The Girl a Horse and a Dog

By
FRANCIS LYNDE

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er two of them; one of having the feeling that I was shut in a tight box at the moment of the fiercest struggling, and the other of fancying that I had felt a swirling inrush of the liquid ice as well as the sucking outrush. But the recollection was so confused that I attached no importance to it. When a man is fighting for his life ten or twelve feet under water, pipe-dreams are nothing to the things he can imagine.

It was while we were sitting at the shaft-house door, hammering away at the old puzzle of why the water level never varied so much as a fraction of an inch in the shaft, in wet seasons or dry—as Daddy testified it never did—and why the subtraction of two six-inch streams at a velocity sufficient to stir up a veritable whirlpool at the suction intakes should make no impression upon it, that I began to notice the queer actions of the pie-faced collie, Barney. First he would come and stick his cold nose into my hand; then he'd trot over to the cabin and back, and maybe loaf a little way down the road toward the bench level. Coming around to the shaft-house again, he'd sit beside Daddy Hiram, yawning and panting as if he were waiting impatiently for us to stop talking and pay some attention to him.

"Poor old Barney's homesick, and I don't blame him," I said. "I'm feeling a good bit that way, myself, Daddy." Then to the dog: "Come here, old boy!"

The collie came to lick my hand, and while I was petting him I found a pretty bad gash just behind one of his ears.

"See here, Daddy," I broke out; "the dog's hurt!"

We examined the wound and decided at once that it was not a bite. It was a bruised cut, looking as if it had been made by some blunt instrument or weapon. I had a hot-flash vision of Bullerton kicking the dog with his iron-shod heel in an attempt to drive him back home, and it was so real that I couldn't shake it off.

When it began to grow dusk in the shaft-house we shut up shop and went over to the cabin to cook our supper. The dog went along, but evidently with reluctance. While we were crossing the dump head he turned back and once more started off down the road toward the bench below, but when he found that we were not following him he came to heel again. Still, neither of us had dog sense enough to guess what was the matter with him.

Daddy Hiram and I, being merely stupid humans, were commenting upon his queer actions, and laying them to Jeanie's absence, when again the dog started off down the road, looking back and barking when he found that we were still sitting on the doorstep. At that, since even solid ivory can be penetrated if the would-be driller of it stays on the job long enough, we finally caught on.

"Say, Stannie!—he's a-tryin' to tell us to come on!" Daddy exclaimed, starting to his feet. "Methuselah-to-gracious! did it have to take us a hull endurin' afternoon to figger out that much dog-talk?"

"It looks that way," I admitted; but now, having "figgered" it out, we made no delay. Daddy got his rifle and cartridge-belt, and told me to take Jeanie's pistol for myself—which I did. And thus equipped we took the trail, Indian-filing down the mountain road in the darkness, Daddy Hiram, with his gun in the crook of his left arm, setting the pace, and the collie running on ahead to point the way.

CHAPTER XII.

Around Robin Hood's Barn.

After we had covered possibly two of the four miles between the Cinnabar and the railroad station, the dog branched off to the left along the mountain on a road that was little better than a bridle path through the forest, and which, for the time, kept its level on the slope, neither ascending nor descending.

"How about it, Daddy?" I asked. "Where does this trail go?"

"Give it time enough, it comes out at the old Haversack, on Greaser mountain."

"Ends there, you mean?"

"You said it; far as I know, it ends there."

"What is the Haversack?"

"It ain't nothin', now. Used to be a gold prospect eight 'r ten year ago. Never got far enough along to be a mine, they tell me."

It was certainly singular that the dog should be leading us to an abandoned mining project, but Barney seemed to know perfectly well where he was going.

In one of the gulch headings there was a patch of wash sand in what was, in wet weather, a runway for water, but which was now only a streamless ravine with a few damp spots in it. Here Daddy called a halt, and while the dog sat down and yawned at us and otherwise manifested his impatience at the delay, the old man gathered a few pine-cones and twigs, struck a match and lighted a fire, cautioning me meanwhile not to walk on the damp sand patch.

I hadn't the slightest idea of what he was driving at, and he didn't explain; but after the fire had blazed up enough to light the surroundings a bit, he went down upon his hands and knees and began to give an imitation of a man hunting for a dropped piece of money. "It's sort o' queer. Jeanie's been here, and the dog's been back and across a couple o' times, as you can see. But Bullerton hasn't crossed here. There's only the one set o' tracks."

We made a wider search, with a dead pine branch for a torch, but found no other tracks; in fact, the gulch was gullied so deeply above and below that there was no other practicable crossing-place for a horse. If Jeanie had headed for the gulch—and the hoof prints in the sand, and Daddy's identification of them seemed to prove this past any question of doubt—she had headed it alone. But why had she been riding alone into the depths of this uninhabited mountain wilderness?

Calm and self-contained as he usually was, I could see, or rather feel, that Daddy Hiram was growing increasingly nervous as we pushed on. I didn't blame him; so far from it, I was sharing the nervousness in full measure. What were we going to find at the end of the trail?

It must have been at least two miles beyond the damp sand patch that the dim trail we had been following ended abruptly at the abandoned mining claim spoken of by Daddy Hiram—the Haversack. The starlight was bright enough to show us what there was to be seen, which wasn't much; a couple of tumble-down shacks, a shed that had probably been the prospectors' blacksmith shop, and a tunnel mouth that had once been securely boarded up, but from which the bulkheading was now partly fallen away.

Once more Daddy hunted for a dead pine branch and lighted a torch. The shacks were empty, of course, and while we did not go into the tunnel, we could see, through the broken bulkheading, that it was half filled with caved-in earth and broken stone. Underfoot there was only the coarse gravel of the tunnel spoil, and a full troop of cavalry might have passed over it without leaving any visible trail. Worse than all, Barney, the pie-faced collie, appeared now to be completely at fault. He was running around in circles with his nose to the ground; a pretty plain indication that he had lost the trail.

"I'll be bat-clawed and owl-hooted if I know what-all to do next," Daddy puzzled.

He hadn't any the best of me there, and it was precisely at this point that the split-faced dog took it into his head to add another snarl to the knotted tangle. After galloping around all over the place half a dozen times, sniffing at everything in sight, he had finally come to a stand with his nose at a crack in the tunnel boarding. The next instant he had leaped through the hole where the planks had fallen away, and presently we heard him whining and scratching behind the bulkhead.

I don't know about Daddy Hiram's heart, but I do know that mine was doing flip-flaps and back somersaults when we ran up to see what the dog had found in the tunnel. For a half-second after Daddy thrust his torch through the hole I was afraid to look—scared stiff at the thought of what I might see. When I did look, I saw the dog digging frantically at the heap of caved-in earth, and, of course to my disordered imagination, the hole in which he was burrowing transformed itself at once into a newly made grave.

"Good God!" I gasped; and then: "Look, Daddy—right under your torch!"

He looked and staggered back, and would have dropped the blazing pine branch if I hadn't caught it from his hand. For what he saw, and what I had seen, was the unmistakable print, in the soft earth just inside of the planking, of one of Jeanie's brown-leather riding-boots.

In another half-second we were both in the tunnel and Daddy was heaving the dog aside from the hole he was pawing out in the earth fall. Snatching up a broken-handled shovel that the former tunnel drivers had thrown away, the old man flung himself madly upon the dirt pile, and since there

The Old Man Flung Himself Madly Upon the Dirt Pile.

was room for only one to work at a time, I stood at his elbow and held the torch. I don't know what he expected to find hidden under the slide, but I do know what I was afraid he was going to find.

After all, it was only a flash in the pan, so far as any dreadful discovery was concerned. Inside of five minutes, Daddy, working like a man demented, had dug the entire cave-in away, and there was nothing to show for the frantic shoveling—less than nothing. Again, I don't know how Daddy felt, but I'm sure I was able to breathe better, the improvement dating from the moment when it became apparent that the earth heap had grown too small under the shovel stabs to possibly conceal a human body.

The collie had followed us and Daddy Hiram scowled down at him. "If that dog could only be like old Gran'paw Balaam's donkey for a minute 'or so," he mused. "He saw her go in there and saw her come out; likewise and the same, he must 've seen what she did after she come out. Looks as if he wanted to talk and tell us, don't he?"

Barney was certainly giving a good imitation of that, or some other anxiety. He was frisking about and barking, leaping up now and then to snap at an imaginary fly in the air. Daddy caught him by his lower jaw and held him immovable. "Go find her, Barney!" he commanded; "good dog—go find her!"

The instant he was released the collie acted as if he understood perfectly what was wanted of him. Springing aside, he began to circle again, nose to the ground, and within half a minute he was off, this time heading into a dim trail that led away diagonally down the mountain, not in the direction of Atropia, but rather on the other leg of a triangle, one side of which might be the desert edge, one the trail we had followed from the Atropia road, and the third the route we were now taking to the eastward.

It must have been within an hour or so of midnight when we left the mountain forests behind and got into the region of barren foothills. Here the collie seemed much surer of his ground, and we had our work cut out for us in the effort to keep up with him. In the starlight I made out the line of telegraph poles as we ran, and pretty soon our dog leader swung off to the right and we found ourselves trotting on a line parallel to the railroad track and only a little way from it.

Pretty soon the dog disappeared; and then we heard him barking at a little distance to the left of the parallel tracks. When we went to see what he had found, the mystery suddenly took another tack and veered off into a new channel. In a small grassy hollow between two of the hills we came upon the dog and the calico pony. The bridle reins had slipped over the bronco's head, and Barney had them between his teeth and was backing and tugging and apparently trying to pull the pony along.

"Well, I'll be ding-jiggered!" said Daddy; but I couldn't unload quite that easily. For me the riderless pony meant an accident of some sort.

"Heavens!" I gasped; "do you suppose she's been thrown, and—maybe crippled?"

"Who—Jeanie? Why, bless your heart, Stannie, son, she can ride 'em wild! And that calico wouldn't buck a baby off. No, boy; don't you go to frettin' about nothin' like that. When she got out o' that saddle, it was 'cause she was good and ready and wanted to."

"When she got off to take the train, she tried to make Barney lead the pony home," I suggested. "Would she be likely to do that?"

Daddy Hiram slapped his leg.

"You've hit it exactly, son! Don't know why I didn't think o' that at first. It's an old trick that she taught the collie when he was a li'l' pup. And Barney, he tried, and when he couldn't make the pinto leave off grazin', he come for us. Sure!—that was the way of it. What say if we go back to the edge o' the timber and camp down? I reckon there ain't nothin' to be gained by hittin' the trail afore we've had a li'l' rest-up spell, is there?"

I had no objection to offer, you may be sure; and after we had found a camping spot, and had picketed the pony with the light rope that Jeanie always carried tied to the cantle of her saddle, we made a good fire to serve in lieu of the blankets that we didn't have and stretched ourselves out to sleep the sleep of the fagged and leg-weary.

The next thing I knew—and it seemed to be just about a minute after I had closed my eyes—Daddy was shaking me awake.

"Time to be moggin' along, if we aim to get home for breakfast, sonny," he announced. At the break of day we were coming into the Cinnabar-Atropia road at precisely the point at which we left it the evening before.

The sun was just beginning to gild the upper heights of Old Cinnebar when we trailed over the broad plateau bench below the mine and headed for the slope that led up to the dump head. As we topped this last hill there was an amazing surprise awaiting us—a surprise and a shock. On the level spot which served as a dooryard for the Twombly cabin stood a horse, saddled and bridled, its drooped ears and hanging head showing that it had been ridden far and hard. And on the cabin door-step, sitting at ease and calmly chewing a half-burned cigar, was—Bullerton!

CHAPTER XIII.

A Battle and a Siege.

It was Daddy Hiram who made the first break.

"Charley Bullerton, where's my daughter?" he rapped out, hurling the question at the loafer on our doorstep in a sort of deadly rage that you wouldn't have thought possible in so mild-mannered a man.

"You needn't worry about her," was the cool response. "Didn't you get the note she left for you, saying that you needn't?" Then, as if he had just seen and recognized me: "Hello, Broughton; we've missed a day, but I'll give you the benefit of it and not dock you. Are you selling the old water-logged Cinnabar for twenty thousand dollars this fine morning? It'll probably save you more or less trouble if you are."

He didn't get the kind of answer he wanted; or any relating to the mine. Unbuckling Jeanie's gun and handing it to Daddy Hiram, I walked across to where he was sitting, keeping a wary eye on the hand which would have to be the one to go after the weapon he had once showed me hanging under his left arm-pit.

"Mr. Twombly has just asked you where his daughter is, and you haven't told him," I gritted. "You've got about ten seconds in which to tell him all you know, and after you've done it, I'm going to trim you!"

He had scrambled to his feet when he saw me coming, and, just as I expected, that watched right hand flicked suddenly under his coat. At that I rushed him and we mixed it promptly. I got hold of the gun hand before it got to the pistol butt, and at the clinch we were all over the place, each grappling for the underhold, and neither of us paying much attention to the rules, Marquis of Queensberry or other. Bullerton was a heavyweight; he had probably fifteen pounds the advantage of me in that direction; but after I had got the thumb of my free hand upon a certain spot in his neck, it was all over but the funeral.

Jehu! how he swore when I crumpled him, and took his gun away from him, and slammed him down on a bed of broken stone and stuck a knee into his breathing machinery. But he couldn't do anything; the thumb-jab had fixed him. His head was skewed over to one side and he couldn't straighten it. I groped around until I found that other paralyzing nerve ganglia—the one at the joint of the third vertebra.

"Listen to what he says, Daddy!" I said to the old man who stood looking on with the face of a wooden image. Then to Bullerton, who was now merely a wad of flesh gone flaccid under the torturing touch: "Tell what you know, and all you know; and tell it quick and straight!" and I gave him

Jehu! How He Swore!

one more little prod on the agony nerve.

With a preliminary shriek he let it out by littles, gasping between the words and phrases like a man in the last stages of lockjaw.

"We were going to Angels—to get married," he panted. "Ah—oh—I was to meet her at Atropia—she—she was afraid to ride all the way with me—afraid—the old man—would come gunning! Oh, for God's sake, Broughton, take your thumb out of my back—you're killing me by inches!"

"You need a little killing worse than anybody I know," I told him. "Go on; you were to overtake her at Atropia; what then?"

"I didn't see her again!" he howled. "I don't know where she went!"

I didn't believe much of what he was saying, and I think Daddy Hiram didn't, though we had proved it true up to the point where they had separated on the Atropia road. I would have gone on, making him talk some more, but the look that was creeping into the old man's eyes made me let up. As I read the look it meant that Daddy couldn't stand it to see the third-degree stunt carried to its finish, so I got up and pulled Bullerton to his feet. He was pretty badly wrecked, as I meant him to be; still couldn't straighten his neck, and stood as if one leg were about half paralyzed, as perhaps it was.

"This outfit is my property, and you've out-stayed your welcome!" I snapped at him. "Climb your horse and get off the map!"

He limped over to his horse and gathered the reins and tried to put a foot into the stirrup. When I saw that he couldn't do even that much, I grabbed him and heaved him into the saddle; did this, and gave the horse a slap to set him going. I guess I shall always be able to recall the picture of that brown-bearded pirate riding across the Cinnabar dump head in the early morning sunshine, screwing his body in the saddle—because he couldn't turn the stiff-necked head by itself—to yell back at me with sizzling curses, "I'll get you—I'll get you yet! D—n your eyes—do you think you can make a hobbling cripple of me and get away with it? I'll—" and then breaking it off short and kicking the ribs of his nag frantically for more speed when I made as if I were going to run after him.

Throughout this bit of belligerent by-play, which hadn't used up more than a few minutes, all told, Daddy Hiram had stood aside, as I have said, taking the part of the interested spectator. Now he remarked: "You can bet all your old clothes, son, that we hain't seen the last o' Charley Bullerton, not by a long chalk. You ricollect I told you once he'd got a man, down in one o' the camps on the Saguache? Well, it was for a heap less than what you done to him a few minutes ago. But let's go eat."

I passed through the cabin to the out-kitchen and while I was kindling a fire in the stove I saw Daddy with an armful of hay and a peck measure of oats, toiling the little horse down the path back to the cabin to disappear with it in the direction of the gulch where the abandoned "Little Jeanie" claim lay. I had the coffee made and the bacon fried by the time he got back, and after we had eaten he blossomed out in an entirely new role—that of commander in chief.

"This is movin' day, Stannie," he announced briefly. "If you'll dig up all the chuck and canned stuff you can find and tote it over to the shaft-house, I'll fetch the blankets and the cookin' tins."

I obeyed blindly, and entirely without prejudice to a lively curiosity as to what this new move might mean. While I was emptying the kitchen and pantry the old man unearthed another rifle from the closet under the loft ladder, and with it a box of ammunition; and I observed that this second gun, like the one he had carried on our pilgrimage of the night, looked as if it had been freshly oiled and rubbed up every day since it had left the factory.

"You'll have a lot of talking to do presently," I warned him. "You seem to forget that you haven't yet told me what's biting you."

"Maybe there ain't nothin' bitin' me; maybe I'm just gettin' sort o' old and skeery. But it's this-away, Stannie, son: Ever since your gran'paw gave me this here watchin' job, and since I heard tell how them Cripple Creek short-card artists socked it to him on this Cinnabar deal, I been lookin' for trouble. I hain't been easy about them Cripple Creek holdups nary a day since your gran'paw told me to stay here and hold the fort for him."

"You thought perhaps the original owners might try to grab the property by force?"

Daddy looked up at me from under his bushy eyebrows.

"'Pears to me like you've got a mighty short memory, some way, Stannie. Have you done forgot that bunch o' huskies we saw campin' out in Antelope gulch as we come along by there at daybreak this mornin'? I didn't like the looks o' that camp much at the time; and I liked it a whole lot less after we got here and found Charley Bullerton sunnin' himself on the door-step. Made me sort o' perk up my ears."

"But, see here, Daddy," I thrust in, "if he's got my deed, or has destroyed it, why—"

"Why, he has as good a right to the Cinnabar as the next one that comes along, is what you're goin' to say. I ain't disputin' you for a minute. But afore he can have it, he's got to take it, hain't he? And we've got two mighty good li'l' pieces of artillery that says he's goin' to have one joyful old time a-takin' it; that is, if you're of the same mind that I am."

By Jove! I wanted to put my arms around the old Spartan and hug him! As I've said, there were ten or a dozen men in that bunch we'd seen in the gulch, and he was calmly proposing to stand up to them, as confidently as if it were all in the day's work.

"I get you now, Daddy," I said, "and if there's a fight coming to us, your mind is mine. We'll give them the best we've got."

I thought the two old-fashioned guns and Jeanie's pistol promised a poor chance for an effective defense; but Daddy Hiram proceeded to show me that we had at least one other resource. In the mine stores left behind by the former operating company were two boxes of sixty-per-cent dynamite, with fuse and caps, and Daddy pointed out that there were good possibilities wrapped up in the greasy brown-paper cartridges if the enemy should come close enough to let us use them.

"I believe you had this all doped out in advance, Daddy," I said, when he had a neat little row of the cartridges laid out on the floor. "But surely you didn't expect to hold out alone if those sharks sent a crowd of 'jumpers' in to run you off?"

"Me and Jeanie," he said simply. "We'd 'a' done our level best; and the angels couldn't do no more than that."

Here, unless the old man was sadly mistaken in his daughter, was another and wholly unsuspected side of the blue-eyed maiden displayed for me. I tried to imagine Lisette helping her father, or me, or any lone man, to defend a beleaguered mine against an armed attack. It was so funny that I shouted. "Do you mean to say that Jeanie would shut herself up in here and load the guns for you against a mob of mine jumpers?"

He looked up with a prideful sparkle in his mild blue eyes.

"You don't half know that little girl o' mine, yet, Stannie, son," he said earnestly. And then: "She's the only boy I ever had, you see; and she hain't had any mother since she can remember. Maybe I hadn't ort to taught her to ride hawsses and shoot, and them things; but it seemed like I had to."

"You haven't made her one iota less womanly—or lovable," I hastened to say. Then I blurted out the thing that had been weighing on me ever since we had found Bullerton loafing on the door-step: "Do you suppose they could—is there any way they could have been married yesterday, Daddy?"

"Uh-huh; I reckon there was. They might 'a' gone on down to Angels. There's a justice o' the peace down there."

It still lacked a full hour of noon when we got our preparations made and were ready to stand a siege. Then we waited, and waited some more; and after a while I began to grin. What if we had stampeded ourselves needlessly? After all, the men we had seen in the deep gulch might really have been tramps, and not a Bullerton army. Would the mining engineer, unprincipled as he doubtless was, go to the length of trying to dispossess us by force? The more I thought of it, the more unlikely it seemed.

"I guess maybe we were scared of a shadow, after all, Daddy," I said. "Bullerton has had time enough to bring up his army, if he has one."

"I ain't countin' much on his backin' down," was the drawling rejoinder. "Ye see, I know Charley Bullerton of old; keen knowin' him ever since he first bu'sted into the minin' game. That was over in the Saguache. He's an all-'round cuss, but he's a stayer. Besides, you roughed him up sort o' hurtful this mornin', and he's got that to make him spitey. We'll be hearin' from him as soon as he gets things yanked 'round into shape to suit him."

Still, as time passed and nothing happened, it looked less and less likely that we were going to have to fight for our holding ground. I don't know to this good day what made Bullerton so slow in bringing up his army, but it was high noon, and Daddy and I were eating a cold luncheon, with the shaft-house door-sill for a seat, when we saw the army coming. It was a straggling gang of perhaps a dozen men; we couldn't count them accurately because the road on the bench wound in and out among the trees.

They came up within easy rifle shot and pitched their camp, if you could call it that, in a little glade. At that distance we could see that they were armed, but, of course, we couldn't tell what kind of guns they had. After they had taken possession of the small open space, two of them set to work to build a cooking fire.

At the halt in the glade one of the party—Bullerton, we guessed it was—broke a branch from a pine, stripped the twigs from it, and made it a flag-staff for his white handkerchief. Under this flag of truce he and two of his

Daddy and I Were Eating When We Saw the Army Coming.

men came on, leaving their guns behind. There was a climb of about thirty feet, maybe, coming up from the bench to the ledge upon which the mine buildings stood, so we got a fairly good look at the peace party before it came within talking distance. Bullerton still had a slight touch of the wry-neck, and the devil-may-care jauntiness which had been his chief characteristic as a guest of the Twombly's had been wiped from his face and manner like a picture from a blackboard.

As the three of them topped the rise in the ore road I reached behind me and got one of the Winchesters.

"That's near enough!" I called out. "Do your talking from there, if you've anything to say."

The delegation halted and Bullerton took a paper from his pocket.

"I'm serving legal notice upon you, Broughton," he said, waving the paper at me, "and I have two witnesses here, as the law requires. I represent the Cinnabar Mining company of Cripple Creek. You are trespassing on our property and I am making a formal demand for possession."

"So that's the new wrinkle, is it?" I laughed. "I was hoping you might spring something a little more original. How are you going to prove ownership?"

"The burden of proof isn't on us; it's on you!" he ripped out. "You haven't a shadow of claim to this mine. I've got your so-called deed right here"—and he shook that at us. "It's a forgery; a clumsy, childish forgery that wouldn't impose upon a blind man! We can send you to the rock pile on the strength of it if we want to!"

Since he had stolen the deed out of my pocket, I thought, of course, that he was just bluffing about its being a forgery. He must have known perfectly well that it wasn't. But Daddy was whispering in my ear as he sat behind me. Something like this: "Gosh-all-Friday, Stannie, he's got you goin'! He's made a copy o' the deed and throwed the 'riginal away—burnt it up, 'r somethin'!"

"You have it all your own way, Bullerton—or you think you have," I told him; and if I didn't get all of the self-confidence into the words that I tried to, I am persuaded that he didn't know the difference. "I might even concede that you have everything but the mine itself. If you want that, you may come and take it; but you'll permit me to say that when you break into this shaft-house there will be fewer people alive on Cinnabar mountain than there are at the present moment. I shall quite possibly be one of the dead ones, but before I go out I shall do my best to make you another."

"All right," he snapped back; "you're speaking for yourself, and that's your privilege. But how about you, Twombly? This is no quarrel of yours. Suppose you go over yonder to your cabin and stay out of the fight. Nobody wants to hurt you."

That put it pretty squarely up to me, too, so I turned to the old man at my side.

"It's good advice, Daddy," I said; "and this isn't your quarrel. You'd better duck while you can."

Daddy Hiram made no reply at all to me; didn't pay any attention to me. Instead, he stood up on the door-sill and shook his fist at Bullerton.

"I been lookin' for you and your kind of a crowd for a year back, Charley Bullerton, and drawin' pay for doin' it!" he shrilled. "Stannie here, says if you want this mine you can come and take it, and, by gummies, I say them same identical words!"

"All right," said Bullerton again. "But it's only fair to say that we outnumber you six to one, and we've got the law, and a few deputy sheriffs, on our side. You two haven't as much show as a cat in hell without claws, and when the circus is over, you'll both go to jail, if there's enough left of you to stand the trip." Then, as he was turning to go he flipped the deed into the air so that it fell at our feet. "You may have that," he sneered. "We'd like nothing better than to have you produce it in court."

It didn't seem just fitting to let him have the last word, so I pitched a small ultimatum of my own after him as he herded his two scoundrelly-looking "witnesses" into the downward road.

"One thing more, Bullerton," I called out. "Your flag of truce holds only until you get back to your army. If you or any of your men are in sight of Cinnabar property ten minutes after you reach your camp, we open fire."

Since the truce was thus definitely ended, we retired into our fortress and put up the bars. As we were closing the doors and making everything snug I asked Daddy what kind of human timber Bullerton was likely to have in his army, and if there were any chance that his boast about having deputy sheriffs in the crowd was to be taken at its face value.

"There's nothin' to the deputy brag. Ike Beasley is the chief deputy for this end o' the county, and he'd be here himself if that was a posse commytaters down yonder. As for what he has got, there's no tellin'. Most likely he's picked up a fistful o' toughs and out-o'-works down in Angels. There's always plenty o' drift o' that kind hangin' 'round a minin' camp."

"Fighters?" I queried.

"Oh, yes; I reckon so—if fightin' comes easier than workin'."

With the doors shut and barred I climbed up on our breastwork to bring my eyes on a level with one of the high window holes. The ten-minute ultimatum interval had come to an end, but the raiders were making no move to vacate the premises. On the contrary, their cooking fire was now burning briskly and they were apparently making leisurely preparations to eat. It fairly made me schoolboy furious to see those fellows calmly getting their noon meal ready and ignoring my warning.

"Hand me up one of those dynamite cartridges!" I barked at Daddy Hiram; and when he complied, I lighted a match and stuck it to the split end of the fuse. There was a fizz, a cloud of acrid smoke to make me turn my face away and cough, and then a frenzied yell from the old man.

"Throw it—good-gosh-to Friday—throw it!"

I contrived to get it out through the window opening in some way, and lost my balance on the earth bags doing it,

"Throw It! Good-Gosh-to-Friday! Throw It!"

tumbling awkwardly into Daddy's arms as I fell. Coincident with the tumble, the stout old shaft-house rocked to the crash of an explosion that was still echoing from the cliffs of the mountain above when the sour fumes of the dynamite rose to float in at the window holes.

"G-good gizzards!" stuttered Daddy Hiram, "did you reckon I cut them fuses long enough so 't you could hold 'em in your hands and watch 'em burn?"

"What do I know about fuses?" I asked, grinning at him. Then I mounted the breastwork again and looked out, prepared to see the entire landscape blown into shreds.

Aside from a few sheets of corrugated iron torn from the roof of the adjacent ore shed, the landscape appeared to be fairly intact and still with us. But down on the bench below, the lately kindled cooking fire was burning in solitary confinement. The raiders, to a man, had disappeared.

(Continued next week)

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