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The American Magazine

January, 1927

MERLE CROWELL, *Editor*
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Jim sprang forward and knocked Dillon down. "It may take more'n that," he said in slow accents, "but I told you who I am. An' that's somethin' you didn't tell me!"

"Nevada"

A romance of the West

By Zane Grey

ILLUSTRATED BY STOCKTON MULFORD

Synopsis of the Two Preceding Instalments

JIM LACY was notorious as a "gunman," from Lineville, his old hangout, across the desert wastes of Nevada, clear to Tombstone. But two years of friendship with Ben Ide in California had opened a new life before him. He had been known to Ben and his sister Hettie only as "Nevada;" they had loved and trusted him; they had taught him the beauty of love and friendship and faith; and in return Jim had given all his devotion. He had helped Ben in his wild-horse hunting; he had won Hettie's love, and then had come his chance to serve. He had saved their ranch for the Ides, by killing Less Setter and the two accomplices, who had plotted their ruin. He had made Ben and Hettie rich—but Nevada was once more Jim Lacy, who had killed his man, and a fugitive from justice.

After a time of hiding in the mountains he rode back into Lineville, where he had known Less Setter of old. He was resolved to be true to Hettie Ide's ideal of Nevada, even though he could never hope to see her or Ben again. They must never know that the Nevada they had loved was Jim Lacy. He resisted all attempts to draw him into brawls in the "Gold Mine" (the gambling hell of Lineville); he refused all invitations to drink; he tried to help Lize Teller, but ignored her overtures leading to any relationship which might give Link Cawthorne, her lover, ground for jealousy. About this time a man named Cash Burridge came back to Lineville, and begged Nevada to go with him to Arizona, where he purposed to turn from cattle "rustling" to honest cattle raising, and had already bought a ranch. Nevada had decided to go—and then he came into the Gold Mine to find Lize Teller dying at the hands of Link Cawthorne. In Jim Lacy's code there was only one thing to do—he shot Cawthorne dead. And once more he was a fugitive from justice.

As Nevada did not forget Ben and Hettie Ide, so they did not forget him. By his sacrifice a reunion was effected between Ben and his father, and Ben was enabled to marry Ina Blaine. For four years Ben and Hettie hoped for Nevada's return, and then decided to sell the California ranch and move to the wilder country of Arizona. In both hearts was the unspoken hope that in this newer country they might find Nevada. They took "California Red," the wild stallion Ben and Nevada had captured, all the other horses, a few of their men, and Ina's brother, Marvie Blaine, and journeyed overland to Arizona.

Near the town of Winthrop Ben bought a ranch and ten thousand head of cattle from Cash Burridge. They were getting settled here when a neighbor, Tom Day, rode over to see them. To Ben's consternation, he learned that Burridge had cheated him in the count of his cattle, and had passed on to him liens upon the stock he had. Also that the whole country was infested with rustlers, that not even Franklidge, the boss rancher of the country, knew which were the honest ranchers and which the thieves—and that Tom Day had never heard of a cowboy named "Nevada."

SOME eighteen or twenty miles from Tom Day's ranch, Judge Franklidge maintained the last outpost of his extensive cattle ranch.

This property, called the Chevelon Ranch, had come into his possession, as had many another, by the failure of a homesteader. At some time or other Franklidge had lent money or staked cattle to every poor settler in that part of Arizona. His kindness and generosity had for many years made him a mark. But though he had never been known to drive a hard bargain or force a payment, he had prospered through most of his transactions. Chevelon Ranch, however, was a losing proposition so far as actual cattle raising was concerned.

The hundred and sixty acres which comprised the ranch lay in a strip along the rim of Chevelon Canyon, one of the deep wild gorges that constituted part of the brakes of the Mongollons. Cabins and corrals, built of logs, showed the weathering of years of storm and heat. The main cabin stood on the rim, and the wide porch ran to the edge of the gray rock wall. On this mid-August afternoon the porch was a shady and cool place to

lounges and rest. The deep canyon was densely green with oak and cedar; a low roar of running water floated dreamily from the depths; the drowsy summer air was redolent with a sweet, dry fragrance.

JUDGE FRANKLIDGE had just arrived on one of his rare visits to this margin of his vast cattle interests.

"Jack," he said to the cowboy who had driven him out, "I'm to meet Day here. Put the horses up. I'll stay all night. Then find Day, if he's here, and come back yourself."

"Yes, sir. An' how about Stewart?" replied the cowboy.

"Stewart? Tell him I'll send word when I want him."

"All right, sir," said Jack, and slapping the reins he drove away toward the barn.

"Humph. I'd forgotten about that foreman," muttered Judge Franklidge. "Darn the cattle business, anyway. . . . I'd like to forget it and enjoy the peace of this wild place."

The judge fell into a day dream that amused as well as made him sigh. Presently a jangle of spurs and thud of footsteps interrupted his reverie, and he looked up to see Tom Day and the cowboy

approaching. Day had his hand on the younger man's shoulder, and was talking earnestly. That reminded the judge of the strong friendship Day had always evinced for this young man the range called Texas Jack. How good to see two men he could swear by!

"Howdy, Judge; I'm shore glad to see you," said Day, as he heavily mounted the porch, with beaming smile and extended hand.

"How are you, Tom? Pull up that bench. We're in for a good long talk."

"Wal, it's about time," returned Day, as he deposited his huge bulk on a seat, with back to the porch rail.

The judge laughed, and then glanced sharply at the cowboy waiting at the step.

"Jack, you've got something on your mind," he said.

"Yes, sir, but it can wait. No hurry, sir."

"Wal, Judge, if you'll take a hunch from me you'll not let it wait too long," interposed Day.

"Come up and sit in with us, Jack," was Franklidge's reply.

THE cowboy did as he was bidden, but he made no reply. He sat near the porch rail and leaned over to gaze down into the green canyon. The judge's appraising eyes took stock of the lithe figure, the service-worn garb, the lean bearded face that was half hidden under the wide sombrero.

"Stewart was in town last night, drunk," said Franklidge casually. "Is he here today?"

"Yes, sir—an' he's all right now," rejoined the cowboy.

"Judge, your foreman *may* be all right, as Texas Jack says; but I've my doubts," put in Day. "I can't find anythin' agin him, 'cept the drinkin', but I've just come to distrust the man. Mebbe I'm wrong. It shore is a distrustful time."

"Mr. Franklidge, I hunted up Stewart, an' found him an' Dillon off under a cedar, talkin' deep an' quiet," said Texas Jack.

"Dillon? Who's he? That name's familiar."

"Dillon is young Ben Ide's foreman," replied Day, with interest. "He's held jobs all over the range the last two years. Fine cowman. Engagin' sort of chap. Everybody likes him. I shore do."

"Which ought to be recommendation enough for Ide, or even me, sore old cattle man that I am. . . . Well, Tom, have you considered the offer I made you some time ago?"

"Reckon I have, Judge, an' I'm acceptin' with thanks."

"We're partners, then," replied Franklidge. "We'll throw these ranches and all the stock together. I'll have papers made

out when I get back to town. . . . Now, get what's troubling you off your chest."

"Wal, boss, the situation heah has grown from bad to wuss," returned Day seriously.

"Where do you mean by here?" demanded Franklidge.

"All this range thet haid along the wild brakes of the Mongollons. Say, fifty miles in a straight line. Reckon it takes in a good many ranches, countin' everybody, an' mebbe two hundred thousand haid of cattle. But Ben Ide's range an' this one of yours an' mine have come in fer the wust of the rustlin' this last month."

"We've always had rustlers to deal with. We always will have. What's the difference between, say, a year or five years ago and now?"

"Wal, Judge, fer a big cattle man, you're shore poor informed. The difference I'd calkilate offhand to stand you an' me an' Ben Ide around ten thousand haid!"

The judge's boots came down off the porch rail with a crash.

"What?" he demanded, incredulously.

"Boss, I said ten thousand, an' mebbe thet's conservative. Shore, most of this rustled stock belongs to Ide. But we've lost a good deal, an' stand to lose more, or all, unless somethin' is done. You see, Ide proved an easy mark. He bought out Burrige, who had some stock, nobody knows how much. Wal, young Ide's cow outfit was green an' raw fer Arizona. I

gave him two of my best riders. One of them, Sam Tull, was found daid in the woods. Shot! We've never found out about it. The other cowboy, Rang Jones, had a quarrel with Dillon an' quit. I cain't see thet Dillon has changed matters fer the better. But I reckon no one man could at this stage of the game."

"So they've hit young Ide hard," muttered Franklidge darkly. "Funny he didn't complain to me. I've seen something of him lately."

"Ide's not thet kind, Judge," replied Day warmly. "He's as game as they come. An' his sister—say, she's a thoroughbred. She stands to lose most as much as Ide."

THE two men, warming to the subject, might have been alone for all the notice they took of Texas Jack. He leaned far over the porch rail, his face hidden, his long, lithe form strung like a whipcord. It was the strained position of a listening deer.

"Tom, I admire Miss Ide very much indeed, and her brother too," responded the judge. "I regret exceedingly the reception Arizona has given these two fine young people. I am ashamed. We all ought to be ashamed. We must end this wholesale cattle stealing."

"Ahuh! . . . Boss, I reckon I feel it more than you, as I've come to be friends with the Ides. Why, he paid Burrige's debt to me. Four thousand! An' then I'm a son-

of-a-gun if he didn't send for Elam Hatt, an' pay the lien he had on Burrige. Don't know how much. But the Hatts were drunk fer a week or more. An' ever since then the rustlers have been bolder than

I ever have seen 'em yet in Arizonie."

"Who are these rustlers, Tom?"

"Huh! If I said what I think it'd be old to you. But I reckon there is a new leader workin' now. Shore, they're all workin'. But there's some big thief who's keen as a wolf."

"Where are these stolen cattle driven?" asked the judge, wondering. "I've been twenty years in this business. Yet this beats me."

"Reckon the stock gets drove everywhere," replied Day.

"Not to the railroad?" queried Franklidge, aghast.

"Shore to the railroad. Not to Winthrop. But, man, there's other stations along the line. Then I had a Mexican sheep herder tell me he'd seen herds of cattle drove over the Rim, down into the Tonto. That's a wild country. Shore no cow outfits are followin' rustlers down into the Tonto."

"Tom, the Hatts are a bad outfit," rejoined the judge thoughtfully. "Some years ago I had trouble with Elam Hatt. The Stillwells are another. Surely these backwoodsmen run with these rustler outfits."

"Shore they do," snorted Day. "But I reckon the Hatts ain't the ringleaders. Cedar Hatt is the wust of thet bad lot."

"Cedar Hatt?" mused the judge. "Yes, I know of him. Bad name. Gun fighter. . . . How many Hatts in the family?"

"I KNOW the whole outfit," replied Day. "Elam an' me always got along pretty good. But I've no use fer Cedar. He's the oldest son. Then there's Henny and Tobe—pack-rats, if I ever seen any in the woods. An' last there's a girl, Rose. Reckon she'll be about sixteen. Pretty slip of a lass, whose mother died when she was a baby."

"What a pity! No mother. No decent home. No schooling. Why don't some cowboy take this Rose away and marry her? She might turn out a good woman."

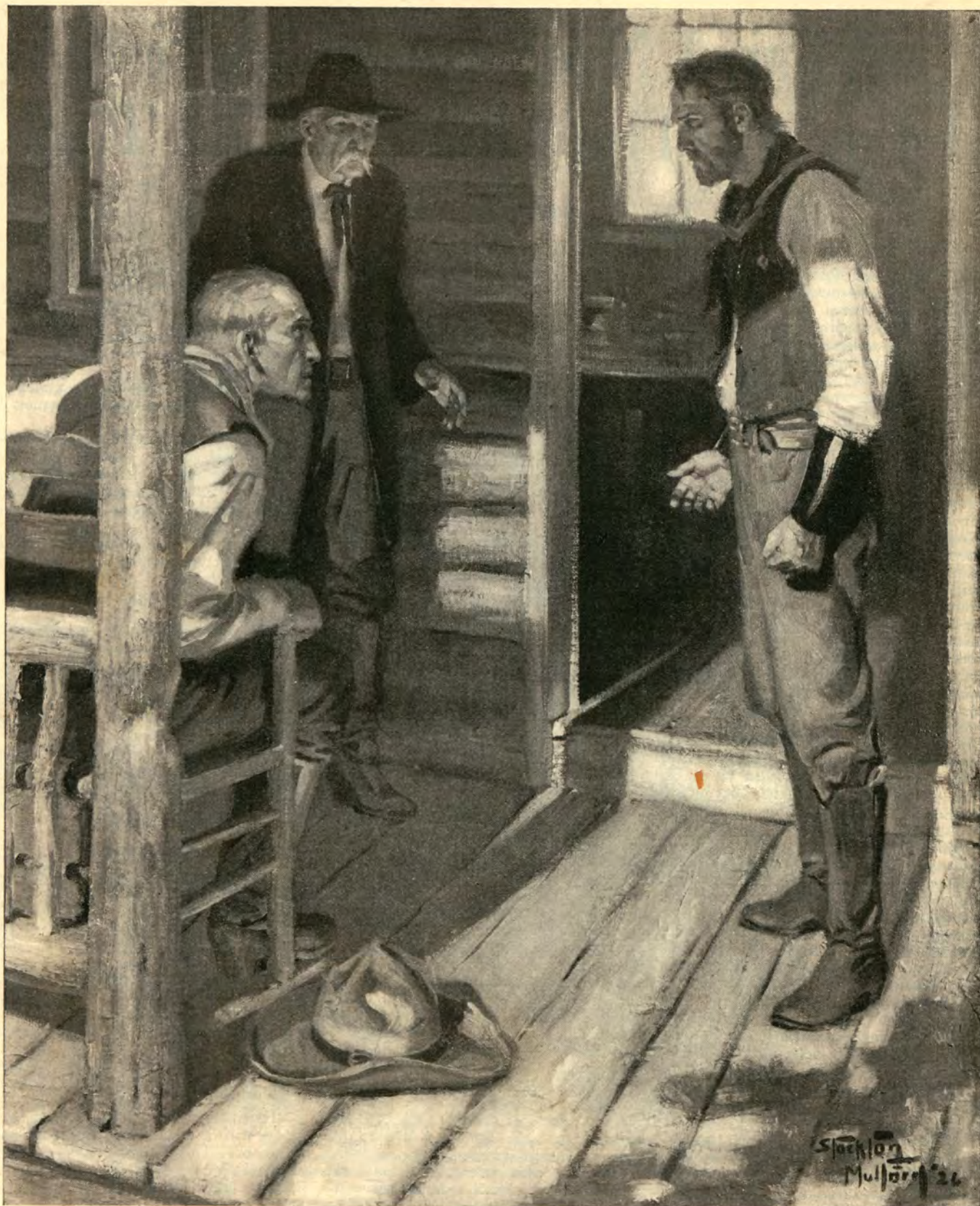
"Shore she might. An' so I've said often. But I ain't hit on any cowboy yet who cared to risk his skin down there in the brakes."

"What has Ide done in regard to the raids on his stock?" asked the judge, curiously.

"About all any man could," replied Day admiringly. "He's spent a lot of money hiring extra hands to trail stock. He took over this Dillon at a high salary. An' I reckon he puts a good deal of confidence in Dillon. Funny about Ben Ide, though. He gets sore when the rustlers make a raid. But he really don't care about the cattle. He's shore afraid fer hosses, though, specially thet California Red. There's a grand hoss, Judge. I'll bet if the rustlers got thet stallion, Ben Ide would hit the trail himself. Strikes me he's seen some wild life. He shore is a rider. Strange sort of chap Ben Ide is. I'm just gettin' acquainted with him. He always struck me as a rancher whose heart wasn't in his ranch. There's somethin' he wants. But he worships his wife an' kid, an' thet handsome sister. It ain't thet. I cain't explain what I don't savvy. But I've a hunch young Ide has been hurt. Mebbe he killed someone over in California, an' had to get out. I've often wondered if thet could be it. Then it might be he's lookin' fer some man.



"Say, mister, I reckon you ain't acquainted with Cedar Hatt," declared the girl, almost with scorn. "You're sure a stranger in these parts"



"Man, you're forcing me against my will," said the judge, rising to his feet:
"I don't want you to attempt this thing alone. It's a wild cowboy idea"

Like a Texan, you know, who never forgot."

Before the judge could reply to Day's earnest statement, the cowboy, Texas Jack, whirled around with a silent wrestling violence that indicated a suppressed and poignant passion. Under the shadow of his broad sombrero his eyes gleamed like clear coals of fire.

"I'm—heahin'—all—you say!" he burst out, pantingly.

"Suppose you are, Jack?" queried the judge, in kindly surprise. "If I'd minded about being overheard I'd have sent you away."

Tom Day stared, and it was evident he was not so surprised as expectant. He had lived with cowboys all his life.

"Wal, what ails you, son?" he growled.

Jack whirled away in the same sudden violent action with which he had faced them, only now it seemed there was added a fierce struggle of mind over body. But in a moment he turned toward the men again, to present a remarkably transformed front.

"I'm shore (Continued on page 66)

"Nevada"

(Continued from page 13)

beggin' pardon, Mr. Franklidge, an' of you too, Tom," he drawled, in slow, cool, easy speech. "I couldn't help heahin' all you said, an'—wal, it knocked me off my balance."

"Wal, see heah, you long, lean, hungry-eyed Texan," spoke up Day, forcefully, "jest why did I knock you off your balance?"

"Tom, I reckon I happened to hit on a way to fix the rustlers," replied Jack, nonchalantly.

Judge Franklidge sat up with a jerk.

"Wal, what is this idee you hit on?" demanded Day.

"Shore it's as simple as A B C," rejoined the cowboy, blandly. "Somebody has got to ride down into the brakes an' get thick with the rustlers, then shoot up the Hatts an' mebbe the Stillwells. An' kill some of that Pine Tree outfit—in particular the hombre who's at the head of it."

"Is thet all? My lord, Jack, you're loco!" exploded Day. "Shore you hit on the way to fix the rustlers. Shore! But who's goin' to do it? Was you figurin' on us hirin' some fancy gun-slingers to do the little job? Kingfisher from Texas, huh? An' Wess Hardin? Or mebbe you had in mind some new Bill the Kid, or Pat Garrett? Or more like, perhaps, Jim Lacy, who, they say, has been hidin' quiet in Arizona for a long time!"

TEXAS JACK'S tan appeared to become a shade less brown. He grew tense, steely-eyed.

"Tom Day, how long have you known me?" he demanded, in a voice that rang.

"Two years an' more, son," replied Day, surrendering to something compelling.

"Would you trust me?"

"I shore would. With my stock, my money, my reputation . . . with my life, so help me Gawd!"

"Judge Franklidge, how long have I worked for you?" queried the cowboy, turning to the other.

"About a year and a half, as I remember."

"An' what is your opinion of me—as a man?" flashed the cowboy.

"Jack, you're the squarest and best man, the finest hand who ever worked for me!" responded the judge, feelingly.

"Thank you. Reckon you can have no idea what that means to me," returned the cowboy. "An' you'd trust me?"

"As well as I would my own flesh and blood."

Texas Jack removed his sombrero and sailed it against the wall. His brow was broad and pale, his clear light eyes seemed to burn with a steady flame; there were white hairs in the long locks smoothed back over his ears; under the thin bronze beard cheeks and lips set hard.

"Wal then, it's my job to fix the rustlers," he said deliberately.

"You! Nonsense," declared the judge. "You wouldn't tackle that alone? Nonsense, I say!"

"Judge," interposed Tom Day, "it shore does look thet way; but wait. This

cowboy has got somethin' up his sleeve. I always knowed it . . . Come heah, Texas Jack. Spring it."

What shrewd, hard, comprehending, yet wondering light flashed from the old rancher's eyes!

"Listen," went on Jack, bending to his hearers. "To serve Arizona an' you an' your good friends, I've got to become a rustler. I may have to go a long way to find the leader of this heah Pine Tree outfit. I'll have to drink an' steal an' kill. Shore, I may lose my life finishin' the job. An' I want my secret kept till it's ended. Then, if I come back alive I want my name cleared."

"Who'n thunder are you?" asked Tom Day in a low and husky voice.

"Man, you're forcing me against my will," said the judge, rising to his feet. "I don't want you to attempt this thing alone. It's a wild cowboy idea. You'd only be killed. But I admire you, Jack. If you're going to persist in this mad plan, I'll make you a deputy sheriff right here and now."

"No. I'll never be an officer of the law; but I'm shore goin' through with this, whether you stand by me or not," returned the other grimly. "It's too late now. I've got a reason, Judge. But it'd only be fair for you to uphold me—to tell in court, if necessary, that you an' Tom Day were parties to the job I undertook."

"Jack, you misunderstand," replied Franklidge hastily. "Don't make me ashamed. I will give you any support and authority right here and now. In writing, if you want."

"Only your word, Judge."

"There! You have it. And here's my hand."

Texas Jack broke from that handclasp to make the same proffer to the other rancher.

"Tom, will you stand by me—when I come back?"

"Lord, yes!" boomed Day, as he pumped the cowboy's arm up and down.

Abruptly then Jack wrenched clear of the vigorous grasp and wheeled to a post of the porch, against which he leaned and clutched hard. But, whatever the strife was, it passed as swiftly as it had come. Then the cowboy turned again, somehow different, so that the judge and Day had awe added to their surprise.

"Gentlemen, I shore hate to give myself away," he drawled. A smile outshone the strange, steely light in his eyes. "But I reckon it's got to be done. Tom Day, I'm the starved cowboy you once took pity on. But that starved cowboy happened to be—Jim Lacy!"

IT WAS Sunday, and that hour of the afternoon when all the men off duty at the Franklidge Ranch would be anywhere except around the bunk-house. The cowboy Texas Jack, striding in, was relieved to find himself alone. He made for his bunk for the purpose of hurriedly packing his few belongings. An old pair of black chaps, worn thin, hung at the head of his bed, with a belt and gun. An instinct prompted him to flash out his hand.

There, as if by magic, the gun whirled in the air.

"Reckon it was fate," he muttered, as he sheathed the gun. "Somethin' never let me stop practicin' that old draw!"

In a few moments his belongings had been tied into a small roll to go behind a saddle, and he strode out into the rude yet comfortable living-room. Something prompted him to step before the mirror.

"Wal, so long, Texas Jack," he said to the image reflected there. "Reckon I been almost happy with you. A shave an' a hair-cut will shore say adios to you forever. . . . An' then there'll be men who'll recognize you as Jim Lacy!"

A QUARTER of an hour later he rode briskly down a trail that led into the cedars. He had taken his own saddle, but the horse he bestrode was one long discarded by the boys at the ranch. Once under cover of the cedars the rider pulled his mount to a walk. It was nineteen miles to Sunshine, and he wanted to reach that station after dark, and board a night train without being seen.

A melancholy resignation had no power to cramp the slow-mounting exaltation in Jim Lacy's breast. Once free of the need to hurry, his mind reverted to the cause of this extraordinary adventure he had voluntarily accepted. Facts were cold, hard things. He had hidden his real identity; he had buried the past; he had risen on stepping-stones of his dead self to honest, useful service; he had earned peace and victory, if not real happiness. And then, like a thunderbolt from heaven, an inevitable, irresistible fate had confronted him.

What he had suffered during the moments when Tom Day had talked to Judge Franklidge about Ben and Hettie Ide! The old wound had not healed. The old love lived in his heart, stronger for the years of denial and repression.

"I shore knew it—all these weeks I knew," whispered Jim huskily. "Ben come to Arizona to find me! . . . Didn't he comb California—didn't he send men to all the ranges in the West? . . . Didn't Tom Day tell me no more'n a month ago how Ben Ide wanted to know if he'd ever met a cowboy called Nevada? . . . That was it—the name Ben gave me—Nevada! . . . He never forgot!"

How terribly sweet and soul-satisfying that knowledge, and yet somehow bitter. In one tremendous moment of decision it had flung him back into the past, once more to own to an infamous name. It had destroyed all he had built up. Only through the power of his dreaded name could he ever bring to successful issue the task he had set himself. What irony of fate that the fame he hated must be his open sesame to the rendezvous of the rustlers who were ruining Ben Ide!

"Like as not in the long run I'll stop a bullet," he muttered. "But hardly before I get the job 'most done. . . . An' shore that'd be better so. Ben would never know I'm Jim Lacy. An' Hettie—she would never know. . . . But I reckon that's not my kind of luck. Like as not I'll run

plumb into Ben before it's over. An' Hettie too!"

He rode on through the waning afternoon, absorbed with the strife of his soul. When darkness fell he had reached the outskirts of Sunshine, and he halted under a clump of cottonwoods. Here, removing saddle and bridle from the horse, he turned it loose. That act seemed to sever the last thread which bound him to the ranching life he had followed for long.

It had, too, a singular effect upon the emotions which had beset him. The hour had come when he must plan his return to the old life. Wherefore he sat down beside his saddle and pack, and with bowed head and a wrenching rending of his spirit he slipped, as into a long-unused garment, back into the old personality. And it seemed that the instant this transformation was consummated his plan for the perilous adventure at hand was simple and complete. He had only to be Jim Lacy.

The whistle of an approaching freight train inspired him with an idea more satisfactory than the one of waiting for the passenger train. He would steal a ride on the freight, thus obviating any risk of being recognized at the station. To this end he shouldered his pack and saddle and, hurrying to the railroad track, which was only a few hundred paces away, waited beside the slowly halting train, peering through the gloom for an empty car. At length it reached him, just as the train stopped. Jim threw pack and saddle aboard and climbed in.

DAYLIGHT found him across the territory line into New Mexico. When the train stopped outside of a town at a water tank he threw his baggage out, down over a grassy embankment, and got off. He had some money, besides the considerable sum Judge Franklidge had forced him to take. And it was with something of an old familiar zest that he strolled into the town.

Before encountering any riders or cattle men Jim entered a barber shop, from which he emerged a changed man. Next he purchased a complete new outfit of rider's apparel, the costliest he could find. Jim Lacy, he remembered, had once affected something near to dandyism. He retained only his gun and chaps, which were things more intimate than clothes, and were not to be discarded.

His next move was to buy a good horse. Lastly, he led the horse out of town, found his saddle and pack, and was soon riding back across the line into Arizona.

Traveling leisurely, and stopping at ranches and stations convenient to the day's travel, Jim Lacy in due time arrived in Winthrop.

The day was a Friday, toward the close of afternoon. He made his way to Beacham's corrals, where overnight visitors to town usually left their horses to be cared for. Several rangy, dusty-garbed riders had just ridden in, evidently behind a dilapidated old wagon drawn by a shaggy, gaunt team. The driver, a lanky man, dark of face and bearded, clambered down with the cramped movements of one more at home in the saddle. Jim had seen him before, but could not place him. There was a young girl sitting on the driver's seat, and she appeared quite pretty in a wild-rose way.

Jim led his horse somewhat closer to the wagon and, choosing one of the covered stalls adjoining the fence, he leisurely began to remove the saddle, while his eyes roved elsewhere. He noted presently, when the girl jumped down, that her slim brown legs were bare, that she wore beaded moccasins, and that the rest of her apparel showed further indications of the backwoods. As she passed out of the corral with the bearded man, Jim had a closer scrutiny.

"Shore I'll bet that'll be Elam Hatt an' his daughter Rose," muttered Jim. "An' if so, those three riders are the other Hatts. . . . Reckon the ball is openin' pronto."

By the time Jim had turned his horse over to the Mexican stable boy the Hatts had gone into town. Jim got out just in time to see them turn a corner. He followed very slowly. Turning into the broad main street he strolled along, seeing everything while not appearing to be interested in anything. He passed several persons whom he knew well. They did not give him a second glance. The restaurant keeper, standing in a doorway, did not recognize Jim. A cowboy came along on his horse, evidently going home. It was Jerry Smith from Franklidge Ranch. He saw Jim, yet did not look twice.

THE later afternoon hours were the busy ones in the stores of Winthrop, owing to the heat of midday. The saloons were always busy, all day and all night.

Jim had never entered a saloon in Winthrop. He would break that record presently, but not just yet.

He crossed the side street and went on down toward the center of the main block. Presently he came to the entrance of a store, and espied the girl he had taken for Rose Hatt standing in the door.

"Excuse me, miss," said Jim, doffing his sombrero, and stepping up to her. "Don't I know you?"

She looked up at him with big hazel eyes that had not been long free of tears.

"You might, mister, but I sure don't know you," she replied.

Jim decided she was more than pretty, and not such a child as he had first supposed. She had wavy brown hair, rather rebellious red lips, and tanned, rose-tinted cheeks.

"Aren't you Rose Hatt?" he asked.

"Sure."

Jim leaned easily against the door post, smiling down upon her. "Reckon I thought so. Shore there's not many girls as pretty as you in these parts."

"Put your hat back on, mister," she replied tartly. "Standin' bareheaded don't go with such taffy. Besides, I ain't used to it."

"All right," returned Jim, good-humoredly. "Bad habit of mine. I'll get sunstruck some day."

"Say, you'll ketch worse if my dad comes along," she said, laughing, "unless you tell me pronto who you are."

"Wal, Rose, I understand there's a dance to-night," drawled Jim. "I may drop in on it. If I do, I'll tell you my name then."

"Mister, I knowed that was comin'," she returned. "An' I'll bet you never met me before!"

"Wal, to be honest, I never did."

"Reckon it ain't no difference. But I'm afeared I can't promise to dance with you. Dad says I can go, but Cedar—he's my brother—he says no. An' Cedar is boss of our outfit."

"Wal, if your dad's willin', why, go ahead. He's your father."

"Say, mister, I reckon you ain't acquainted with Cedar Hatt," declared the girl, almost with scorn. "You're sure a stranger in these parts."

"Yes, I am, sorry to say," replied Jim thoughtfully. "But what's so bad about your brother?"

"He's only a half-brother, same as Henny an' Tobe, an' I hate him!"

WAL! Why do you hate your own kin, little girl? Shore it's not natural," went on Jim, in his slow, persuasive drawl, so full of interest and sympathy.

"Reason enough! It was his fault that Clan Dillon took to runnin' after me."

"Dillon!" flashed Jim, in an amaze too swift and deep to hide.

His tone, his look betrayed to the simple, passionate girl that she had allowed her tongue too much freedom.

"Say, mister, here I am talkin' like an old woman," she cried, almost in affright. "I'm beggin' you to keep mum that slip of my tongue. Cedar would half kill me."

"Shore I will," returned Jim, in his former kindly tone. "Rose, you just happened to run into a man you can trust."

"You look it, mister. I like you," she replied, with relief.

"Thanks. I'm shore the lucky hombre. But I reckon, now, you're engaged to marry this Clan Dillon."

"Marry!" she exclaimed, suddenly almost fierce again. "I wouldn't marry him to save his life, the handsome, smilin'-faced liar. Not even if he wanted to, which he sure don't. I be only a sheep-skin rug to Clan Dillon!"

Jim dropped his head, conscious of an inward shrinking of tingling nerves to the coldness of ice. It had come again—that thing which had not frozen within his breast for years. How life tracked him down! Then he looked again at the girl. She was recovering composure. Manifestly she was a primitive little girl, as much like a wild-cat as a wild-rose. Jim felt intuitively that she was good. The flame left her hazel eyes and the hardness around her lips softened. Jim did not need to be told more about her life.

"Rose, have you any friends?" he asked. "Shore, I mean women-folks who could advise a young girl like you."

"Me? Why, mister, didn't I tell you I live down in the brakes!"

"Haven't you a man friend, then, or even a boy—who's good?"

"No. But I was makin' one fast enough," she replied. "A boy from California! Say, he was nice! But Cedar caught me with him."

"Too bad. What'd Cedar do, now?" queried Jim, much concerned.

"Not much, for Cedar," replied the girl. "He drove my boy friend off into the woods. Dodgin' bullets! An' he kicked me till I couldn't set down for days."

"Wal! . . . Look heah, girl, you're old enough, and you've sense enough, to know a friend when you meet him, aren't you? Now, who's this California boy your brother caught you with?"

"Swear you'll never tell?" she returned impulsively, drawn by his potent sympathy.

"Rose, I'll shore keep your secret, an' more. I'll help you to *make* a friend of him."

"His name is Marvie Blaine," she whispered.

Jim Lacy drew a sharp, swift breath that seemed to cut him like a knife as it swelled his breast. He leaned down to the girl.

"Listen," he whispered. "I will be your friend—an' this boy's—if you'll keep your mouth shut."

"Lord, mister, you needn't be afeared of *me*," replied the girl. "I wouldn't dare. Sure I don't know why I ever talked to *you*. But you're different. An' oh, how I need someone to talk to!"

"Shore you've found someone. Me! I'll be goin' down into the brakes."

"But who are you, mister?" she queried, aghast at his assertion.

"Did you ever heah of Jim Lacy?"

Her red lips parted to let out a little gasp, and her brown face paled. "My heavens—are you *him*?"

"Yes."

"Heah of you, Mr. Jim Lacy!" she ejaculated, her eyes dilating. "Ever since I can remember I've heerd of you. Many men ride to my dad's ranch, an' none of them but speaks your name. Some of them have seen you, an' two of them at least knowed you once."

"Rose, I'll tell you their names—Hardy Rue and Cash Burridge."

"Yes—yes! Oh, you *are* Jim Lacy! An'—an' I'm not scared a bit," she whispered. "Why, it ain't so long ago that I heerd Cash Burridge tell of seein' you call out an' kill a man for beatin' a girl. . . . Oh, Mr. Lacy, no one ever taught me about God, but I've prayed—prayed night after night—for someone to come an'—"

"That your dad right heah?" interrupted Jim.

"Oh yes. . . . What'll I say?"

"Nothin', lass. He hasn't seen us. Don't forget. Keep mum. Good-by."

JIM strode out as if he were just leaving the store, and passed Elam Hatt so close he might have touched him. Hatt was walking with a man as rough in garb and hard of face as he was himself. Neither appeared to notice Jim. After a few steps Jim glanced back. The girl had disappeared and the men were passing on.

"Good!" said he to himself. "That lass is game; but she's only a kid, an' I reckon it's better her dad didn't see her with me. Wal, wal! The old luck of Jim Lacy! Half an hour in Winthrop, an' I'm on a hot trail."

He strolled the length of the main street, and, crossing, strolled back again. He had the pleasure of meeting Judge Franklidge face to face in front of the hotel. The rancher saw Jim only as a passer-by.

It would have been the opposite of pleasure, however, for Jim to have encountered Ben Ide face to face; and that was one reason Jim's keen eyes sighted every man first. But accidents could happen. It would be well for Jim, while in Winthrop, to keep under cover of the saloons or places not likely to be fre-

quented by Ben. At most, Jim's hours in town would be few and far between.

He went to a side-street restaurant to get his supper and engage lodgings for the night. As darkness came on he ventured into a store, where he made a few purchases, and then returned to the corral for his pack. This he carried to his room.

The small mirror showed his eyes piercing and light, like points of daggers gleaming out of shadow. He stood an instant, motionless in the chill, lonely silence of the room. He knew that when he went forth again it must be into the raw, evil life of outlaws, gamblers, murderers—all that riff-raff of the Southwest which like a murky tide had rolled into Arizona. He calculated coldly that he must be all he had ever been, all that his name had ever meant. And he must add to these the intelligence which had sharpened in the years of peace.

Before the mirror, with a grim smile on his face, he came at last to the practical business of the matter. Though the success of his enterprise depended upon his cunning and his knowledge of the outlawed men with whom he must throw his lot—and the more of such qualities he exercised the surer his chances—the cold, hard fact was that all hung upon the deadliness of his skill with a gun. This job had to do with death.

SUCH was the wildness of the time and the evil code of outlaws, that he could kill this one and that one, any number of them, and only add to his fame, only give himself greater standing among them. True, by so doing, he must make bitter and relentless enemies; he must face the strange paradox that many an incipient gunman, or notoriety-seeking desperado, or drunken cowboy, would seek to kill him, just because he was Jim Lacy.

Whereupon, with cool deliberation he treated himself to a tense exhibition of his swiftness of eye and hand. In secret he had practiced all through these peaceful months while engaged in honest labor. A nameless impelling force had exacted this of him. He understood it now. And with a dark satisfaction he realized that he had gained in speed, in sureness of hand. Beyond these he had in large measure the gift peculiar to all gunmen who survived long in the Southwest—and that gift was the ability to read his opponent's mind.

"Reckon I might have bit off more'n I can chew," said Jim, as he sheathed his gun. "But from the minute I step out this heah door I shore won't be makin' many mistakes!"

The Lincoln County War in New Mexico had ended recently. It had been the blackest and bloodiest fight between rustlers and cattle men—and many others who had been drawn into the vortex—that had ever been recorded in the frontier history of the Southwest. As such it had possessed an absorbing, even a morbid, interest for Jim Lacy. It had had in its beginning something analogous to the present situation here in Arizona. Jim did not believe there could ever again be such a fight as the Lincoln County War.

But there was no telling. Some of the characters prominent in the Lincoln County War had not been killed. They had disappeared. It was not unreasonable to suppose that one or more of them had drifted into Arizona. To be sure, Billy

the Kid, the deadliest of all the real desperadoes of the Southwest, had fallen in the Lincoln fight, along with the worst of his gang. But they had not all bitten the bloody dust of New Mexico.

"Shore I'll run into someone from over there," said Jim. "When I do, I'll shoot first an' ask questions after!"

With that he opened the door, to step out into the dark, oppressive August night.

During the early evening hours Jim Lacy visited some of the main street saloons, steering clear of the Ace High, and others of prominence. He lounged about the bars and tables, agreeable and friendly to anyone who wanted to talk, willing to buy cigars and drinks, while he made some excuse or other for not indulging at the time. Cowboys were all friendly folk, except now and then one whom drink made mean. Gamblers and hangers-on, Mexicans and Indians, attracted by Jim's liberality and presence, added their little to the sum of information he was gathering. At length he left the last resort, intending to hunt up the dance hall.

"Shore that wasn't so bad for a start," mused Jim, as he summed up and sifted the bits of talk in which he had found significance. "Cash Burridge, sold out an' gamblin' his fortune away, spends half his time heah in town. Thick with some Spanish girl. Same old Cash! . . . Clan Dillon one grand hombre, eh? Wal, wal! Tom Day—just as liable to be boss of the Pine Tree outfit as anyone. That'll shore tickle Tom."

"The Hatt outfit, except Cedar, just no-good homesteaders, low-down enough for anythin' not really big an' dangerous. Cedar Hatt, though, is a plumb bad man. Not the even-break kind. But crafty as a redskin, treacherous as a greaser. The Stillwells hardest nuts down in the brakes. Never come to town! Now, that's shore worth rememberin'. Last an' perhaps meanin' most to me—what that half-drunk sheep herder told me. Strange riders often seen by herders passin' through the Mongollons. Wal, most of all this sounds familiar, as I think back. But now it comes close."

JIM, by following in the footsteps of hurrying young people, soon found where the dance was being held. It was on a side street, almost at the edge of town, in a low, wide adobe building of Spanish design, very picturesque now with its hanging colored lanterns, its trailing vines over archways.

Presently Jim believed he had caught a glimpse of little Rose Hatt at the far end of the terrace. So he arose to walk in that direction. At the end of the terrace he found her, just stepping out upon the floor. It was a transformed Rose. She had on a gaudy, cheap, flimsy dress, with shoes and stockings to match, but these changes did not detract from her prettiness. She was young and radiant. Her partner was a cowboy not much older than herself. They stood a moment, holding on to each other, self-conscious and awkward, before they began to dance. Rose did not know how to waltz, but she made a valiant effort.

Jim watched the couple until they were lost in the whirl of dancers. This end of the terrace opened into a garden or yard, where a walk wound between clumps of



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shrubbery. There were benches at each column of the arches, and some of these were overshadowed by vines. Jim watched the dancers, hoping to see Rose again, and perhaps catch her eye. But he missed her in the whirling throng, and when the dance ended he retreated to a seat on the adobe wall of the terrace.

PRESENTLY a couple approached out of the shadow from down the aisle. As they reached a point beyond, yet near, where Jim sat half concealed, the girl halted.

"Please—let's go outside," begged the man.

His voice prompted Jim to turn so that he could see better. The man had the build of a rider, lithe, tall, small and round of hips, wide in the shoulders. He wore a dark suit and had a flower in the lapel of his coat. His face had a compelling attraction. But Jim, in his quick glance, could not decide whether it attracted him because it was a handsome, unusual face—or because of some other fascination difficult to grasp on the moment.

"No, Mr. Dillon, I don't care to go further," said the girl.

Jim sustained such a violent start that he almost fell off the low adobe wall. That voice! He would have known it among a thousand voices. His cool curiosity vanished in a rushing tide of emotion. He flashed his glance from the man to his companion. She stood full in the soft rose light of one of the colored lanterns. Hettie Ide! His heart leaped. The face that had haunted Jim's camp fires in the lonely watches of the nights! The same rippling fair hair, the deep, earnest eyes, the rich, clear complexion that spoke of contact with the open, the strong, full lips, more hauntingly sweet than ever for the sadness which had come!

So rapt, so agonizing was Jim's attention that he lost something of the words which passed between the two. . . . It was the name "Dillon" that roused Jim from his trance.

"Mr. Dillon," she was saying, "the reason I can't marry you is that I don't love you."

"But, Hettie, you will—you must love me, in time!" he returned passionately, seizing her hand and trying to pull her into the shadow.

"I never will," she said, with eyes and cheeks flaming. "What kind of man are you—that you persist so rudely? I liked you—even admired you until you forced such attentions as these on me. I've overlooked them because my brother Ben thinks so much of you. But, no more, Mr. Dillon!"

Her dignified yet spirited reply might as well not have been spoken for all the effect it had to restrain Dillon. He burst into low, impassioned appeal, and backed her under the overhanging vines against the wall.

"I—I thought you were a gentleman," she burst out.

"No man thinks of bein' over-gentle when he's in love," retorted Dillon. "I tried that with you. And, to tell you the truth, I wasn't so natural then as I am now. I've plumb lost my head. I tell you, I love you, an' I'm goin' to have you! What do you say to that?"

"I say this, Mr. Dillon: We've all got you figured wrong," she flashed.

"Sure you have," he rejoined, with an



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exultant laugh. "An' here's how!" With that he attempted to seize her in his arms. But he had cornered the wrong girl. Supple and strong, she wrestled free in an instant, and wheeled away from the wall. "What do you—think—Ben will do—when I tell him—you've insulted me?" she panted, backing into the aisle.

"IF YOU'VE got any sense you won't tell him," replied Dillon, in a flash changing from an ardent lover to something almost menacing. "Ben Ide's in bad here. Arizona isn't California. There are rustlers here, an' you can bet some of them are the ranchers he thinks his friends. I know this cattle game. I know these men. He's lost most of his stock. If he buys in more he'll lose that too. Hettie, I'm the only cowman in Arizona who can save him from ruin."

"Indeed! Are you aware that I have a share in the Ide ranch?"

"That's news to me," said Dillon. "But it sure makes my case stronger. What ruins Ben Ide will ruin you!"

"The loss of a few thousand cattle won't hurt either my brother or me," she returned, almost flippantly, studying his face with steady, penetrating eyes. She was seeing the man as if he had suddenly unmasked.

"You must be pretty rich to talk like that," replied Dillon.

"Quite well off, thank you. I often wondered if that didn't interest you, and now I know."

He laughed in a way that would have been a revelation to an older woman well versed in the life of the frontier. But Hettie did not grasp what seemed as plain as print to Jim Lacy, crouching like a tiger under the shadow.

"Thanks, you're very smart," he said. "But I'd be crazy about you if you were as poor as Rose Hatt. I tell you, I love you—want you—need you so terribly that if I don't get you it'll make a devil out of me."

"I'm beginning to think the process of making has gone pretty far already."

"You've got cat in you—same as other women," he retorted. "Listen, we're wastin' talk. If you'll marry me, I'll save Ben Ide. If you won't, I'll quit him an' use my influence all over the range. I'll make ranchin' impossible for him in this country. An' I'll get you in the bargain."

Hettie Ide turned so pale that her eyes shone black.

"Mr. Dillon, weeks ago, when you first came to us and began your—your attentions to me, I thought there was something odd about you. You were too good to be true, as old Raidy said. Well, I think now you're as bad as you seemed good. I think you're a contemptible, conceited ass. I think you're a deep, cunning scoundrel. . . . You need not return to Cedar Springs to-morrow. Marvie Blaine will drive me home. Right here and now, you're discharged."

Hettie Ide abruptly turned her back upon Dillon and walked away, to disappear in the crowd of dancers.

Jim Lacy strode out from under the vines and the shadow.

"Howdy, Dillon," he said.

A lightning-swift glance took Jim in from head to feet and back again.

"Howdy yourself. Reckon you've got the best of me," returned Dillon gruffly.

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"Shore. I reckon I have," drawled Jim, with cool significance.

"Who are you?" queried Dillon, sharply.

"I might be Peter Punkins—only, I ain't."

"Pretty smart, aren't you?" rejoined Dillon, feeling his way. He knew men, he knew the West. "Reckon you're more Simple Simon than Peter Punkins. I don't care. But I'm curious about where you sprung from just now."

"Dillon, you're figurin' quick," returned Jim, in slow deliberation. "Wal, I was settin' right heah on the adobe wall."

The man cursed under his breath, and flung his cigarette down so hard that the sparks flew from the stone pavement.

"You set there watchin'—listenin'?" he demanded, with sudden and powerful self-control. "Stranger, where I come from men got shot for such offense."

"I reckon. That's why I'm not apologizin'."

Dillon seemed to accept this as confirmation of the suspicion which had evidently been growing with his thoughts. Abruptly his bullying manner changed. The swift retreat of his personality was almost as remarkable as the new one which took its place. He stood unmasked, as far as his pretense was concerned. Cautious, steady, cold and hard he stood a moment, his strange green eyes trying to pierce Jim's mind. He was searching more for Jim's intent than for other knowledge of him.

As for Jim, he measured Dillon to be a Westerner vastly different from the character he enjoyed in that section of Arizona. He did not recognize a kindred spirit, but he read in Dillon the depth, the cunning, the courage, the desperate experience of a man used to the rawest and deadliest of frontier life.

"Ha! I see you pack a gun, stranger," coolly remarked Dillon. "Reckon you see I don't?"

"Shore. I saw first off you didn't, an' then just now I read it in your eyes."

"Mind reader, eh? Well, it's a helpin' trait for some men."

"Are you meanin' any particular breed?" queried Jim dryly.

"Yes. Spies, gamblers, thieves, gun throwers, an' the like."

"Thanks. I'm shore appreciatin' the way you speak. An', not wantin' to be outdone in compliments, I'll just repeat what Miss Hettie Ide called you. . . . A conceited ass! A deep, cunnin' scoundrel!"

"YOU heard all she said?" snarled Dillon. Deep and crafty as he was, he could not help the rise of passion, though he controlled it.

"Shore. An' I never heard a low-down man called more proper. Tickled me more because only to-day someone else called you a handsome, smilin'-faced liar."

"You're a brave man, stranger," returned Dillon. "But I'm tired listenin'. You excite a little suspicion yourself, considerin' this country is full of outlaws an' rustlers."

"It shore is. That's why I come here," returned Jim meaningly.

For the first time the dark red showed in Dillon's face.

"I'll have you put out of here," he said. "An' I'll tip Sheriff Macklin off that you need watchin'."

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Colgate lather is different in formula, in action, in result, from anything you have used before.

This radical difference is all in the bubbles, as the lather pictures shown below prove. Colgate bubbles are far smaller and wetter. They contain an abundance of water and very little air. For this "small bubble" lather is based on a scientific fact—the fact that the water in the lather is the real beard softener.

How Colgate Lather Works

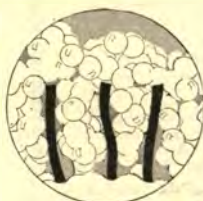
The moment Colgate lather forms on your beard, two things happen:

1. The soap in the lather breaks up the oil film that covers each hair, and floats it away.
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 down where the razor does its work.

Because your beard is properly softened at its base, your razor works easily and quickly. The keen blade glides smoothly through the toughest whiskers—not over them. Every hair is cut close and clean. And your face remains cool and comfortable throughout the day.

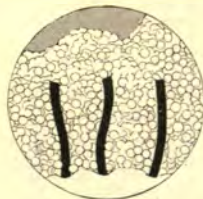
A Week's Better Shaves—FREE

Once you try this unique "small-bubble" lather, you will never go back to ordinary shaving methods. Prove this for yourself—at our expense. Just clip the coupon. We will send you a generous trial-size tube—free.



ORDINARY LATHER

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.



COLGATE LATHER

This lather-picture of Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream shows how the tiny moisture-laden bubbles penetrate deep down to the bottom of every hair, holding water, not air, against the base of the beard and softening it right where the razor works.



COLGATE & CO.

Dept. 501-A, 581 Fifth Ave., New York

Please send me the FREE sample tube of Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream for better shaving.

Name

Address

In Canada,
Colgate & Co., Ltd.
72 St. Ambroise St.
Montreal

"Wal," drawled Jim, with his glance cold and set. "Go ahead. But be shore to tip him off that I'm Jim Lacy!"

Dillon's stalwart frame jerked with a perceptible tremor. A slow, pale shade began to blot out the brown of his face.

"You expect me to believe you're Jim Lacy?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Wal, I'm tellin' you; but it's nothin' to me what you believe," returned Jim icily. This interview was about to conclude.

"All right," went on Dillon, breathing hard. "But I still figure you a liar."

Jim sprang forward and knocked Dillon down.

"Wal, shore it may take more'n that," he said, in slow accents; "but I told you who I am. An' that's somethin' you didn't tell me!"

Jim, wheeling away to go, found himself confronted by Rose Hatt, standing on the steps above the terrace.

"Oh—mister!" she cried, as he brushed past her.

The dancers were trooping off the floor. A tall youth, with features strangely familiar to Jim, appeared behind Rose. She clasped his arm, while she stared from Jim to Dillon, who had not attempted to get up.

"My lord! Who was that?" called out someone Jim took to be the youth with Rose. The voice added to the stirring of Jim Lacy's memory. And it urged him faster through the throng of dancers, out into the street.

"It was Marvie Blaine, God bless him!" whispered Jim, as he gained the darkness. "That was shore a close shave for me!"

(To be continued)

Boneheads I Have Known

(Continued from page 37)

schooling Watson obtained was not from any interest or desire or initiative on his part. He had no enthusiasm for facts. When he entered school, he was led there, struggling and weeping, by a husky and energetic parent who was burning with ambition for the intellectual future of her son.

Watson had no desire for geographical or mathematical information and theories. Literature and history did not allure him. He couldn't spell "laboratory" and he shied whenever anyone tried to introduce him to one. Through the stimulus of harsh words and the lash, he finished the sixth grade by the time he was fifteen, and then he ran away from home for a year or two.

During all his fifteen years, no one had ever seemed to notice that Watson had been almost abnormally interested in seeing things go 'round, and in constructing queer machines. Machinery of any sort held his attention. The old barn back of the house in which he lived was full of curious contraptions run by wind and by foot power and by awkwardly contrived batteries.

He was ignorant of the theories of electricity, but when it came to fixing things, to making balky machinery of any sort function, Watson was at home.

SOFTENS THE BEARD AT THE BASE