

another. The shack bellowed; and an acrid fog of smoke hung stiflingly, as if Hades belched its sulphurous breath.

WITH a bound Kinnaird threw himself on a man who crouched within six feet, the pistol fire cutting from the gloom with vivid touch his face. Like the coils of a python, sinewy arms looped the man's frame. A hand found his pistol wrist and drew it back over his loins till the shoulder cracked, and from the writhing fingers a pistol clattered to the floor. They rolled in a clinch. Once the man's teeth snapped at the Sergeant's throat as he sought to turn his captor.

"Give up or I'll break your shoulder!" Kinnaird panted, his mouth at the other's ear.

"It's you, you Gospel slingin' skunk!" the man grunted, followed by a groan as his arm was wrenched.

Writhing away from the pain he half turned, and with a quick twist the Sergeant had him on his face, pinioned flat by the clutched arm across his back, and another beneath the captor's knee.

Then Kinnaird struck a match. A bottle, rolling groggily within reach, was corked with a candle. Lighting this, he slipped the other's revolver in his pocket. Then he released his hold, and rising, stepped back, the candle in one hand, and a six-shooter in the other.

"Hello, Cayuse!" he exclaimed, a grim smile lighting up his face as the man twisted to a seat on a gray blanket that had lately held him in sleep.

Cayuse rubbed his shoulder and looked at the speaker reproachfully; then he cursed softly, as though, even in a case of assault, the calling of his assailant exercised restraint on his vocabulary.

"Sorry if I hurt you," Kinnaird said apologetically; "but you were sure careless in your gun play. You might have shot one of your own men."

"Hell! d'you s'pose they'd stampede me outer sleep without a call? I knowed it was some sneakin' spy in the corral." He sat for a second blinking his eyes, and then added, "Say, Matt was right, eh? The fellers was right all the time when they measured your tracks for a spy, eh? God! but you'll get wuss'n what's comin' to Matt for boss stealin' when I call off this fool play of yours to the men."

"When you do, Cayuse, that'll be in burracks at Fort Nelson; for you're going to hit the trail with me."

"I'll see you in hell first, sky pilot brand and whole outfit!"

The Sergeant ignored Cayuse while he ran his eye over the shack's interior. There was a large copper still, a worm, tubs, in a corner several bags of grain; one wall was entirely hidden by square tins. Then he recovered his hat, which now carried a bullet puncture, saying, "Stand up with your face to the wall, Cayuse! Quick! If you don't, I'll club you into submission!" he continued angrily, as the whisky man glared at him without moving.

Reluctantly Cayuse obeyed; and Kinnaird, taking a leather tump line that lay beside the tins, fastened it round his prisoner's waist, made a loop in the loose ends, and passed it over his left wrist.

"Sabe, Cayuse?" he queried. "It's a pretty tough trail over Little Divide, and I'm going to give you a lease of your arms. If you buck up, I'll put a bullet through you. Now hit the trail!"

"I'll see you in—" But the prisoner was cut short by being thrust bodily from the shack and hustled along the path.

As they cleared the growth of trees Kinnaird said, closing up on his prisoner, "See this gun, Cayuse? If you so much as speak, I'll lift your thatch!"

In silence the driver and the driven crept up the trail which was like a bracket on the gray cliff of Little Divide, their moccasined feet falling with a dull thud on the smooth worn rock.

DUPRE, crouched in waiting like a panther, heard a sucking breath and the crunch of heavy feet. Then a man's shadow blurred the path around the point to his feet, and a form swung past the cedar, a shoulder almost brushing his chest. He lunged at it, a pushing upward stroke of the knife.

The man reeled outward, and, falling, hovered strangely on the brink.

With a snarl of rage Dupre shifted the knife to his left hand, and, clutching the cedar, leaned outward to strike again. A tongue of fire scorched his neck. He tottered, reeled, and spun half round, his hands clutching at the air. For a second the moon lit up his face, and then he shot headlong into the gulf, his cry of terror mingling with the growl of the cataract.

use on the rope, was clinging to the wall, a smoking pistol at his feet.

The strain was terrific; a jutting corner of the rock held his shoulder. His mind seemed steadied, cast into smooth grooves, where it worked frictionlessly with fierce velocity. The pulling of the trigger on the murderous breed had been but an incident—almost automatic. In the moonlight he had recognized Dupre, and even as the breed had vanished from sight so he had vanished from Kinnaird's mind.

Coolly he faced the real problem,—his chance of saving Cayuse George, or being pulled over the precipice himself. With but a straightening of his wrist he could let the loop slip over his hand, which was now drawn across his chest by the strain, and save his own life. With a corner of his shoulder wedged in a little crevice of the rock, and his feet braced on the ascending path, he could hold the weight that dangled over the cliff until he tired, until the strain won out. To move perhaps meant a plunge to death.

He raised his voice and yelled, "Keep still, Cayuse! I'll pull you through!"

The rock walls echoed his call; and up from the gorge floated the snarl of the cataract like a note of derision.

Slowly Kinnaird turned his head and looked backward along the ledge. Twenty feet away the rock sloped from the narrow path toward Mad Squaw Pool in a drooping shoulder of fifty feet. If, hugging the wall, he could work backward, dragging the man's weight till it struck that slope, he could save him; but one inch of overbalancing pull and they would go down together.

He weighed the chances, his eye resting on the loop that cut at his wrist till his clenched hand was cold in bloodlessness. To slip the strap was cowardice; but on the other side was so much,—his young, full life against that of a man whose teeth had been at his throat within the half-hour.

Inwardly he cursed Cayuse. What right had he to hang a dead weight at the end of his life,—that's what the strap represented, his life? And yet he owed Cayuse something,—the knife thrust had been meant for himself.

Slowly he raised his right arm above his head which lay against the cliff and fingered the rock for a hold. He clutched a jagged point and, bracing till his moccasined feet seemed to cut into the ledge, worked his body back the span of a hand. Then he wove his foot backward along the path. As the rope slipped in its new angle the cliff seemed to fall away from his shoulder inward; his body swung on a pivot. Beads of perspiration gushed from his forehead. Two seconds he fought. He won. Again his head felt the hard press of rock. He rested as though he had battled for an hour. There was something of triumph in the infinitesimal victory. His mind whispered that he could win out.

For half an hour he fought a grim battle on that narrow ledge. Inch by inch the twenty feet were covered, his tiring strength offset by the increased slope to the wall against which he clung. His own peril had been replaced by a dread that the strap might cut on the cliff's edge; but it was shaganappy, rawhide, as tough as whalebone.

AT last the strain fell away, as though strong shoulders lifted Cayuse. The dangling man now lay against the shelving rock. Kinnaird drew him up to the now wider trail, where he lay in an inanimate sprawl. A faint flutter of the heart beat against Kinnaird's searching hand; blood dripped from his fingers, as he drew them from beneath the buckskin shirt and splashed a crimson trail across the face so ghastly white in the moonlight; and as he turned the buckskin coat and woolen shirt over Cayuse's head a red stream trickled from beneath a shoulder blade to the sopping waistband.

The Sergeant ran his hand in the unconscious man's pocket and drew forth a plug of chewing tobacco. As he mouthed this to a black pulp he tore his own cotton shirt into bandages, and covering the wound with tobacco he wound Cayuse's body with cotton strips. This seemed inadequate, and he knifed the buckskin coat into ribbons and applied them.

Then he sped down the trail to the shack, filled the candle bottle with whisky, grabbed two tump lines, and raced up the rock scarp of Little Divide.

As the raw liquor scorched its way down Cayuse's throat, he gasped; his eyelids twitched, then curled backward from eyes that stared wonderingly into Kinnaird's face.

"You're all right, Cayuse," the Ser-

geant said soothingly, his arm beneath the other's head.

Cayuse's mouth opened and closed inaudibly half a dozen times; then, his voice just a hoarse whisper, he gasped, "What's—where—" He put his hand out and touched Kinnaird's face like a man in a dream.

"You're all right, Cayuse," the Sergeant soothed. "Don't you remember? Dupre knifed you; but you'll be all right. Here, drink this."

He held the bottle to the trembling lips, saying, "Gulp it down. You've lost some claret; but you'll be all right. You're tougher than a mule."

The whisky drove the weakened heart faster; it pumped the depleted blood and warmed the wavering senses back to understanding. Cayuse tried to rise; but Kinnaird held him back, saying, "Keep quiet, old man; I'm going to pack you out."

THEN, making a cradle of the tump lines, he lifted Cayuse to its saddle, then, squatting down, drew the wounded man's arm about his neck, placed the broad strap over his forehead, and rising, said, "Put your legs across my hips and keep quiet. If you wiggle an eyelid, you'll tip us into Mad Squaw's lap."

"Lemme walk," Cayuse objected with broken petulance. "I'm not done up so's I got to play baby."

"Shut up, or I'll throw you in the ditch!" Kinnaird laughed. Then, creeping cautiously along the stone ledge, he carried his burden over the dip to the pine wood, where Badger, winding the scent of blood, snorted in terror, and stood trembling in dread as Cayuse was lifted to the saddle.

They crept cautiously down the steep path to the flat, where Kinnaird, stopping the horse, ran his hand over the bandages.

"Dry as a bottle," he advised. "Just sit tight, and you'll be all right."

"Say, preacher, you're white, and I just want to crawl over that fool break I made," Cayuse said penitently, his speech hyphenated by little breaks of weakness.

As Kinnaird took the reins in his hand to lead Badger, Cayuse asked suspiciously, "Whar we goin'?"

"To Stand Off."

"Different here! The fellers'll pump you full of lead soon's I palaver. Say you, stop!" he piped angrily, as the horse was led onward. "Set me afoot and pull your freight for your own outfit. I got a hoss feedin' here somewhar."

"If you get excited you'll start bleedin', and you ain't fit to die," the Sergeant flung over his shoulder, plodding stolidly ahead.

"But I was there scoutin'! I got to split on you, you mule headed bronco. You'll get killed! If I had a gun, I'd lam you over the head!"

"Look here, Cayuse," Kinnaird turned back and put his hand on the wounded man's knee; "didn't you get knifed in my troubles? If I set you afoot here, you'd bleed to death; besides, there isn't anybody in Stand Off could fix up that wound. It's a bad one."

"But I got to make the war talk," Cayuse whined. "I got to tell Mayo you come sniffin' about Red Eye Fountain like a damn coyote; and if Dupre was trailin' you, don't that sure allow they're out for you to-night?" He finished with a yelp of pain; for Badger was again on the move, and a sudden twist ripped like a knife at his side.

AS Stand Off loomed, Cayuse made a final appeal. "Cache me in some shack where they won't find me till mornin', and pull out. You won't, eh? Then get shot, and be damn to you!"

Kinnaird led Badger away from the trail, sweeping clear of the town, to his own home. He helped the wounded man in, laid him on a sofa, and lighted a candle, saying, "I'll put Badger in the stable. Curse yourself empty in the meantime."

When he returned, Cayuse watched him build a fire to heat a kettle of water and bring forth bandages and antiseptic dressing with a look of dissatisfaction in his eyes. At every sound without he glanced apprehensively at the door. When the Sergeant drew a wooden chair beside the couch and spread his surgical outfit, Cayuse, eying the preparation with awe, whined coaxingly. "If I stand plumb steady an' let you rope me plenty quick, will you hit the trail soon's I'm hobbled?"

Kinnaird was silently stripping the crude bandages. "By Jove!" he exclaimed as the ugly wound gaped with red lips, "your shoulder blade just saved you."

Cayuse winced when the carbolic wash



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