

Langford of the 3 Bars.
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They Were Covered on the Instant.

... crawling, creeping, twisting... insinuating—nearer and nearer, so near now that it beat upon her presence. She pressed the trigger to shoot at the shadows and dispel that choking, blanket horror, God knows what stayed the fingers. Call it instinct, you will, her hand was stayed before her physical eye was held by a blot darker still than the night, over to her right, farthel from the spring. It lay perfectly clear. It came to her, the wily plan, the startling clearness. The blot was waiting for her to fire futilely at shadows among the trees under cover of her engrossed attention insinuate its treacherous body farther forward. Then the play went so merrily on till—the end. She raised the barrel of her rifle slowly and deliberately away from the moving shapes among the cottonwood clump, sighted truly the motionless blot to her right and fired, once, twice, three times.

The completeness of the surprise seemed to inspire the attackers with a hellish fury. They returned the fire rapidly and at will, remaining under cover the while. Shrinking low at the window, her eyes glued on the still black mass out yonder, Mary wondered if they were dead. She prayed passionately that it might be, and yet—it is a dreadful thing to kill. Once the wild firing ceased. Mary remained once or twice just to keep the chilly chill from returning—if that were possible.

Under cover of the desperadoes' at obtuse angles with the first attempt, a second blot began its tortuous twisting. It accomplished a pause, stopped; pulled itself its length, stopped, waited, watchful eyes on the shadow whence came Mary's scattered thing still into the clump of trees. They had drawn her close regard at it. Would it hold out? Forward again, crawling flat on the ground, she advanced, slowly, very slowly, but also very surely, creeping, creeping, now stopping, now creeping, now stopping, now creeping.

All at once the gun play began again, sharp, quick, from the spring, from the sheds. The blot lay perfectly still for a moment—waiting, watching. The plucky little rifle was silent. So it had been before! Quarter length, half, whole length, cautiously frequent stops, eyes so steely, so sure—could it be possible that this was really silenced—out of the scene? It would not do to trust too much. The blot waited, scarcely moved, crept forward again.

A sudden bright light flashed up through the darkness under the unprovided wall to Mary's left. Almost simultaneously a kindred light sprang from being from the region of the cat-sheds. The men down there had been waiting for this signal. It meant that for some reason the second effort to creep up unobserved to fire the house had been successful. The men grew and spread. It became a scene.

When the whole cabin seemed to be in flames save the door—the dry, rude boarding had caught and burned like paper—when the heat had become unbearable, Williston held out his hand to his daughter, silently. As silently she put her hand, her left hand, in his, nor did Williston notice that it was her left, nor how limply her right arm hung to her side. In the glare, her face shone colorless, but her dark eyes were stars. Her head was held high. With firm step, Williston advanced to the door. Deliberately he unlocked it, as deliberately threw it open and stepped over the threshold. They were covered on the instant by their rifles.

"Drop your guns!" called the chief, promptly. Then the desperadoes moved back.

"I take it that I am the one wanted," said Williston.

His voice was calm and scholarly none more. In the uselessness of further struggle, it had lost the sharp effectiveness that had been the call to action. If one must die it is good to die after a brave fight. One is never so coward then. Williston's face wore an almost exalted look.

"My daughter is free to go?" he asked, his first words having met with no response. Better, much better, for the sake of a man like Williston to die in the dignity of silence, than for Mary's sake he parleyed.

"I guess not!" responded the leader, curtly. "If a pullin' idiot hadn't missed the broad side of you—as pretty a

mark this side heaven as man could want—then we might talk about the girl. She's showed up too damned much like a man now to let her loose."

His big, shuffling form lounged in his saddle. He raised his rifle with every appearance of lazy indifference. They were to be shot down where they stood, now, right on the threshold of their burning homestead. Williston bowed his head to the inevitable for a moment; then raised it proudly to meet the inevitable.

A rifle shot rang out startlingly clear. At the very moment the leader's hawk eye had swept the sight, his rifle arm had twitched uncertainly, then fallen nerveless to his side, while his bullet, playing a faltering and discordant second to the first true shot, tore up the ground in front of him and swerved harmlessly to one side. Instantly the wildest confusion reigned—shouts, curses, the plunging of horses mingled with the sharp scraak of fire-arms. The shooting was wild. The surprise was too complete for the outlaws to recover at once. They had heard no sound of approaching hoof-beats. The roaring flames licking up the dry timber and rendering the surrounding darkness the blacker for the contrast had been of saving grace to the besiegers after all.

In a moment the desperadoes rallied. They closed in and imposed a cursing, malignant wall between the rescuers and the blazing door of the shanty and what stood and lay before it. Mary had sunk down at her father's feet and had no cognizance of the fierce though brief conflict that ensued.

Presently she was dragged roughly to her feet. A big, muscular arm had heavy grasp of her.

"Make sure of the girl, Red!" commanded a sharp voice near, and it was gone out into the night.

Afterward she heard—oh, many, many times in the night watches—the eerie galloping of horses' hoofs, growing fainter and ever fainter, heard it above the medley of trampling horses and yelling men, and knew it for what it meant; but to-night—this evil night—she gave but one quick, bewildered glance into the sinister face above her and in a soft, shuddering voice breathed, "Please don't," and fainted.

TO BE CONTINUED

President Stirs Up Senators

Washington, May 8.—Three members of the United States senate have received letters from President Roosevelt within the last few days declaring his supremacy, as commander-in-chief, in all matters referring to the control of the army and navy. The letters have created intense feeling in the senate, and it is not unlikely that they will precipitate a conference of republican members. The letters in every case are in defense of his course in discharging without honor the negroes he believed to be guilty of shooting up the town of Brownsville, Tex., and his action in banishing Col. William F. Stewart to an abandoned military post in a desert section of Arizona.

The third letter came today to Senator Stewart of Vermont. A few days ago, during the debate on the Brownsville case, Senator Stewart asked a question indicating that he had doubt as to the wisdom of extending to the president the power of passing on the innocence or guilt of ex-soldiers applying for reinstatement, in view of the fact that it appeared the president still believes all of the negroes to have been guilty of complicity in the affair.

The senator was surprised to receive from the president today a letter bearing on both the Colonel Stewart and the Brownsville case. Attached to the communication were letters to Senators Rayner and William Alden Smith, the one to Mr. Rayner asserting chiefly the president's right as commander-in-chief to deal with an officer in such manner as he pleased, while the one to Mr. Smith was confined to the Brownsville affair and reiterated the president's belief that he had dealt with the case as conditions demanded.

The president went further still in his letter to Senator Stewart, in addition to repeating much that he said to the other senators. He declared that Senator Stewart, from the question he asked in the debate, appeared to be proceeding under a misapprehension of the duties of the president of the United States in connection with the army and navy.

He quoted the law as he understood it and denied that he was under any obligation to give to the discharged negro soldiers or to Colonel Stewart a court of inquiry. Several paragraphs were devoted to a discussion of Colonel Stewart's case and the faults of his which have brought him in disrepute in army circles. After this discussion the president wrote that in every community there is found maudlin sympathy with murderers, and the Thaw case in New York is cited by him as an example.

More News from the New England States.

If any one has any doubt as to the virtue of Foley's Kidney Cure, they need only to refer to Mr. Alvin H. Stimpson of Willimantic, Conn., who, after almost losing hope of recovery, on account of the failure of so many remedies, finally tried Foley's Kidney Cure, which he says was "just the thing" for him, as four bottles cured him completely. He is now entirely well and free from all the suffering incident to acute kidney trouble. Glendive Drug Co.

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