setter and his two accomplices, killed them all, in open fight, and escaped, with no word of farewell to Ben and Hettie.

By his deed he saved the ranch for them, and made possible Ben's reconciliation with his father and his marriage to Ina Blaine. This Ben and Hettie knew. What they did not know was that their "Nevada" was the notorious gunman, Jim Lacy, and that he had learned from them for the first time the beauty of friendship and the glory of love. It had made a new man of him—and yet to save them he had had to renounce his new self and become again Jim Lacy.

Jim went back to Lineville, where he had known Setter, resolved never to let Hettie know who he was; but to live up to her idea of him. And again Fate intervened. He had arranged to go to Arizona with Cash Burridge, who had determined to turn from cattle "rustling" to honest cattle raising, and had bought a ranch there—and then once more Jim Lacy was called upon to kill his man and become a fugitive from the law. He came into the "Gold Mine" (Lineville's gambling hell) one night, to find a girl dying on the floor, where Link Cawthorne, in a drunken rage, had thrown her. Jim Lacy did the only thing his code allowed. And for four years no one knew his whereabouts.

Meanwhile, Ben Ide and Hettie had bought a ranch in Arizona from a man named Cash Burridge, only to find out from Tom Day, a neighbor, that Burridge had cheated them in the count of cattle; that he had passed on liens on the stock; and that the whole country was so infested with rustlers that not even Judge Franklidge, the boss rancher of the country, knew who were the honest ranchers and who the thieves.

However, Ben stuck to his guns, built his ranch houses, and hired a man named Dillon as foreman. When Ben Ide's cattle and his own began almost at once to be the chief targets for the rustlers, Judge Franklidge called Day and a trusted cowboy, "Texas Jack," into consultation. Texas Jack volunteered to go singlehanded into the Mongollons and pose as a rustler, in order to get information to break up their gangs. And when Franklidge and Day remonstrated, he confessed to them that he was the notorious Jim Lacy. So, once more, to save those he loved, Nevada made his sacrifice. He shaved off the beard he had grown, bought a new outfit, and rode into town—Jim Lacy again.

He heard much gossip in the saloons, and learned that old Elam Hatt and his son Cedar were under suspicion. Then, on the street, he ran into Rose, the only daughter of old Elam. He gained her confidence, found that she feared Cedar Hatt and Clem Dillon, and loved Marvie Blaine—and promised to help her. That night he saw her at a dance with Marvie—and he saw Hettie Ide! Hettie was lovelier than ever, and from a dark corner Jim heard Clem Dillon make love to her. Hettie repulsed his advances with scorn, and when Dillon tried to hold her by force she broke away from him and ran. Whereupon Jim stepped out of the shadow, knocked Dillon down, and got away before a crowd gathered.

That night he ran into Cash Burridge again, and made friends with him. Cash told him that Hardy Rue, one of Less Setter's men, was also in Winthrop. The next day Hettie learned that California Red had been stolen, and from a store window saw Hardy Rue shot down in the street by the notorious Jim Lacy. He came directly past the window—and she knew that Jim Lacy was Nevada.

She told no one, enduring alone the pain of her terrible secret, and trying still to cling to her old faith in Nevada. And then Marvie Blaine came to her for help in his trouble. He was very much in love with Rose Hatt; but Rose so feared her brother Cedar that she had begged him not to come to see her again. And she would not marry him, because she would not bring disgrace upon his family. Hettie was moved by this evidence of fineness in the girl, and promised to go with Marvie to see her.

HETTIE, early riser as she was, outdid herself on the Wednesday morning which was the date of her agreement to ride down into the brakes with Marvie Blaine.

There were tasks to see to, some of which she performed before her mother called her to breakfast. Hettie was still at the table when whoops outside alarmed

her. Then she recognized Marvie's "Whoop-ee!" and ran out on the porch, followed by her mother.

"For the land's sake!" cried Mrs. Ide. "Has Marvie gone daffy?"

They saw him running wildly, bare-headed, up the walk toward Ben's house. "Whoop-ee!" yelled Marvie again. "Hey, Ben!"

Hettie realized now that something was

up, so she started to run across the log bridge. When she got half way she saw Ben rush out on the porch, in his shirt sleeves, rifle in hand.

"What's the matter, Marv?" he shouted.

"California Red's back!" bellowed Marvie, coming to a halt.

Hettie saw Ben start as if struck. Then he ran to meet Marvie. Hettie lost little time getting over the bridge and across the grassy bench. Breathless and excited, she arrived in time to see Ben sink down on a log, as if overcome.

"Ben, I'm—so glad," panted Hettie. "Boy, you're not playin' a trick on me—because I was sore on you?" implored Ben of Marvie.

"Nope. I saw him sure. An' I was tickled to death!"

"I reckon Dillon fetched him back," sighed Ben, in unutterable gratitude.

"Dillon, thunder!" exclaimed Marvie. "Dillon is in bed. There's nobody up but me."

"Ahuh! By George! Did you see anyone?"

"Not a soul."

"Well! That beats me. Let's go down."

BEN and Marvie, with Hettie trying to keep beside them, stalked down off the ridge, into the lane, through the courtyard, and on to the corrals. Raidy appeared on the bunk-house porch, and he carried a rifle.

"Boss, what's the bellerin' about?" he queried, as he joined the trio.

Marvie led the way through two corrals, and then across the wide square to a high pasture fence, up which he scrambled like a squirrel.

"There!" he shouted, pointing.

Ben surmounted the fence ahead of Hettie, and his exultant cry prepared her.

California Red stood not far distant, down along the fence. Nervously he jerked up at Ben's cry, and wheeled, with head high, ears up, eyes wild. How sensitive, how splendid he looked to Hettie!

Ben whistled and began to call: "Red! —Red, old boy; come here, Red!"

The stallion lost his alarm, and laying down his ears he approached slowly, step by step. Ben kept calling. Red knew the voice, and showed increasing gladness. He whinnied. Then he trotted straight to where Ben straddled the fence. He looked the worse for his absence. Ragged, scratched, muddied, somewhat thinner; he showed the effect of hard travel and probably harsh treatment.

"Come, Red; come, old boy," Ben called again. "Don't you know your boss?"

But Red would not come all the way.

He halted, uncertain, pawing the ground. His dark eyes shone softly. Again he whinnied. Ben guardedly got down off the fence, speaking all the time, and slowly went up to Red, finally encircling

when Ben had been a lonely outcast, wild-horse hunter, when Nevada had come so mysteriously into their lives; and her eyes dimmed.

Meanwhile the cowboys had arrived on

and Hettie still stayed on the fence, the better to see, the old horseman walked around Red, feeling him, examining him, lifting his hoofs one after the other.

"Wal, boss, he's as sound as a bullet," declared Raidy gladly. "Ganted up a little an' got a couple of bad cuts. An' he's lost a shoe. Nervous an' skittish. But you can bet he's glad to git home!"

"Raidy, do you think he's been mistreated?" inquired Ben.

"I sure do. Why, man, don't you know hosses? Can't you see he's been haltered, an' hobbled?"

Raidy kept running gentle, skillful hands over Red, ruffling up the silky hair, looking with the eyes of long experience to marks and signs by which he read something of what had happened to the horse.

"See for yourself," he went on with vehemence. "Look hyar! . . . By heaven, he's been roped, too!"



the noble neck with his arm. Then he buried his face in the red mane.

Hettie's thoughts went back to the Forlorn River days, when California Red had roamed the sage hills, free and proud,

the scene; Raidy had opened the pasture gate. Presently Ben led the stallion through to the square.

"Look him over, Raidy," said Ben. While the cowboys crowded around,

At this point Hettie saw Dillon stalk around the corner of the high fence, which had obscured the men and horse. Abruptly he halted. Swift amaze and consternation leaped across his expression of

curiosity, blotting it out. Then, as swiftly, his face changed, smoothing to a smile. What a handsome, pleasant man! Hettie marveled at his consummate control and acting. But he could not fool her again. The return of Red was actually as startling to Dillon as it had been to anyone else there.

The circle of cowboys opened to admit Dillon.

"Ha! So, Boss, what'd I tell you?" he broke out, and vigorously shook Ben's hand. "The old red son-of-a-gun has come back. Jumped the pasture fence goin' an' comin'. . . . Took a little run, an' come home. I've had many a hoss do it."

"Not wild hosses, Mr. Dillon," snapped Raidy.

"What do you know about hosses, Raidy?"

"Wal, I reckon I've forgot more'n you ever knew," retorted the older man. "I ain't doubtin' you've had a lot of hosses, Dillon; but you didn't raise them—you didn't catch them—an' you didn't keep them long."

This was pretty plain speaking, as was evinced by Ben's stepping between the men, and the dark flush that wiped out Dillon's geniality.

Ben raised a hand to silence Raidy.

"That'll do. You're both privileged to your opinions. But don't get nasty."

"All right, Boss," replied Raidy, in an aggrieved tone. "But my word is sort of ridiculed hyar. An' I'm askin' thet you look at these marks on Red. If you won't, I reckon I'll take it as a slap at me. An' I'll quit you cold."

"Raidy!" exclaimed Ben, astounded.

"You know me, Boss," returned the old horseman sturdily.

Ben wavered. It was plain to Hettie that he hoped to keep peace between the old and the new hands, so valuable to him now. But Raidy had thrown down his gage, and he looked formidable.

"Ben," called Hettie, from the fence, "you've known Raidy all your life. He taught you how to ride. It's only fair that you listen to him."

"All right, Raidy, if you feel that bad about it," replied Ben resignedly.

AGAIN the old horseman ran his gentle, skillful hands over Red's supple body, down to the wonderfully muscled legs. "Look hyar," said Raidy, as he stooped. "He's been hobbled. See! He's been gone ten days. That mark was made no more'n yesterday."

"Reckon you're right," admitted Ben, as he slowly arose. "I apologize."

"No apology wanted," said Raidy.

"All I want is for you to come out of your

trance. . . . Now, look hyar. Look at Red's nose. He's been roped."

"By thunder! There's been a hackamore on him," ejaculated Ben.

Dillon was not to be outwitted, and he had swiftly followed Ben's examination



A man had come out of the aspen thicket. He carried a rifle, which he held by the barrel over his shoulder

of the horse with one of his own.

"Darned if Raidy isn't right, Boss," he exploded, evidently regretful. "I hadn't even looked at Red. But there are the marks, plain as print. . . . I apologize too, Raidy. My mistake."

"Wal, Mr. Dillon, I'm acceptin' your apology," drawled Raidy, his keen old hawk eyes on the handsome foreman.

HETTIE was riding beside Marvie across the western end of the sage flat, toward the fence which marked the limit of Ben Ide's ranch land.

Marvie dismounted to open the gate for them, and when he vaulted to the saddle again he grinned. "Nobody but Raidy saw us, an' he won't tell. But Ben would stand for anythin' to-day. Gee, how he loves that red horse!"

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"Nevada"

(Continued from page 63)

"Marvie, were you looking at Dillon when he first came on us and saw Red?" inquired Hettie.

"No, I wasn't. Why?"

"He struck me as being more amazed than any of us, and *not* so happy."

"Ahuh!" replied Marvie. It was evident that he chose to be noncommittal. Hettie, however, did not fail to catch the glint in his eye.

"Here's where we turn off, Hettie," he said, as he left the road. "Narrow trail, but good. Look out for the brush an' duck the branches. Ride now!"

He spurred his horse into a lope and Hettie did likewise. Soon they entered the forest, where the shade was welcome and no dust arose. Hettie had been on this trail several times, though not to go very far. It led west, toward the brakes and the frowning dark notches of the Mongollons, dim and purple in the distance.

THEY rode perhaps five miles before the trail began to penetrate deeper into the forest and to ascend into rockier and rougher country, and she soon gathered what the brakes of the Mongollons meant. The brakes were canyons, running like the ridges of a washboard, walled with brush and rock, choked with dense thickets, above which the lofty pines and spruces towered. Ridge after ridge Marvie climbed and descended, until, coming to a deeper, clearer canyon, he turned off to follow a willow-bordered stream.

As they progressed, again riding at a lope, the canyon widened and deepened, the walls grew rugged and unscalable, the fringe of pines on the rims lifted higher, and every aspect of the wilderness seemed likewise intensified. The time came when the horses had to walk again, down and down, under narrow gray shelves of stone, under the massed foliage of maple, oak, aspen, all beginning to show a tint of autumn, especially the fluttering aspens, just turning to gold. The stream grew larger, swifter, deeper, and its mellow roar filled the dreamy solitude.

At corners, where the trail turned, Marvie always exercised a caution which added more than romance to Hettie's feelings. This adventure grew with the miles. How dark, still, lonely some of the constrictions in this brake of the Mongollons!

"Somewhere along here we'll meet her," whispered Marvie fearfully. "It always scares me. That Cedar Hatt might be prowlin' along the rim to spy on us. Rose is cute, though. I've waited half a day before she came."

They wound along the crooked trail, and if it were possible Hettie imagined every vista wilder and more hauntingly beautiful than the last. The white bleached grass, the green willows, the amber rocks, the rushing, foaming brook, the thickets of oak and aspen, russet and gold, the wonderful walls rising sheer, stained and mossy, gray and purple, up to the ragged fringed rims—all these aided the movement of leaves, the flash of birds, the fragrance of pine, the utter solitude, into working an enchantment upon Het-

tie's senses. No wonder Marvie had fallen in love with his wild Rose.

"I see her horse," whispered Marvie, as he halted. "She'll be near. We'll get off now. I'll hide our horses."

Hettie got off to hand her bridle to him, and waited while he led their mounts out of sight. How noiselessly he moved! Marvie had become a woodsman. Soon he returned and led her off the trail into the grass.

"Anyone ridin' along behind us would sure see our tracks," he whispered. "But that's a slim chance. You see, it's an old, unused trail here. The Hatts live over in the next canyon."

"She's a brave kid, to meet you this way. And you're not such a coward, Marvie boy," returned Hettie.

He led her up a gradual grassy slope, into the protecting shelter of low pines and silver spruces. "Look at the elk beds," he whispered, pointing to round places where grass and moss had been flattened.

Hettie espied a ragged red pony, without a saddle, haltered to a sapling. Then she saw a dark curly head rise above the tall grass. Next moment Marvie was speaking low: "Hettie, this is Rose Hatt. . . . Rose, I've fetched her. This's Hettie Ide, my best friend an' sister."

As Hettie sank down, smiling, with hands outstretched, the girl rose to her knees, her eyes dilating, her face without color.

"Rose, I'm glad—to meet you," whispered Hettie, and she kissed the girl.

"Oh, Miss Ide—you're good to come," faltered Rose. She was trembling all over.

Marvie knelt beside Rose, and it was evident this was a torturing moment for him too. The romance and excitement had passed. Ide's sister was now face to face with the daughter of rustler and backwoodsman Elam Hatt, with the sister of notorious Cedar Hatt.

"HETTIE, I reckon Rose won't be so scared an' shy if I leave you alone with her," said Marvie. "So I'll keep watch below. An' don't forget we haven't lots of time."

Then, with a bright and reassuring look at Rose, he slipped off under the low-spreading trees. Hettie turned to the girl, trying to think of words to put her at ease. How like a woodland wildflower! Rose wore a buckskin blouse fringed and beaded, a ragged brown skirt, and boots without stockings. She held a sprig of tiny aspen leaves, turning gold.

"Rose, since Marvie loves you, I must love you too," said Hettie, speaking not what she had intended, but the words that welled from her heart. She did not need to be told that Rose Hatt had never had love of mother, sister, or friend. The girl gave a little gasping cry of wonder and pain, then fell into Hettie's arms, where she burst into tears.

This made the ordeal easier for Hettie, and she held the girl in silence until the paroxysm of weeping had subsided. Then she began to talk, kindly, soothingly, as if to a child, saying she hardly knew what,

until the moment came when she felt she might venture a question. But before she could ask it, Rose sat up, wiped her wet face, and smiled through her tears.

"Marvie was right," she said. "It's sure good to see you, hear you, now I'm over my scare. I'll never forget you till my dyin' day!"

"Rose, you love Marvie very much?"

"Yes," replied the girl, simply. "I couldn't help it. But I didn't know at first. Not till the dance."

"Then you two have pledged your troth?"

"If you mean told our love, yes, Miss Ide. But I didn't promise to marry Marvie."

"He asked you, of course?"

"He begged me to," replied the girl, lifting her head with pride.

"Why did you refuse?"

"I love Marvie too well to hurt him with you an' all his family."

"DO YOU mean you think you'd disgrace him and us because you're a Hatt?"

"Yes, an' a good deal more I haven't told Marvie," she went on, steady of voice, though her round breast heaved. "Cedar would come down on Marvie an' you an' your brother Ben for money. An' so would another man whose name I daren't tell. He—this man—has got a hold on Cedar—an' me. He'd ruin us all!"

"Rose, that's a strong statement," said Hettie. "But, even if it isn't exaggerated, it doesn't change the fact that you and Marvie ought to wait. You're both very young."

"I'm not exaggeratin'. I could tell you more. An' about marryin'—Marvie's reason for hurry is to get me away from the life I live. It's terrible, Miss Ide. I have to cook, wash, scrub for an outfit of rustlers an' hoss thieves. Look at my hands! Look at the black marks—here—an' there. I get kicked an' beat. Marvie knows, an' he can't stand it any longer."

"Couldn't you leave this home?" queried Hettie, earnestly.

"I've thought of that. Yes; I could. My dad wouldn't care. But I'd have to be a servant—or worse."

"No, indeed. Rose, you could come to my home."

"Oh, how—wonderful!" gasped the girl, rapturously clasping her hands. "But that'd be 'most the same as marryin' Marvie, so far as Cedar an'—that other man are concerned. . . . No, it'd never do. But thank you—bless you!"

"Rose, we mustn't despair," continued Hettie, touched to the heart by the girl's sincerity. "Time will help us. If you could only escape this—this drudgery and shame."

"That's the hope which keeps me up, Miss Ide. If I could only tide over a little time! Cedar is goin' to ruin fast. He's rustlin', gamblin', drinkin' harder than ever. He's under the thumb of—the man I daren't squeal on."

"But why daren't you?"

"Because if he didn't kill me, Cedar would. I'm the only one outside of that

Pine Tree Outfit who *knows*. An' my life ain't worth much."

"Pine Tree Outfit!" echoed Hettie, her eyes lighting. "That's the mysterious gang of rustlers."

"It sure is. I'm trustin' you with my life, Miss Hettie. But I daren't tell more. Nobody knows how secrets slip out. You might talk in your sleep."

"Naturally. But I think you could risk it, considering I sleep alone," said Hettie. "Rose, this is a plot. We're all involved. Your people and mine. What a tangle! It must have been fate that brought you and Marvie together. Oh, if I only knew how best to advise you!"

"Reckon I wish so too. But I've got a hunch. It's my job to stick home—to fool my people—to learn all I can. . . . I mustn't see Marvie often, an' be sure we're never ketched. Somethin' will happen, Miss Ide. You've made me feel it. You've made things different. Neither Cedar nor *him* can last long in this country. Not now. I heard my dad say so. . . . Oh, this is the second time my hopes have risen. Oh, I wish I could tell you of another friend I found lately. I forgot. . . . But he came to my home, an' there was an awful time. I listened at night through the chinks of the logs. Cedar was wild. Cash Burrridge was there. 'We've got a big deal on,' says Cash. An' that pleased all the gang except Cedar. They set to whisperin', an' I didn't hear no more."

"Rose—isn't your friend—Jim Lacy?" whispered Hettie haltingly, with dry lips.

The girl caught her breath, and drew back sharply, wonder the most predominant of her varying emotions.

"There, you have betrayed it," continued Hettie forcefully, trying to command her voice. "Call Marvie now. We will plan another meeting, then hurry home. I've enough to think of—this time!"

Rose silently slipped away under the pines, and Hettie, staring at the green-walled foliage seemed to see a ghost. "Oh, my heaven," she whispered in an agony. "Nevada belongs to this thieving, vile crew!"

FROST fell early in September on the high rims of the Mongollons. Soon after the sun set the rarified air became cold and sharp, making a camp fire something to draw the riders and hunters, and other men of the woodland.

A group of five dark-faced, dark-garbed campers sat around a beautiful opal-hearted cedar fire, at the wild edge of Black Butte, where it fell sheer into the brakes. Three of these men were playing cards, cross-legged in front of a saddle blanket, intent on the greasy bits of colored pasteboard and the piles of gold coin and rolls of greenbacks.

The other two men occupied a position on the opposite side of the fire. One had his back and his outspread palms to the blaze, while the other sat against a log.

"Well, Jim," said the standing man, "all I want to get at is this: If you'd loosen up a little more, drink an' gamble a little, especially when we run into other outfits, it'd facilitate our plans."

"I reckon, Cash," returned Jim wearily. "But how can I have a quick eye an' hand if I drink? I'll agree, though, to be

more friendly an' set in a game now an' then."

"Good. Reckon that'll do. Lord, Jim, don't get me wrong. Ever since you called Hardy Rue out an' killed him, I've been ready to crawl an' wear my finger nails off scratchin' for you. I mayn't have been your friend back in Lineville; but I sure love you now! You've put me on my feet again."

"Wal, Cash, that's plain talk," replied Jim. "An' I don't mind sayin' I like you better than I used to. But I can't love any man, or even be pards."

"Sure, sure, I understand," returned Burrridge hastily. "An' I'm glad for small favors. But you needn't tell that to our gang, or any of these outfits we meet. They all think you were my pard back in California, an' are yet. Burt Stillwell would have shot me, sure; but he was afraid of you. He couldn't be himself, an' I'm tellin' you he was a bad hombre."

"Aw, bad, yes, in a sense of dirty, yellow, behind-your-back viciousness," agreed Jim, flashing a quick, eloquent hand. "I hate to throw a gun on such fodder. But he forced it. He kept still till he got a few drinks. Then he riled up about Ben Ide's red horse, an' put in that ridiculous claim for his pard, Cedar Hatt. Wanted a share of the divvy for the cattle—for this Hatt fellow."

"The thunder he did! Well, I wondered what it was about. But I was so glad I didn't feel no curiosity," returned Burrridge. He turned around to kick the fire-logs. Then he again faced his companion. "Maybe you don't know it, Lacy, but you made a lot of friends by pluggin' Stillwell; an' one sure enough enemy."

"Who's that? Cedar Hatt?"

"He's the bird. He's a backwoodsman, Jim, like an Indian, who knows the woods. Cedar wouldn't ever try you out, unless, like Burt, he'd been lookin' at the bottle. All the same, you'll be in more danger from Cedar than from all the gun-throwers in Arizona. He's killed shepherds an' cowboys enough, believe me. He'll trail you—ambush you in the woods."

"Much obliged, Cash," drawled Jim, yawning. "Reckon I know this heah Cedar Hatt!"

"I'm givin' you a hunch of hunches," declared Burrridge. "I'm darned hones' and selfish about it too. I've other reasons besides affection not to want Jim Lacy killed. Cedar Hatt will be sore enough when he hears you put Stillwell over; but say, when he learns you got that red stallion an' sent him back to Ide—my lord, brother, he'll be fire and brimstone!"

HOW soon is he goin' to find out?" queried Lacy, with more interest. "Stillwell cain't very wal tell. An' that pard of Stillwell's—Babe Morgan, someone called him—he'll be runnin' yet."

"Cedar'll find out pronto," declared Burrridge. "If not from one outside our outfit, then from someone inside. You were playin' a queer high hand, Jim, when you took the stallion away from Burt an' Babe, an' sent it back to the Ide ranch. They'd stolen it. But your argument sounded good to me. Ben Ide would raise more trouble over the loss of California Red than over a hundred thousand head of stock."

"Huh! I'll bet he would," declared

Lacy, dropping his head. The twig he had been twirling snapped sharply.

"Well, to go on, your argument looked good to me. Now, I've got brains, an' most of these rustlin' hombres haven't nothin' but spruce gum in their heads. That deal looked queer to all our outfit. Still, only Hubrigg opened his trap to say so. Hubrigg likes you, though, an' I think you can gamble on him."

Here Burrridge leaned over toward Jim to whisper, "If our gang seem a little stand-offish yet, it's only your reputation. Since you helped us to steal cattle an' drive them an' sell them, why, they're sure you are one of us, even if you are Jim Lacy."

"Reckon that ought to be aboot enough," returned Lacy.

He turned his ear to the faint cold wind that breathed up out of the black void below.

"Hear anythin'?" queried Burrridge. "I heah a hoss."

"Good. That'll be Stagg, unless it might be one of our hosses. I'll take a look, an' then I'll unroll my bed."

BURRIDGE stalked away in the gloom of the forest while Lacy, left alone, attended to the camp fire. Once or twice he glanced at the absorbed gamesters, with something curious, strange, and menacing in his eyes. Then he fell to contemplation of the opal heart of the camp fire. And the moment arrived when he forgot the wild environment, the gambling rustlers, to become like a statue, cold-faced, with haunted eyes. He must have seen a ghost in the radiant embers, for not until a thud of hoofs sounded close at hand did he rouse out of his trance.

Presently two dark forms entered the circle of light, and approached, talking low. Lacy got up to meet them.

"Howdy, Jim," greeted the newcomer. He was a swarthy-faced, beady-eyed white man with a strain of Indian or Mexican blood.

"Howdy, Stagg. Did you make a good job of it?" returned Lacy, with apparent carelessness.

"Wasn't no job a-tall," said Stagg, reaching bare, grimy hands toward the fire. "Soon as you-all left, the red hoss quieted down, an' I coaxed him out of the measly leetle corral. Reckon it was nigh on midnight when we got down on the sage. I tied up both hosses, pulled off my boots, put on my moccasins, an' led the stallion five miles through grass an' sage. When I run into Ide's fence I kept goin', along till I come to a gate. I opened it an' let him in."

"Much obliged, Stagg. I—reckon it was no fool move of me—though some think different," replied Lacy, turning his face away from the fire.

"Lacy, it was the slickest piece of head-work I ever seen on this range," declared Stagg. "I hadn't time to tell you I was at Burton's ranch the next day after Stillwell stole the stallion. Ide's cowmen came rarin' over the country. Thet Raidy, he's an old hand, an' he was mad as a hornet. An' to-day, as I was climbin' the Hog-back I run into a sheep herder I know. Greaser named Juan somethin'. He said Ide had plastered the trees along the trails offerin' rewards for Red."

"There, Jim! You see it was a wise move," declared Burrridge, with satis-

faction. "Young Ide would have spent a fortune gettin' back that stallion."

Lacy stared out into the gloom of the forest.

"Reckon you're hungry?" asked Burrage of the arrival.

"Had a bite at Hatt's to-day," returned Stagg. "But a chuck of deer meat an' a cup of coffee wouldn't go bad."

LACY turned from the darkness to the firelight. "Stagg, did you see any of the men Hatts?"

"Sure, they was all home, an' had company too. Strangers to me."

"Did you tell them about takin' Red back to the Ide ranch?"

"Sure. Thought it good idee. An' I rubbed it in too. Elam's no hoss thief. He said hoss-stealin' was a low-down bizness. But Cedar swore there was somethin' crooked about a gunman an' rustler who returned stolen property. Also, he swore he'd steal the red stallion again, jest to spite you."

"Ahuh. Wal, what did Cedar say when he heahed I'd shot his pard, Burt Stillwell?" inquired Jim, in dry, caustic tone.

"What?" queried Stagg, with a start. "You heahed me, man."

"Sure. But it—I— An' you shot Burt?" Lacy nodded coldly, eying the fire.

Stagg stiffened a little, and after a pause glanced from Burrage to Lacy, and then out into the forest. A silence ensued, broken only by the gamblers.

"Burt's dead, then—of course?" asked Stagg presently, with an effort.

Cash Burrage broke the strange spell of the moment.

"Burt's under the sod an' the leaves, waitin' the judgment day. An' it was a darn good job, Stagg."

"No arguin' agin' that," returned Stagg. "Wal, Lacy, fact is, Cedar Hatt hadn't heard, no more'n me. An' if you're curious I can sure tell you—Cedar will be hoppin' mad!"

"I told Jim that," said Burrage impatiently. "What's it amount to, anyhow? There'll be a Hatt less, pronto."

"Wal, pards, the population of this hyar Arizona is sure deterioratin'," returned Stagg, with a guffaw.

One of the gamblers, disturbed by the loud laugh, looked up to say, "Bill, shet your loud mouth, an' you an' Cash come set in this game. Hubrigg an' Brawn ain't very much to stack up agin'."

"I'm on," replied Stagg, eagerly. "Wait till I swallow some grub."

"Gamble your heads off," said Burrage. "We needn't break camp till tomorrow. But I'm turnin' in."

"Same for me," said Lacy, and strode out of the lighted circle. Presently he had to feel his way to the black tentlike spruce tree under which he had spread his tarpaulin and blankets. Sitting down he pulled off his boots. Then he sat motionless, peering back at the ruddy camp fire. Presently he removed his coat and made a pillow of it. Next he unbuckled his gun belt, took it off, and put the gun under the edge of his coat. After that, he gazed a long time out into the spectral forest, before he rolled in his blankets.

The ring of a cold ax on hard wood awakened Jim Lacy from his slumbers. Hubrigg was chopping wood for a camp fire.

"Nifty mawnin', Hub," said Jim, by

way of greeting. "I'll pack some water."

Whenever such duty as this, or other opportunity offered, Jim always took advantage of it, seeking even a moment away from the rustlers with whom he had cast his lot. That time, however long, was a blessed relief. He need not then be perpetually on the *qui vive*, watching, listening, reading the minds of his companions. In those stolen moments or hours he reverted to his old character, Nevada, lover of the open, of desert and forest, of the life and color and mystery of nature.

Upon returning to the camp fire he arrived in time to hear Brawn exclaim: "What'n hail Columbia for do we want to ring the Hatts in on this deal?"

"Say, man, there's brains back of this deal," replied Burrage derisively.

"Meanin' yours, eh? Wal, all right; but I'm from Missouri."

They ceased the argument at the approach of Jim Lacy.

"Somebody rustle the hosses," called out Burrage.

AN HOUR later, the six men, with as many pack horses, started over the rim on the trail down into the brakes. It was a trail that even the most expert and daring rider would hesitate before attempting on horseback. Moreover, it was seldom used. Lacy decided it must be a rear outlet from the rendezvous of desperate men.

But, though very steep, it was not long. It led out into the head of a canyon where the stream gushed forth from under an amber-mossed cliff, and went singing down through a winding defile, surely the wildest and most beautiful that Jim Lacy's eyes had ever beheld.

"Cash, tell me," said Lacy, at an opportune time, when they rode abreast, "is Cedar Hatt the haid of this Pine Tree Outfit?"

"Lord, no!" ejaculated Burrage, in ridicule. Then, as an after-thought, he continued: "But, Jim, I don't *know* he isn't. I mean, I've sense enough to figure he couldn't be. There's a real man at the reins of that gang."

"You're square now? You honestly don't know?"

"So help me heaven!" returned Burrage, raising his gloved right hand. "If I knew I'd tell you—even though the man was my pard. But I don't know. I never met a man who did. Of course, no one is goin' to brag about that. The Pine Tree Outfit is only three years old. It's got a brand; but sure no one ever seen it on a steer or a calf. I never seen it on anythin'. I hear it's cut on aspen trees. Sheep herders will tell you that."

"Cedar Hatt might belong to it?" queried Lacy.

"Sure. But he'd be a bad hombre to trust, unless you had some hold on him. My idea of the Pine Tree Outfit is this: Some slick rustler from other parts has ridden in here, either with a few choice men, or picked them carefully after he got here; an' he had the money an' the brains to control a small outfit."

"It's no trick to steal cattle in this country, an' it's a heap-sight easier to sell them," continued Burrage. "But to do it on a big scale, an' not be found out—I call that brains."

When they rode around a high green corner Jim gave vent to an exclamation of

utmost pleasure. The brake opened into an oval valley surrounded by gray-cliffed, green-thicketed walls, rising high. A level meadow, where horses and cows grazed in deep grass, ended in a low bench of land upon which huge isolated pines and spruces towered half way to the rim. Two log cabins stood picturesquely at the edge of this rise of ground. In the background, a corral and barn, with logs awry and roof caved in, showed half hidden in a blaze of golden aspens.

"This place, where the Hatts hang out," remarked Burrage, "is like a fox den, with two holes. The one we just came down, an' a pass below, where a couple of good shots could stave off all the cowboys in Arizona. Well, old sharp-eyed Elam sees us already. He's comin' out with a gun."

The riders in advance drove the pack horses up on the bench, and followed to dismount. Burrage arrived a little in advance of Jim. The old mountaineer Hatt stood shaggy-headed, with a smile on his craggy face.

"Welcome you air, both of you," said Hatt genially. "We keep open house fer our friends. Git down an' come in. Jest turn your hosses loose. Never yit had a hoss leave hyar."

While pack and saddle horses were led back toward the aspen grove Elam Hatt walked with Burrage, while Tobe and Henny, the two sons, followed. They were uncouth, unshaven louts, with bad teeth and pale eyes, and faces that indicated very low mentality. Lacy's advent manifestly did not cause them either apprehension or interest. Tobe was barefooted. Henny leaned on a short carbine, worn shiny from long service.

"Where's Cedar?" inquired Burrage casually.

"He's hyar abouts somewhere," replied Elam. "He seen you fust."

"Hope Cedar won't take exception to our comin'."

"No tellin' what Cedar'll take," replied Hatt, with a grin. "But I'm right glad to see you. I'm wantin' news. Make yourself to home. I'll go an' see about grub. . . . Tobe, whar's your sister?"

"I dunno," replied the son.

"Find her, you terbaccer-chewin' cub," returned Hatt, and strode away toward the cabins.

Tobe Hatt might never have heard his father, for all the attention he paid to the order. Instead, he gravitated toward Lacy.

"Got any smokin'?" he asked.

"Shore. Help yourself there in my saddlebag," replied Lacy.

The other young Hatt, Henny, now moved out of his tracks, and, dragging the rifle butt over the ground, he joined in a search of Lacy's saddlebag. Finding the tobacco, they availed themselves of Lacy's offer. They took it all.

"CASH, where you goin' to bunk?" asked Lacy, presently.

"Right here in the aspens. Good a place as any. Elam will offer the loft of the big cabin. But I'd just as lief be out."

"Wal, I'd a good deal rather," drawled Jim. "Cabin lofts are full of dirt, spiders, centipedes, an' smoke. I'll throw my outfit somewhere aboot."

"Make it within call, Jim," replied Burrage, not without significance.



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Jim sat down, ostensibly to mend one of his stirrups, but as a matter of fact he did not care to pick out his bed site under the pale eyes of these degenerate Hatt boys. He could peer through the eyes of men to their minds. Either Tobe or Henry would commit murder for a sack of tobacco. Jim decided he would carry his bed to a secluded place in the brush, and change that place every night. With covert glances, he watched the Hatt boys, and also kept a lookout for Rose.

"Wal, fellers, what about goin' on with our little game?" inquired Hubrigg.

"Sure," replied Brawn.

"I should smile," added Stagg cheerfully.

Cash Burridge shook his head dubiously; but did not voice his opinion until the Hatt boys had ambled off out of hearing.

"Say, men, I don't want to be a kill-joy; but, honest, I question the sense of showin' all that money here."

"Why not?" asked Hubrigg.

"It might not be safe. We don't belong to this Hatt outfit. They could have this canyon 'most full of backwoodsmen in no time. There's only six of us."

"Wal, listen to him!" ejaculated Brawn. "You got it wrong, Cash. There's five of us, an' Jim Lacy!"

"I just don't think it's wise," added Burridge stubbornly, ignoring the sarcasm.

"We may have to hang 'round here for a week or more," spoke up Stagg. "What'll we do? If we can't gamble, we might as well not have any money."

"Jim, what do you say?" asked Burridge, in perplexity.

"Wal, seein' that money changes hands so often, I reckon nobody'd miss it if the Hatts did get it," chuckled Jim.

"Haw! Haw!" roared Cash, slapping his knee.

"I'll set in a few hands," said Jim, good-naturedly.

Whereupon, the rustlers, in high spirits, owing to being well-fed and flush with money, repaired to the shade of a pine in front of Elam's cabin, squatted around a blanket, and emptied their pockets of coins and bills. Jim joined them, choosing a seat from which he could watch the cabins, and approach of anyone.

The Hatt boys came to look on at the game, soon growing as absorbed as the players. Old Elam came presently, and likewise fell to the attraction of the game; but it seemed that it was the playing itself, rather than the sums of money lost and won, that held charm for him.

ELAM HATT'S cabin was one of the picturesque double-cabined structures under one roof, with wide porch space between. The porch ran along the front of both cabins, and one end was littered with saddles and packs. Deer and elk antlers on the walls supported rifles and bridles. The left-hand cabin was smaller than the other, evidently consisting of only one room. The window, without glass or shutter, opened toward Jim, who had been quick to see a face peer from the darkness and draw back again.

When he caught sight of it again, he knew at once that it belonged to Rose Hatt, and that she had espied him. She stood far back in the gloom of the cabin, her face only a vague oval, but with staring eyes like black holes.

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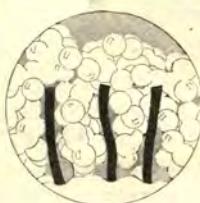
Compare the two lather-pictures on this page. Notice the amazing smallness of the Colgate bubbles. See how compact they are. The smaller the bubbles, the more water they hold; the larger the bubbles, the more air.

How Colgate Lather Works: The moment Colgate lather forms on your beard, two things happen:

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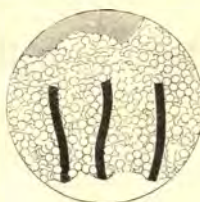
2. With the oil film gone, millions of tiny, water-saturated bubbles bring and hold an abundance of water down to the base of the beard, right where the razor does its work.

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This lather-picture (greatly magnified) of ordinary shaving cream shows how large, air-filled bubbles fail to get down to the base of the beard; and how they hold air, instead of water, against the whiskers.



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"Elam, do you know draw-poker?" asked Jim presently.

"Tolerable. I wisht I had stake enough to set in this hyar game. I'd bust somebody," replied old Hatt, to the amusement of the gamesters.

"Play a few hands for me," said Jim, rising. "Change my luck, maybe. I want a drink."

"Whisky?"

"No. Water. Where'll I get it?"

"Thar, inside the kitchen door at the end of the porch," replied Hatt, rising with alacrity to take Jim's place. "My girl jest fetched some fresh from the spring. Snow water, an' thar's none better."

As Jim neared the porch, Rose came out of the cabin where he had seen her, and crossed to enter the other. She wore buckskin. He caught the flash of brown, bare legs and feet. Jim went down the porch and entered the door mentioned by Hatt. As he expected, he encountered Rose. Despite excitement manifest in her face, he thought she looked clearer of eye and skin, somehow prettier.

"Howdy, Rose. You see I've come," he said.

"I saw you the first thing," she replied.

"I want a drink, please."

SHE filled a dipper from a pail and handed it to him. Facing her and standing in the door Jim drank thirstily. It was good water.

"Will it be all right if I talk to you?" asked Jim.

"Sure. 'Cept when Cedar's around."

"Where is he?"

"Reckon he's hidin' somewhere, watchin' you-all. So we can't talk now. . . . But oh, I've so much to tell you!"

"Yes? Tell me a little—quick," said Jim.

"Marvie's fetched his sister Hettie—to meet me," whispered the girl, fearfully, yet with eyes full of glad light. "Oh, she must be an angel. She says she will give me a home—if I can ever get away from here."

"Wal, now, that's fine!" flashed Jim, vibrating to this news. "Three friends now—Marvie, an' me, an' Hettie Ide. Lucky girl!"

"I can't thank God enough," she breathed from a full breast.

"Keep on thankin', an' fightin'," said Jim, with ring of voice and meaning smile. Then he set down the dipper on the bench and backed out of the door, eyes still intent on Rose. She was flushed of face now, eager, hopeful, yet still fearful.

"I will. They can't stop me now—unless they kill me," she answered resolutely, with a wonderful blaze in her eyes.

"Who're they, Rose?"

"Cedar, for one. I told you," she replied, haltingly. But there seemed to be a tremendous impelling power working on her, greater, Jim sensed, than could come through him just then.

"Tell me the other man."

"Oh, I daren't—I daren't," she faltered, losing courage.

"If you love Marvie—an' if she will stand by you—you can dare," he shot at her, relentlessly.

She showed then a struggle over fear that had outlived childish years.

"Rose, that other man is Clan Dillon?"

"Yes—yes," she whispered, in unutter-



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able relief, as if she had been spared betraying him. "Are—are you to be here long?"

"Days, maybe weeks."

"Keep watch," cried the girl, finding courage. "Cedar will drag me off in the woods—to meet Dillon. If he does—follow us, for God's sake!"

"I shore will, Rose. Don't lose your nerve."

"But be careful. Cedar's an Indian in the woods!"

Jim Lacy turned leisurely, and with glance on the ground, apparently idle and lax, he strolled back to the gamblers.

"How comes the luck, Elam?" he asked.

"Ha! He's got no chance on earth, Jim," said Cash. "Better set back in before we break you."

Old Elam held his own, however, evidently to his immense gratification. Jim watched for a while, much amused, until his ever-questioning glance fastened upon a newcomer to the scene.

A MAN had come out of the aspen thicket. He carried a rifle, which he held by the barrel over his shoulder. This was Cedar Hatt.

Upon nearer view, Cedar Hatt turned out to possess only the walk and the shape of the Hatt family. He was darker than any of them, with beardless face of clear brown tan, small glittering eyes set close, black as coal, and of a strange intensity, sharp nose and sharp chin, with a slit between for a mouth. He wore his hair long, and it curled dark from under an old slouch hat full of bullet holes. His garb was greasy buckskin, from head to toe. There was a knife in his belt, but no shells for the rifle.

Cedar Hatt stood across from the circle of gamblers, and dropping the muzzle of his rifle upon his moccasined foot he leaned on it, and gave his restless sloe-black eyes scope of all present. If the players saw him they gave no outward show of it. The game progressed, with luck shifting from one player to another, and manifestly what seemed a long, tedious, irritating waste of time to Jim was only a fleeting of precious moments to them.

Finally, Cedar Hatt, without ever having uttered a word, shouldered his rifle, and stalked away with the spring of a deer-hunter in his stride. He went up the canyon to disappear around the green bend.

Whereupon, Lacy strolled away himself, into the golden shade of the aspen thicket, and on through darker shade to the lichened base of the cliff. He flung himself down here and leaned against the wall. Above him the quivering aspen leaves fluttered with the marvelous, noiseless movement peculiar to them. All around in the brush the lizards rustled. Nature was alive and full of treasure for the watcher, the seeker. But Jim Lacy's eyes were focused inward; his ears were attuned to a beating within. He had come there into the obscurity and loneliness of the thicket to think, to plan, to plot, to work out a course he could inevitably follow.

But how useless that was! The slightest accident or incident might change the best of his plans. If he decided on a definite thing his mind would be set. His task demanded more than that; and it involved infinite patience and sacrifice,



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incredible command of geniality and good-fellowship with these rustlers, sight and sense that must grasp every little clue which might lead to the success of his venture. All this, when his spirit revolted, and his nature demanded quick, hard, fierce action.

AFTER supper, which was served about sundown on the porch between the two cabins, Elam Hatt scraped his rude seat back and arose.

"You-all who want to gamble air welcome, but I reckon some of you will want to set in to a confab with me."

He went into his cabin, followed by Burridge and Lacy. The large room was dark, except where breaks in the chinks between the logs let in light. Hatt stirred the slumbering embers in the huge yellow stone fireplace and put on chips of wood.

"Reckon they'll want the lamps, an' we don't need none," said Elam.

The door opened to admit Cedar Hatt, who advanced with his sliding, silent step, to seat himself on a bench in the shadow beside the stone chimney.

"Burrige, if thar's a lead weight on yore chest shove it off," invited Elam, bending down to lift a fiery ember with which to light his pipe.

"Are you open to a big deal?" queried the rustler bluntly.

"Always open to anythin'. But I'm careful not to change the minds of ranchers about Elam Hatt," replied the backwoodsman, shrewdly.

"Which means they think you do some two-bit rustlin' of mavericks, like any cowboy; but you never tackle a real rustlin' job?"

"Reckon that's the size of it, Cash."

"An' that's exactly why I'm goin' to spring this deal on you. No one will ever lay it to you, an' everyone will lay it to the Pine Tree Outfit. Savvy? The time's just ripe. The trap's set. We can't do it half so well without you an' your sons. We don't know the country. Otherwise, you bet we wouldn't let you or anyone else in on it."

"Sounds good. I'm listenin'."

"Tom Day an' Franklidge have throwed a big herd of stock together. Some of it's workin' with Ben Ide's big herd, the last of his stock, in what the sheep herders call Silver Meadows. They're high, an' won't be comin' down before the fall round-up. That'll come anywhere along first of October. Now, while them cattle are high up we plan to drive them—on up over the Rim—an' down into the Basin, where we could sell a hundred times as many head, with never a question asked. I've already got the buyer. To do the job right an' quick we need more riders, an' particular some who know how to find fast travelin' through them bad canyons up to the Rim. That's all. I leave it to you to call the turn on that deal."

"How do you know Ide's stock air runnin' on Silver Meadows? That's Day's range."

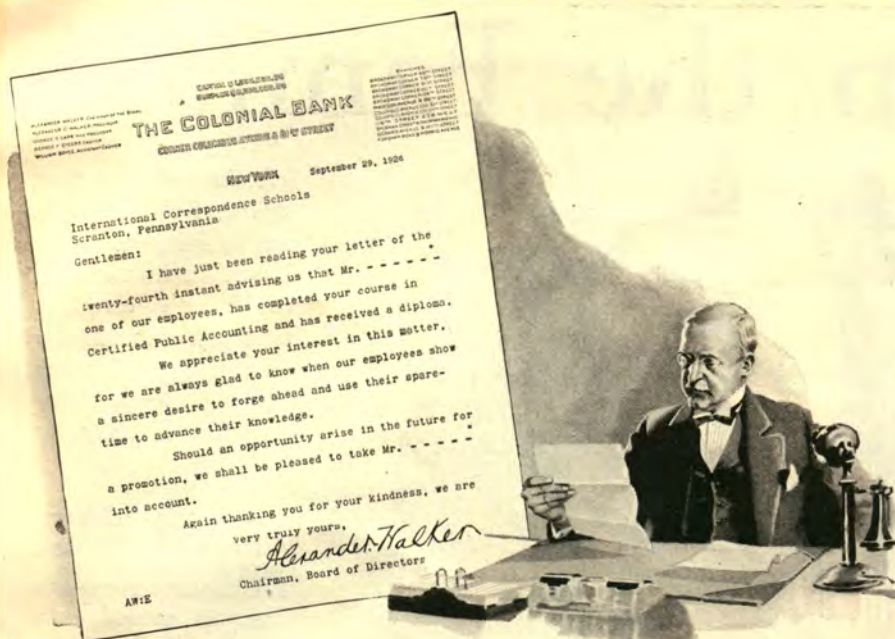
"I know because I saw them, an' they used to be my cattle."

"You're calculatin' thet if Ide does rare, he'll lay it onto the Pine Tree Outfit?"

"Exactly. The deal is ready-made for us."

"How much stock thar now?"

"We can bunch three or four thousand



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Canadian address—International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal

head in half a day, an' land them over the Rim in less'n two days."

"An' you've got a buyer?"

"Waitin' an' willin'. He's drivin' ten thousand head to Maricopa. How easy to run in a few more thousand!"

"Looks too powerful easy to me," returned Hatt, as if sagging under an overpowering weight.

"Easy an' safe. An' listen, Elam. Twenty dollars a head! In gold! One yellow old double-eagle for every steer!"

ELAM HATT paced the rough-hewn logs that constituted the floor of his cabin. He seemed to find strength in their solidity. His legs were the first part of him to weaken. His collapse came suddenly, with a crash to the bench before the fire.

"Cedar, what d'ye say?" he asked.

"Burridge, swear them steers air in Silver Meadow," said Cedar Hatt, his moccasined feet coming down with padded thuds, as he leaped up and leaned out of the shadow.

"Sure, I swear. Three days ago. An' the grass an' water are fine. They'll work higher for several more days. . . . Ask Jim Lacy here. Reckon you'll not be intimatin' he's a liar."

"Talk up, Jim Lacy, if you're a rustler," called the younger Hatt.

"Wal, I was with Burridge. I saw the cattle," replied Lacy.

Cedar Hatt glided into the light of the fire, to lean over his father and strike out with a lean dark hand.

"Papa, with ten riders I can run them cattle over the Rim in one day," he declared. How grotesque and striking the epithet he gave his father! He seemed the epitome of lawlessness, of the hardened rustler, yet acknowledged the endearing claim of blood.

"Thet settles it then," returned Elam Hatt, throwing up his hands as one who had his price and it had been met.

"Hold on! Thar ain't no greaser herder in these brakes who'd lead thet drive. An' I'm the only white man who kin."

"Wal, what's makin' you yap so? It's settled, ain't it, 'cept the workin' out?"

"I want my pard, Burt-Stillwell, in on this."

"Reckon I see no kick to thet. But it ain't my deal."

Cedar Hatt faced round with the swift, sinister action peculiar to him.

"Anythin' agin Stillwell?" he queried.

"Wal, not any more, Hatt," drawled Jim. "I shore had a little grudge; but it's gone. When I saw Burt last I shore had a friendly feelin' for him."

"Burridge, you had no use for the Stillwells. How're you standin' on this hyar deal I want?"

"Cedar, all I say is, sure—ring your pard Burt in—if you can get him," returned Burridge, with something unnatural in his tone. And it was noticeable that he stepped more into the shadow.

"Papa," hissed Cedar Hatt, and now that word inspired awe as well as mirth, "I'm double-crossin' the Pine Tree Outfit to make us all rich on this big job."

"Air you drunk, son?" asked Hatt, slowly rising to his feet. "How'n tarnation can you double-cross them—onless you mean beatin' them to the deal?"

"Me an' Burt belong to the Pine Tree Outfit!" (To be continued)
