"HALLO! HALLO!" GREETED THE SPORT. TREMBLING LIKE ONE SORELY SHAKEN, THE OPERATOR LOOKED UP.
"Hallo! Hallo!" greeted the sport. Trembling like one sorely shaken, the operator looked up.
Shadrach, the Sport Detective;

or, THE SECRET SEVEN.

A TALE OF GYPSY CUNNING.

BY JOHN W. OSBON,

AUTHOR OF "SPORT FROM ST. LOUIS," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DARIUS COLLINS' Latest FATE.

"Halloo! a shot—yes, that is a cry of pain or distress, or my ears have lost their cunning!"

"Well, good horse! There is trouble ahead—maybe danger!"

Quitting his startled steed, Shadrach Mordden dropped from the saddle and hastily tethered the animal to an oak beside the trail; then, darting forward in hand, he pushed silently through the undergrowth shuffling from view the scene of the tragedy.

For tragedy it surely was. True to the quick-witted sport's surmise, nothing less had been heralded by that searing plaintive cry. For his head was on his back in the middle of the rough road lay the victim of that deadly assault—a bearded, misted man of middle age, evidently an Englishman; and, as he peered out from that leafy covert, Shadrach fancied he could detect the life-current ebbing through a ragged hole in the Briton's broad, convulsively heaving chest. He was, and is going fast, poor fellow! And the imp that did it—where is he? Hark!—hoofbeats! The trail is clear now, now; but—caution, old man! Let you lump of clay be a warning!"

Casually Shadrach parted the bushes and stepped out into the trail. A moment his piercing, hazed eyes swept the surrounding covert; then, with quick, restless strides, the sport approached the prostrate Briton.

"Pardon, pardon?" he asked, dropping upon one knee and flashing a searching glance, finding at that fatal second that the Briton's face, the blood-dimples marking the earth here and there. "Are you only winged, or is it really the end of your wing?"

Shadrach opened his eyes, shuddered, and recalled.

"Den!... Away with you!" he exclaimed, with the same vehemence. "Why should you remain to taunt me? Is not your crime black enough?"

Doubtless, the other bent lower in an attempt to read the truth; then, with long forefinger upon the edge of that gaping wound, in a kindly but steady voice he replied:

"Black enough for you, Johnny Bull surely? But who did it? I know not—it is not I, man—don't you think it? Rally your wit just once, and speak out before your glimmer of grace expires. Say it, now—Who shot you?"

"No—" he replied. "You are sure you didn't?"

"As gospel, Johnny! Why should you think I would?"

The Englishman groaned, and feebly pointed to the sport's sloathed hat, frilled shirt, and flowing sash.

"This—this—" he stammered. "These lips curled in grim contempt. He nodded curtly.

"And why shouldn't they? 'I'm, Johnnyleg, m'man.'"

"I don't deny it. Surely they are not a badge of dishonesty or servitude! Then, too, they suit me. I'm no more, nor less. But you are new to the West, I reckon?"

"Yes, yes. Let it pass. You say you didn't shoot, friend?"

"Honour bright! I've not pressed trigger the whole day."

"Believe you, sir. Now, do you know when I opened my eyes and saw you I jumped to the conclusion that you were a blood assassin?"

"A-far-from-safe jump, Mr. Bull, I assure you!"

Shadrach smiled faintly. Then, with an effort, he raised himself upon an elbow and stared curiously at the dark, resolute face. "Shall I trust you?" he asked, after a moment.

"My poor fellow, it is your age! Do as you please. I am not seeking your confidence, nor shall I betray it if given."

"That will do! I need greater of fear than I like yours. I will speak, and freely, Mr.—"

"Shadrach Mason, sir."

"I am Darius Collins, Mr. Mason, and your surmise that I am from England is justified. Come, I came back up to my mission, and I am dying with that mission unperformed."

But while some important papers and notes relating thereto, and I will place them in your hands for delivery to Sandy McDeh, my cousin at Crystal City, Colorado, if—If you will—"

"I am going direct to Crystal City, and shall be glad to have you serve, Mr. Collins, the sport assured.""

"Thank you, Mason. Here—the paper is done up in a four-page letter, care of your coat pocket. Get them out, will you?"

Darting open the wounded man's coat, Shadrach thrust his hand inside.

"Instantly a peculiar expression crossed his face.

"Your pocket is turned inside out! The papers are expressing! A wild look flashed from Darius Collins' blue eyes, and his heavy jaws closed with a snap. "I have been robbed!" he grated.

"You have, sir.

"See if my other pockets have been tampered with."

"They have not, air," declared the sport. "Here is your wallet and your watch."

Collins stared vacantly at the articles. His brain seemed for a perplexing problem. Presently he spoke:

"Dying, Mason, am I not?"

"You are, sir."

"You will do me a favor?"

"Assuredly, sir."

"Go, then, as soon as I am dead, to Crystal City, and find McDeh. Tell him my fate, and say that I fell victim to—"

"Darius Collins, sir?"

"Yes, sir. Do you know 'him,' and the movements of the man. Shadrach shook his head in a puzzled way.

"No," he replied. "The name is unusual, though there is something—"

"True—true. But it is enough for you do not know him," interrupted Darius Collins, tensely. "Time is short. Let be that he belongs across the water, but has been in America a number of years. He is generally supposed to be the master of Craglans, in Scotland, but is a black sheep—a very black sheep. My blood is upon his head!"

"He fired the shot, then?"

"I don't think so. But his hand did not hold the weapon, he at least inspired the attack."

"An enemy of yours, may I ask?"

"Yes. The papers I carried would have wrought from him a man inheritance. So rare."

"Naturally. Yet you may be wrong."

"No, Mason, I feel that my condition is due to Carnegie. He is here, his tool, yet the crime lies at his door. No common footpads did the deed, or the traces along would not have been singled out for booty!

"Let me remind you, too, that I was shot, from ambush, and fell right here. The man who lay in wait for me had a knowledge of my movements, he wanted something of importance, I think. It was not money, for we have the wallet here, and it is not an empty one. But the packet is gone. Do you see?"

The sport nodded.

"Your theory is probably correct," he added. "But I awoke you, could you have glimpsed the knife?"

Impossible, man! The shock deprived of me my senses, and I knew nothing!"

"Tell me all I crossed your path! I was over me. Yet, I know that Cragile was the man!"

"George McDeh to use every precaution, for something warns me that the false master of Craglans will do him to death."

"Say to him that the heirs are here, but known as such by Cragile, and that he must guard with the utmost vigilance and secrecy if he would save them from the clutches of that masterful wretch."

"Shall I fail to find McDeh—what then?"

"That is not—stay! He may even now be in peril. The time is quick and with marvelous precision. Should you fail to find Sandy, send word immediately to Duncan Saunders, Stannasome Street, Philadelphia. And lose no time, for in thwarting the evil designs of old Cragile much will depend upon prompt action."

"Saunders is familiar with the case, and will know what to do. Say to him, simply, that I have been murdered, and that McDeh is dead or missing, as the case may be. Tell him that you breath I charged Cragile with being at the bottom of it all."

"Say too, that the Craglans are—"}

A hoarse, guttering sound broke the solemn stillness of the night. The blood-dimples of the unfortunate Englishman. His head dropped forward; his slippery arms were huddled upon his breast and the sport could catch him as he sank limp upon his back.

Another minute Darius Collins was dead.

CHAPTER II.

AJAH, THE MOUNTAIN SEEKER.

Shadrach Mason gazed down at the corpse of the unfortunate Englishman with a strange expression upon his fair face.

"That marks the end of a long trail," he said to himself. "The end is shrouded in gloom and mystery, too!"

"Who is Donald Cragile? What was the case that blurred poor Collins across the trail, making mere margin in the Western wilds? Will these things ever be known? Will the murderer ever feel the force of his crime?"

"I can but keep my pledge, and seek out McDeh. This time will tell!"

A careful search of the unfortunate man's pockets brought nothing new to light, and after a moment's reflection the sport lifted the body in his arms, dragged it through the shrubbery, and placed it at the foot of a tree. Crossing the hands ever that broad chest, he turned away, muttering.

"It's the best I can do, just now. I'll get a look at the point of ambush, and hurry on to Crystal City. McDeh will finish the job."

Retracing his steps, then, to the point at which Collins had fallen, Shadrach again bent low, to scan those telltale marks. He leaned there and there, and he nodded shorty.

"Hardly distinct enough to swear by yet plainly enough made in the true fashion of an assassin that dastardly shot The broken and twisted twigs of the stroke left upon the leaves marked the place beyond question, as hinted strongly that the deadly vigil was over, that the assassin too was shorn of impotence and physical discomfort."

Keenly and quickly the sport read the signs.

Then, passing beyond that natural screen, Shadrach crouched in theaupt of a tree, and glanced up and down the trail.

"Impossible, man! The shock deprived of me my senses, and I knew nothing!"

"Tell me all I crossed your path! I was over me. Yet, I know that Cragile was the man!"

George McDeh to use every precaution, for something warns me that the false master of Craglans will do him to death."

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"Say too, that the Craglans are—"
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

As foul a deed as Satan ever instigated. Good Shadrach, after the murder, burned leaves clearly proves that even the muzzle of the murderer’s weapon was hot when he killed. Shadrach walked straight into the death-trap without sight or sound to warn him of his impending doom.

“Well, I shall do my best to aid McGowan in avenging his pards, so must continue the hunt. I am in tracing down the author of the crime. There is yet time—sunset to the right of the course he left his horse, and I will do it, so that no possible clue may be missed.”

It was certain that the animal, like his master, had grown impatient at the delay. The silence was as much, and then a sharp ejaculation burst from the lips of the sport.

At the center of that space of barren earth lay a round, yellow object, gleaming softly in the glancing rays of the sunset.

Carefully noting the position in which it lay, Shadrach reached forward and seized the bit of metal. It was a gold locket. The sides were smooth and timeworn, and the fragment of gold in them formed the face of a young and beautiful girl. Long and earnestly he studied the features of that tiny likeness, then closed the lid and slipped the locket into his purse.

With a glance up and down the trail Shadrach noted the hoof prints leading away from that trampled spot, and again was his patience rewarded.

The shoe on the hind foot of the assassin’s horse was marked in a peculiar manner.

Three deep nicks had been filed in the edge of the tough metal, and wherever the hoof had come in contact and retained the full impression, those teeth-like marks appeared.

The sport smiled grimly, and hurried toward his horse.

“McGowan cannot complain of a lack of clues,” he told himself. “If the assassin is in Crystal City twenty-four hours, he should safely caged.

Saddled his horse, was truant into the saddle and resumed his journey. Considerable time had been consumed in his investigations. The light was failing, and Shadrach was convinced him that he by no possibility reach his destination until two or three hours after nightfall.

Then, too, as he spurred onward that stretch of level woodland gave way to rougher ground, and those tracks, which in turn, were supplanted by towering hills and crags, and the sport shook his head conversingly.

“The trail certainly bids fair to sustain its reputation. Here’s hoping I might have the satisfaction of killing the axeman and bringing him to justice.”

McGowan can never forget the affray as quickly as possible.

“Why?”

“Keeping your pledge you will bring an immeasurable joy.”

The hollow voice of the old man had a firmer tone, and Shadrach fancied he could detect an anxious note. With interest freshly aroused, he smiled and briskly asked:

“Meaning Doctor, I believe? I cannot do it.”

“I had, once; not now. Sir, do you grant my request? The sport should have answered.

“I cannot do it,” he returned. “The man Collins was fouly murdered; the furnishing is an important clue, and as such must be delivered to the authorities.

The sport smiled, then swung his horse toward that rocky wall. That he was puzzled was told by his words, for he said:

“What does it mean? What is the riddle involved in this crime? Is Ajah safe?”

Feeling that he indeed had food for thought, Shadrach quietly touched spur to horse and turned him toward the city. Unconsciously, almost, he turned to the left, taking the Gilt Edge trail, as direct as possible.

“Right into the jaws of a trap, as like as not, he mused, grimly, “Somehow, though, Dorn’s words had a truthful ring, and I believe he spoke by the book.

For more than an hour the sport rode steadily onward, keenly alert. Then, a turn in the road brought a number of the Gilt Edge rangers announcing that Gilt Edge lay just ahead.
Chapter IV.

In Crystal City.

Just a breath of silence followed Schar- laus's terse announcement that McGowan was dead; then one of the loungers, evidently a miner, quickly added:

"Yes; Sandy wuz run down by a train, away yonder by the station, jest after dark."

"The body wuz toed into Orthodox Will, for Tom, to keep it away, so as we'd like to gawe upon it, I'll steer ye across."

"Yaw! Do you so," nodded the landlord, "I don't want to do it, but der drip goutes you notings at all."

"Thank you, gentlemen—not to-night," the man said.

"Was the death due to an accident, Mr. Taylor?"

"No, par'sent. Sandy had packed his grip am' wuz slidin' out fur the East, but wuz a couple o' minutes late, an' wuz run down on the movin' train."

"He wuz foolish, of course; but it seems to me he'd rather we should mind us ther in murther o' life we are in death, as the sky pilot put it."

"Here's a man killed here to-night. I suppose that has shaken your nerves."

"Yes, it was a terrible thing. He wanted the engagement, but was not ready to get aboard as it was moving out. I called him to not to attempt it, but he kept on. He was a good man, a coach, but lost his footing, and was swept under the wheels."

"The operator was much shocked."

"Don't brood over it, man," the sport advised, "in a kindly tone. "Get it off your mind."

Then he seized pen and paper, and in a "free, bold hand:

"Crystal City, Mont., June 10, 188..."

Duncan Saunders,

Sanson Street, Philadelphia

Darius G. Sides, Underwriter in to-day, twenty miles east of this place.
of the street blinded the sport for the moment. One ear has been located that deadly struggle quickly, and with remarkable certitude, and he bounded forward, brushing hand across eyes as he ran. Then, he made out a number of stragglers on the opposite side of the street, or alley, and in another half-minute he joined in the fray, swinging clear across, revolver right and left with terrible force.

"Break loose, you masked dogs!" he grated in a tone of surprise. "I believe the position fairly astride the prostrate form over which that evil cohort was hovering, offers a better chance for clout or dodge.

"Down the whale, pards, or the game is both won and lost!" cut in a hoarse voice.

"Watch it, Skratch, too, for the whole town is alarmed!"

Silently, the masked figures, five in all, flung themselves forward, in response to that command, only to recoil in dismay! With a dexterous movement Shadrach had drawn a second revolver, and now the brace of deadly steel tubes bore full upon the cohort!

"Ready?" warned the sport, quick to note and take advantage of that momentary shrinking, his dark eyes fairly leaping from beneath the mask, should be as good as a feast—you curs!" Just then, with a swift pattering, and a sound of unavailing exertions, Marshab Tarbunt ran alongside of the sport, guns in hand.

"In," said.

A furious curse and a harangue command drowns that wheezy voice, and with one agile leap, man, master of the steps, rushing pell-mell through the narrow cross street.

But, swiftly as they moved, they could not wholly elude the sport. Leaving the marauding gang to sift their way through the crowd, and keep off the main form, he bounded lightly after the nearest of the fleeing roughs, and a moment later gripped the throat of one of the men from behind. Thus checked in that mad flight, the fellow fought viciously, but in a moment Shadrach had him on the ground, his arms fastened behind him, with hands locked on his revolver and a knee planted firmly in the small of his back, and he quickly realized the utter futility of further resistance.

"Hold up your hands," ordered Shadrach, stepping quickly a step, and grasping artistically the white end of the towel. "Don't try any tricks. You're due for a dose of rope or lead, and you'll get it from me. Only the law allows if you play monkey!"

"Oh, Bill, never!"

There the faltering voice failed, for that relentless clench had paralyzed the rasping breath, stilled the moment, and the fretful appeal ended with the choking sound.

Shadrach, dodged grimly, then with hand clenched in collar, swung his captive squarely around, and briskly marched him back to the scene of the struggle. The sturdy old marshal, with pistol-armed hands, was holding back the curious group that had quickly gathered, and theควร payments for the outburst.

A few words from the sport made matters perfectly plain to the prisoner. Then Tarbunt took charge of the prisoner, whereupon Shadrach lifted that mouth, giving me all the better chance to hastily follow the marshal and the captive toward the undertaker's, while a number of the idlers straggled along in the rear.

In response to a peremptory summons from the Watchman, Shadrach opened the door and admitted them, then turned the key in the lock, to shut out the noise.

"Pull down yere shades, too," the mar-shal ordered, with a jerk of his thumb at the single window in the front of the eight-by-twelve. "I want to take the rag off this critter's face, by an'by' an' of his friends are in that gang out front.

Orthodox obeyed without question, but in an extremely nervous manner, while Tarbunt ordered his men to spread out, and delicately knotted it around the wrists and ankles of his captive. Meanwhile, Shadrach was not idle. On entering the place, he had quickly placed his senseless burden on a long wood- bench at one end of the room, and once began a search for the wounds in ducing that deathlike stupor.

In this work, he was shortly joined by Tarbunt.

At sight of that senseless face, the old man's heart uttered a thrill of surprise.

"It's the quarter-blood, Pawnee Bill!" he exclaimed. "Say, the cuss has been scared, for I reckon that gang were after the ding-bats."

I suppose so. We'll let it go at that for the present. Send a report, and drawing back from that sinewy, grayly- garbed form with a long breath of relief.

Clip over the head with some blunt in- strument did the business, and I think a douse of cold water will bring him around.

The marshal assented to this view, and a moment later the remedy was successfully applied. Pawnee Bill sat up in a dazed way, then glanced slowly around. But his eyes encountered the masked captive.

Then he started violently, swung his arm in tears of fear. He was neither start- ed, but was quickly stopped by the offi- cer.

Hold on! hold on!" the latter ex- claimed. "Ye can't do any funny busi- ness, Pawnee! I've got the critter, an' that enuf."

A grim look crossed the quarter-blood's face.

"You do not understand," he returned quietly, and in excellent English. "I do not seek to harm the wretch. He is in your hands. I know. He will be punished, but you must hand him over. But I am one of the men who assaulted me, and I have a right to know."

"That's so, redskin. You shall see it with your own eyes. We know what you know the attack first."

"Marshall, I know but little. I was passing the corner, when a number of men sprang upon me. There was just time to shout aloud and fire my revolver before they got me fast and took my purse. I am not now going to lie fall under my head, and I knew nothing more until I felt the water dashed into my face."

"The Pawnee is not a fool, to carry gold in his pockets."

"Old man chuckked.

"Ye did well to hide it," he remarked. "See, your pockets are turned.

A harsh laugh, that the prisoner heard, as Bill's face when he found Tarbunt's assertion to be correct. Then, before fur- ther words could be exchanged, Orthodox interposed, saying pejulantly:

"Come, gentlemen, I shall have to ask you to make haste. It is after midnight. You are depriving me of my rest."

"Marshall Tarbunt, can you not travel in your baggage to the town prison?"

"To be sure. Orthodox—in jest a min- ute ago. Name is Bill, and will call at ther crit- ter's face, then go."

"It will do yer no good," spoke the prisoner.

"I am a stranger in the Crystal City."

"Say ye are, eh?" As he uttered the ominous words, the marshal stripped aside the mask.

Then all saw that the fellow had spoken the truth. He was indeed, stranger, travel-stained and dusty."

"I'm willin' to make a clean breast of it. I have left the game for good. I have sold my gun and promisely a square deal," he continued, glancing from one to another. "I reckon I'm in a pocket light bag, but perhaps a Highway robbery," the marshal as- sumed.

"An' that means ther pen?"

"No yit."

"Pawnee Bill's dark eyes flashed.
his gaze Shadrach involuntarily drew near.

"Yes, this is the place!" he exclaimed.

"I am sure there can be no mistake. The houses and the church are somewhere in this little girt valley."

Then he started sharply, and gazed eagerly at the foot of the opposite bluffs.

Halt hidden by the timber, a campfire shimmered, and he noted the lazily curling smoke, a look of disquiet crossed his dark face.

"There's gold-seekers! They're indeed here," he muttered. "I will ride across and take a look at the outfit."

Turning anders, he trotted swiftly, for that campfire proves it the same reached by Pawnee Bill. The party yonder entered, I daresay by the same way that he is written on the Englishman's section of the map.

"If so, each of the three approaches has been found, and it is time to make the three sections of the original map together to locate the mine."

"That trust by Yorke himself or his lawful representative is at the head of the party, for then the matter may be quietly and satisfactorily settled."

While thus musing, the sport was hearing rapidly across the valley, and a baying of hounds enlivened the open timber lying along the base of the cliffs.

Then his approach was observed by the party; and instantly they stepped forward, with scowling faces.

The men were three in number. They were without haversack, without armament, and an experienced reader of faces would at once have pronounced them thieves.

"Good-morning, men," the sport saluted, as he drew rein beside the group. With a yawn the party opened.

The three desperadoes looked at each other. Then the tallest of the trio stepped neuralgically from the saddle and said:

"Our boss ain't byar, jest now. But I'm chief o' this hyar layout when he's aboard."

And, without any further ado, they went on business, jest speak yer leetle piece terser.

"No, my man: I prefer to see your chief in person. Will he return soon?"

"Oh, ya—thet is, I mean—blame of me knows, pard," Bunco replied, in stammering confusion, with a broad grin. "Yer'hev' ter ast him!"

Shadrach frowned impatiently. "I am in a hurry, getting along very rapidly," he exclaimed. "You can tell me if your chief will return to-day?"

"Kin ain't wait, pard!"

"You refuse, then?"

"No, I don't know, and can't tell!"

"Where shall I find him?"

"Jest whar yer meets him!"

And all three of the ruffians laughed loudly, and a wrathful gleam appeared in the hazel eyes of the sport.

"No, I don't do the!" he protested. "It is important that I have a talk with your chief as quickly as possible, and you must help me do it. Now where shall I find him?"

"I don't know."

"Give me his name. I will hunt him up."

"Pard, yer is imperitive. Et's agin their law, and they'll shoot you!"

"Among rogues it is, I know," was the significant retort.

Thereupon the desperado flushed angrily, and clenched his hands in a threatening manner.

"I'm no robber, am I, or a rogue?" he demanded, savagely.

"I certainly believe you to be one," was the calm rejoinder. "And with your sash, Shadrach boldly confronted the fellow.

"I come on, and I'll give you a lesson you'll never forget!"

Naturally quarrelsome and pugnacious, Bunco concluded. He looked as if he was fully forty pounds heavier than the sport, and he believed there was an easy victory before him.

"No was a man more deceived."

His savage ruck was promptly checked by a right-hand thrust to the shoulder, which sent him staggering backward. Then Shadrach leaped forward, and struck at the stroke, and the fight was ended.

As they noted this decisive finish, Bunco Bill's companions sprang forward with cries of rage.

But the sport was on his guard. Swiftly, his hands clapped to his weapons while from his lips burst the warning:

"Stau, I back, both of you! Don't attempt to interfere, or I shall open fire!"

Understand, Bunco is my game I've jogged his memory and loosened his reins. And he is going to tell me all he knows!"

Before those pistol-armed hands the hunters fell, helpless, and both shrank back, with muttered curses.

But at that juncture there came a startling interruption.

Out from a narrow, zigzag opening in a ledge on the opposite side, spurted two masked horsemen, leading a third animal, bearing a young and beautiful girl.

With a swift glance at the scene before them, both men drew rein, while from the lips of the girl came a sharp exclamation of surprise and anger.

Then, before a hand could be lifted to prevent it, the maiden threw off her hood, and flung herself fairly upon the sport, while from her pale and quivering lips came the words:

"Save, oh, save me, sir; for those men mean to kill me!

CHAPTER VII.

IVAN, THE KEEPER.

Despite Pawnee Bill's emphatic refusal to open negotiations with the captured thug, Marshal Thomas Tarbotten was fully determined to do that. And thus far he would get the fellow under lock and key.

Some extremely puzzling affairs had occurred in a little town called Crystal City during the preceding half year, and the austere old marshal was quite ready to believe that the battling little town had become the headquarters of an organized band of lawbreakers.

As now at I got one o' the girls, who's to say I shan't make him sing his little song?" he angrily muttered, unconsciously endeavoring to grip a fast prisoner, as he hurried toward the calico.

"Umph! No Injun card-sharp for shore!"

A moment later he passed around a corner in the street and halted before the prison, a door closed with a lock of hewed logs. A light shone through a barred window near the end of the building, and, in response to a sharp rap, the door was quickly unlocked and flung open.

The keeper, a short, stocky-billed man, with bristling white beard, heirloom shoulders, and long and powerful arms, openedkeepered a door and prisoner a moment; then, with a dealt, catlike movement, he swung aside "saving" Enter, man—I am most welcome! By my soul! but I've been lonesome, and I greet your jailbird with joy. Need I tell you he shall be in my country?"

The voice was soft, almost purring and broken slightly by a peculiar foreign accent. A flush dyed the dark skin beneath that grizzled beard and the shaggy brows, and the prisoner trembled as he felt the gaze of that pale, but intensely eager, eyes upon his face.

"No, Ivan," the marshal chuckled, fol lowing his captive through that cancerous doorway. "No need to promise. He's shore enough to be on hand, dead or alive, when you come and rescue me."

"But I want to chit the critter a bit, you understand, before giving him to you or keeping him!"

Ivan bowed, closed the door, and retreated to the cell-room, where he extended himself upon a rude bunk, and patiently waited.

Tarbotten at once motioned the prisoner to follow him.

"Now, critter, cut loose," he exclaimed.

"Let's hear about this attack on the red man!"

What?" he repeated, slowly.

"Slowly, my friend!" the captive retorted. "You forget that my lips are sealed until I give you permission!"

The marshal scowled darkly, and pondered a moment.

"Well, then, what ye kin tell. But if your disclosures are important, I'll stand between you an' your execution."

"That's enough. I'll rely on you, an' spey. My name's Tom Johnson, an' as you have seen, you have been wrong. But I reached hyar this mornin', clean busted, an' that's what got me into this hyar trouble."

"It was highway robbery, then?"

I reckon. I don't know fer shore, though. Ye see, I was hangin' 'round here, Mecca, when some one popped a note into my hand. Can't say who it was, fer I didn't see. This note said as how I was a dead game man thar was a chance fer me ter make ten dollars quicky."

"What's yer note?"

The prisoner tapped his pocket, signifying his note is in his pocket.

I'll shore flash it, by an'; by," he assured. "Of course, soon es I found out what the note said, I went fer round ter see if I could spot thar critter; but he was too deep fer me, an' I gave up.

"Then I determined ter make a try at, fer I needed ten, so I went out thar back door. They arrested me thrice times, like they note hear'd I must do.

"They war thar, pard, an' waitin';\thar chief o' thar layout got yer-thar dropper on me, an' then explained what he wanted. He said ter me, 'I want yer-thar was a red sport in camp ye said, he said, thar, an' he cleaned out him at poker a few nights before,' an' he 'vas jest on givin' 'im-a first-class chumpy in.'"

"He didn't say, then, at he wanted ter see you, Paws."

"Nary a hint ther way, boss! He was out fer revenge, pure an' simple. He calculated, too, that hekin red 'd put up a mean fight, an' he wanted men enough with him ter make a good job of it."

"Would ye know thar chief, should ye see him?"

Johnson reflected a moment, then, in a decided way, shook his head, declaring:

"No. He wore a mask, boss. They all wore masks, and no names."

"Thar war five o' ye?"

"By count, pard. An' ther-thar five-what-fer man did he seem? Short or tall? Old or young?"

"Tallish, boss, an' cat-quick on feet, but you well had been careful much of him. He didn't say more'n he hed to, an' his voice was deep an' coarse. Now, boss, that's all I know. He cut out thar work an' I helped do ef, fer I got my ten when we clinched thar bargain. Ef I got to haf a partner, I'd say more."

Again Tarbotten scowled.

"An' et's leetle enough," he grumbled. "I never saw so much, or so little. Usually yer story proves true. Ho, Ivan!"

Thus summoned, the keeper quickly appeared, and the incident was once searched and registered the prisoner.

True to Johnson's assertions, the note and exactly ten dollars were found in his possession, but he was taken first with a satisfied expression on his round old face.

Tarbotten carefully secured the door, and turned to the prisoner.

"Well, Johnson, you are a cunning devil, and a fine liar. What a story! You have completely deceived that insensate dog!"

"I do that, my friend," Johnson replied proudly. "I—i—don't understand you, jaller."

"Your denial is silly, Johnson. The tale you have given is too clearly connect ed for just such an occasion."

---
"You were in the cellroom. You didn't hear it?"

"In the cellroom—yes; but my ears are keen. You can't deceive me, man. My capacity for inflicting pain will amaze you. You are a bornenced Zendrel. You have carried this note for days—perhaps months. Shadrach, you mustn't cross me. I'm not what I was."

"You are both right and wrong, sweet heart!" he muttered, huskily. "I am in the Cellroom. But you must not come here and fight me out. To run away would brand myself guilty!"

"Do tell!" sneered the captive.

"Yes. You are not going free. I am going to be "practical" with you."

"We shall see."

"You are in disguise, too, and you don't realize it. You have managed the自然界. My impression is, you are far too important a prisoner to slip."

He shook his head, and pressed the knife closer to the firm, white flesh. "It is the mark of the Secret Seven! Deny, if you can, that you are a member of that infamous cohort!"

CHAPTER VIII.

When Shadrach Mason strode out of the telegraph office in Crystal City the operator moved forward mechanically, put the instrument to his ear, lifted it, then seized the message, and sat down to put it on the wire.

Suddenly straightened, the telegraphist was stirred by some deep emotion; but as his blinding eyes glowed dazed in the center of his spectacles, the message to Duncan Saunders, he became quite lively and leaped to his feet.

"What deathnote is this? What is this message, which is so certainly, violently, powerfully, and monstrously written around me?" he grunted. "Can it be possible all this is due to chance?"

"No! It is part of a deliberate conspiracy against my life, and honor, and the courage that is doubling a party to it!"

Swiftly, then, the hand of the desperate man at the instrument, his fingers flashed over the keys, his face was turned away from the office to the narrow platform running alongside the main entrance. With his back turned to the inrush of hearts in his heart at that awful moment, and as he despaired of a means to frustrate the message he read, his arm, bringing the gleaming revoler to a level,

John Yorke, drawn gasp came from his tightly drawn lips; he shivered violently, and his hand sank to his side:

"I cannot do it! I cannot do it—even to battle the inhuman hounds, for it is murder—nothing less.

"Yes, though innocent of crime, I am doomed, but will not red my hands with blood to save myself!"

"Aradn Yorke!" exclaimed the telegraphist, "You have here—and at this moment!"

"But your father, girl! He will—"

"Papa Ivan sent me, sir, under Ma's leaning orders, to your father."

"You puzzle me, Mignon!"

A decided pause showed on the darkly frowning face of the man who was to become the signal of death. But it quickly disappeared, leaving an expression of sadness in itsstead.

"If you are in trouble and danger, and papa sent me to warn you. You must leave Crystal City and go into hiding for a time."

The words fairly staggered the man. He raised his right arm, as one stupefied. Then he drew a hand sharply across his eyes, stopped, and passionately kissed the tip of his pipe. "You are right and wrong, sweet heart!" he muttered, huskily. "I am in the Cellroom. But you must not come here and fight me out. To run away would brand myself guilty!"

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"Yes. You are not going free. I am going to be "practical" with you."

"We shall see."

"You are in disguise, too, and you don't realize it. You have managed the自然界. My impression is, you are far too important a prisoner to slip."

"There!" he cried, triumphantly pointing at the small symbol on the firm, white flesh. "It is the mark of the Secret Seven! Deny, if you can, that you are a member of that infamous cohort!"

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CHAPTER IX.

Against Odis.

Straight to the heart of Shadrach Mason flashed the message that paled the lips of the beautiful captive, arousing the lion in his nature as by a magic touch. In the dead silence, in the night, far off, one could hear faintly, somewhere, in the heart of the chief type of the East, the nine little letters, "Shadrach, Mason out." There was something strangely familiar in the white, terrified face of the maid, and she knew that strengthened his resolve to stand between her and the fiends, no matter how desperate the odds or bitter the fate."

"Courage!" he quickly whispered, as a savage impression came from the forest of the girl, "and no matter what the future may hold. Get behind me, I will save you!"

Then, indelibly:

"Tell your friends in Constantinople, not an other forward step, or somebody's health shall suffer, and—it won't be mine!"

"Take a fool's, and a scamp's, and one all—all! It's the last call, and the last chance to get off with whole hides!"

"Your father, eh? He is here, then?"

"Oh, yes. He is a prospector. The mine strikes in the death area again three six, in company with two friends.

They were driven out by hostile reds, but they besides the ship, separated the chart into three sections, each taking one, and agreeing to meet at a given date and place, to a certain writer, to re- a new their work on the mine.

"But fate prevented my father's appearance at the place the date set, and for many years he has been unable to hear aught of his whibum pards, so came here to rediscover the mine alone, if possible."

Taylor received this information with- out comment, and for some minutes the two men smoked on in silence.

"By the way, Yorke, I have been thinking this matter over, and with your permission I will withdraw from the affair now that you are fool loose for the night."

"You will understand how distressful to me, because it has been, and will relieve me, I am sure.

"Here is the money, just as you gave it to me; I will return it, and if the man appears, will send him direct to you. You will not be offended?"

"No, sir," Yorke responded. "And I thank you for the service you have been to me in the matter."

Then he seized the small packet of bills extended by Taylor, and carelessly thrust it into his pocket, adding:

"Mr. Yorke, I am leaving you. I don't know that the single section of the map would be of the least value in locating the lost mine, and my father no little satisfaction to try it."

"I have no doubt you will succeed. It will be worth seeing down upon us, glowing like an avenging demon!"

True enough! Straight to the table at which the men sat the sturdy old officer, his round face aglow with savage zeal.

Ardan Yorke turned pale, and hastily rose.

"By all, very well—all two o' ye!" Tar- button sang out, gripping the pistol butt protruding from his belt.

"But your father, Yorke, steer off to the side chair, and ye'll escape what y'er old had long ago!"

"Go on, sir, Yorke—hands up! I want ye!"

"For what, Tarbuton?"

"For ther murder o' Darius Collins!"

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"Tell your friends in Constantinople, not an other forward step, or somebody's health shall suffer, and—it won't be mine!"

"Take a fool's, and a scamp's, and one all—all! It's the last call, and the last chance to get off with whole hides!"
Cool enough, surely—odds considered! But the hag is a flinty one, intemperate in temper and sly. What manner of a fellow may she be, and can you find me there at any time, one or all?"

Then, with a mocking bow, the sport began his retreat, walking backward, slowly and cautiously, with weapons drawn and set, until he had gained the shelter of the timber.

There he passed a moment and sternly surveyed the five riders, for Bushy had now scrambled hastily to his feet.

All were slain; and motionless, but nothing to be done with, save the sport know it was the calm preceding the storm.

"So far, so good!" he muttered, grimly.

But I can't murder you, old choker, or give up the ghost!"

Retaining his grip on his weapons, Shadrach turned his back to his sides, turned, and sped rapidly across the basin. Faced by a gnawing molar, he stood still and proceeded to give vent to fierce activity.

"After that fellow, boys!" Zoke Jones shouted, discarding that husky tone and rude phraseology which had marked his conversation with the sport. "Get him alive, if possible—dead if you have to!"

An answering yell came from the roughs, and then the entire party plunged into the timber in swift pursuit of the fleeing sport.

Agitated by the movement; by that burst of vengeful shouts, Shadrach cast a glance over his shoulder.

Fully a quarter of a mile lay between him and his foes, and he had little fear of the result. The mouth of the canyon was less than a mile and a half distant, and he knew that if he once gained the shelter of the rocks his position would be almost impregnable.

To his surprise, the pursuers did not open fire when they emerged from the timber belt and entered the open. They were, with an occasional threatening yell as they bounded forward.

No sooner had he disengaged himself from the timber, the two horsemen were several rods behind the footmen in gaining the open ground of the basin, but this and all of the press of the clear they urged their animals forward at a pace which threatened speedy capture or death to the sport.

A second backward glance warned Shadrach of the changed phase of the pursuit, and his white teeth shut with an audible click. Then his dark eyes ran along the course ahead, and he decided to dodge toward the rear.

Off to the south, a few yards out of line with the direct course the sport was on, the rider was bowling, was dodging, was plugging, and was going. Following aside, he reached it with a couple of bounds, and resolutely faced about.

"Half a mile, I declare!" he muttered, "I'd stake my arms across the top of the huge stone."

"Halt! or I will open fire!"

The horsemen were more than seventy yards away, uttered derisive yells, brandishing their weapons, and drove forward with a mad rush toward the sport.

"Surrender!" cried the foremost, with a savage imprecation. "Surrender, or I'll give you a shot!"

By way of answer Shadrach fired a shot over the fellow's head. Then, as he turned, with thundering hooves, the two followed in the same direction, aiming at the nearest horse, and pressed triggers.

With a shot of pain and terror the stricken animal leaped high in the air, then fell in a quavering heap, pinning its dead body to the ground.

The second rider, daunted by the decisive action of the sport, attempted to dodge aside, but in his haste, terrified by the fate of his companion, refused to answer to bit or spur, and plunged, shot, and fell over that grim obstacle in its path.

More fortunate than his leader, the rider swung clear of the saddle, and, without waiting for his struggling horse to rise, bounded towards the precipice.

Chuckling cheerily as he noted the double result of his shot, Shadrach quickly sprang from behind the bowder, caught the horse as it stepped clear of its dead companion, and turned the flanks.

A burst of angry yells followed the act.

Repeating with a long-drawn cry of defiance, Shadrach spurred his captured steed, urging it toward the canyon at a breakneck pace, followed by a storm of bullets.

CHAPTER X

MINER BILL'S ACCUSATION

Unharmed by that murderous fire from the bowder, and horridly excited by the open space and plunged between the grim walls of the canyon, where they caught the buffeted breath of the roughs, and heard the swishing cut of the captured steel, urging it toward the canyon at a breakneck pace, followed by a storm of bullets.

Then an answering swing of Shadrach's bowler, the smooth driving blow and she wheeled her horse and slowly rode back to meet him.

"Yes, yes, you are right—then you escaped, for I feared that they would kill you, sir," she said, earnestly, as she took her place on the saddle, "but I knew they were only a thoroughly desperate wretches, and I can never thank you enough for releasing me from their clutches."

"Yes; they are bad citizens, and I shall always thank the good fortune that took me to the basin this morning."

The fervent tones of the sport brought a slight flush to the pallid face of the girl, and she quickly added that she was the woman who had been seriously injured, and that they that came to tell me my brother Adrain had been seriously injured, and enquired the presence of my father and myself.

"Although alarmed at the report concerning my brother, I knew it would be impossible for me to go until my father returned. But they urged me to proceed at once, searching for my father, promising to return to the cabin and await him there if he failed to find me.

"Reassured by their kindly and earnest manner, I at once caught my horse and started on the return of the one who had remained at the cabin."

When we reached the defile through which my father had passed, I found the second man awaiting us, and I at once became greatly alarmed. Then followed the search for my father, and when my brother was only a hoax, and that they had come to take me away, by fair means or force, I

"I began to scream and call for help, but they promptly stopped that, and when I showed any sign of outrage or any attempt to escape they would punish me with instant death.

Then both men threatened, and
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

brouched me on to the basin, where you so bravely rescued me.

"They did not, then, state their object in talking to you?"

"No, sir."

The sport reflected a moment, then continued.

"May I ask your father's full name?"

"He is known as Edwin Arvil Yorke."

"How does he make a living?"

"He is, sir—or was, for he has long ago renounced allegiance to that country, has moved to the south, where he has made his fortune.

"And is he not here seeking a mine which he discovered some years ago, in connection with one Hanibal Mason and Deering, a friendly Indian chief?"

The girl looked up in surprise.

"Yes, he is," she frankly replied.

A pleased look came over Shadrach's face, and he laughed gayly. His spirits were up, and Miss Yorke, not unresponsive, added:

"I, too, am in search of that very mine," pursued the sport, after a moment.

"Hanibal Mason was my father."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And the son of Deering, the old chief, is also here. Each of us possesses a section of the wonderful map, and as soon as we can join your father the mine may be found."

Miss Yorke shook her dainty head.

"I am afraid not, Mr. Mason. The true fortune of the Indian chief has not been with fortune. His part of the map has been stolen."

"And you startle me! Has no clue to the thief been discovered?"

"None whatever, sir, unless my adversary has not yet furnished it. The cabin was entered one day during our absence, and the map was taken."

"And the key of the basin?"

"They came nearly a month after the theft was committed."

"Northe, those men are the guilty ones, sir."

"I believe so, sir, for it is now certain that my abductors were part of that outfit."

"Yes. And I may tell you, too, that an attempt to recover the map was made in Crystal City last night, but failed. It is certain now, that the thugs were after its portion of that precious bit of paper."

"And you seem so, sir, though how they could take it without my presence puzzles me."

"Nor do I understand it, sir, but I'll solve the riddle, for I am determined they shall not score the mine."

"This is all for the best, sir, doubly so if they know now, before they can pounce a portion of the map,"

Shadrach turned to other subjects, and before either fairly realized it they were out of the canyon and upon the open plains of the railroad.

A few hundred yards beyond the mouth of the defile, both were surprised by the sudden appearance of a horseman on the crest of a rise in the road, a short distance ahead, and as the fellow drew nearer Shadrach saw that he was Miss Yorke's old friend.

The recognition was mutual. Pulling his horse to a stop, Mr. Taylor dismounted, tipped his hat to Miss Yorke, and smiled gravely at the sport.

"The mail, the latter exclaimed, with the utmost coolness. "Now, what's the matter with you, Mr. Taylor?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but something more darkly, and in tones of suppressed wrath replied: "That's no need for ye to ask that, Shadrach, for I can see you going to a coming time."

"Hain't ye done dirt enough to Ad Yorke already, 'though, 'posin' yer cousin, "sister?"

White grew the face of the sport, and his dark eyes snapped with anger. Before he could speak, however, the mailman interposed.

"You talk in riddles, Mr. Taylor!" he exclaimed. "I am sure Mr. Mason can have done my brother out of an honest dollar, while I know that he has befriended me at the risk of his life."

"You must not presume upon your ac-

quaintance with my father and myself to insult my friends."

"Scarcely, sir, Miss Mona; but ye're making us only part of your spy friends; 'I reckon he's of age an' kin fight his own battle, so I'll speak my little piece of 'I.' Miss Mona is so clever she's the one to which you needn't pay such attention."

"Ad was arrested last night for murder, and hangs in gallows there, sharp, sir, this one 'at cupped the proof an' put et ag'in him."

"Then the only words crept from between Minner Bill's slowly moving lips, followed by a curt nod at the sport. Then, hand on pistol, he waited.

"Stung to her heart's core, Mona Yorke turned pale, and flashed a quick glance at her father.

Swift came the denial:

"The man here, Miss Yorke! His tale is false from beginning to end! You see me as I am, and I say that I am neither spy nor detective! What has belaboured your brother I know not, but I assure you that my hand has never been lifted against him."

A slight flush came into the maiden's face, and her blue eyes sparkled brightly. Bonding toward the sport, she extended her hand.

"I believe you, Mr. Mason!"

CHAPTER XI.

SHADRACH'S PLEDGE.

As he neared the peak of the sun-blanched act, Miner Bill uttered an angry growl.

"Mighty far' words, Mr. Mason, but I've had my reconnaissance, and they've only ever taken the bank off a tree!" he sneered.

"A fact, sir. Ad Yorke is in jail in Crystal City, put that by your doun, 'an' I don't see es you're sayin' now takes him out of it."

"Just explain, will you, Mr. Taylor?"

"Sarth, shore! You found the man Corps hangin' dead in the trail; you nosed out the tracks of the o' the one that shot him; you picked up the locket with Miss Mona's name on it; you recovered the present made by the fied ho'ho's—you done, didn't you?"

"Exactly, Mr. Taylor!"

"An' you run straight to Crystal City, nosed out Ad Yorke, an' put the hull scheme in Marshal Tarbutton's hands, eh?"

The sport smiled grimly.

"It was a very simple, and perfectly correct, Mr. Taylor," he assured, with studied politeness. "I did inform the marshal of the week before, and put the description of such clues as I had picked up. But I did not note out Mr. Yorke, nor did I know of the existence of such a person until this morning."

"Do tell!" jeered Miner Bill, laughing heartily.

"Didn't you ask the way to the station soon as you hee'rd McGowan wuz dead? Didn't you go straight ther' an' ask Mr. Yorke before turnin' him up to the marshal?"

"I went there and telegraphed word to a friend of the Marshal's."

"Tell the truth am' shame the devil! you sneak! Didn't you plan to put Yorke Bureaued?"

Goaded into open anger at last, Shadrach rose swiftly in his stirrups. He found no words, and his open hand fell heavily across those taunting lips, stifling the concluding word of that diabolical threat.

Back went the almighty pull of the rough under the force of that stifling blow, and the miner's face changed from madly glowing eyes—blood from his cut and bruised face."

"Cuss ye! Tha'—"

"Not another syllable like that, Mr. Taylor! Enough's as good as a feast!"

"Better out, on ye insist! Not here and now, I tell ye."

Cowed by the icy smile hovering over the lips of the sport fully as much as by the deadly muzzle now staring him in the face, the miner, stupefied by the super-

"Later be it, then," he muttered, huskily. "Now, I'm goin' after old Yorke! Not a word more; a vicious dig of his spurs, and the "ahman galloped swiftly away."

Mona turned quickly to the sport.

"How can it be, Mr. Yorke, that man your enemy for life," she exclaimed, her voice shaken by fear. "And yet—"

"You could do no less!" gravely.

"True, or false, his language was most offensive."

"Yes; you are in doubt, then—"

"No; I yet believe that you are guiltless of any intent to wrong my brother, nor even that you could tell if I am mistaken in that belief."

Shadrach nodded.

"It is to be true that I picked up the clues mentioned by Taylor, and that I turned them over to the marshal. There was nothing else for me to do," he explained. "The murder of Collins was a foul and deliberate crime, and the guilty man deserves to hang. I could not keep quiet."

"Assuredly not. But tell me about the locket, Mr. Mason. What was it like?"

The sport at once described the tell-tale trinket.

"It was certainly the one worn by my brother," Mona declared, with a shudder. "It has been in the family for generations."

"Yes; the face in the miniature was yours, you say?"

"Yes, Mr. Mason; but an accident happened to me when I first saw you in the basin, just now, but I could not recall where I had seen that face."

"And Taylor spoke of the picture in the locket."

"Oh, my brother! Oh, my poor Ad!"

"The case may not be as black as it looks, miss."

"I fear the word of Sir, unless my brother proves an all'ri."

"He may do that. Then, too, the words of the witted man may change him of suspicion."

"The murderer man? Did he speak?"

"He charged one Donald Craigie with the crime."

"After a terrific cry, Mona Yorke reeled in her indecision, for the sport's earnest support of her escort, she would have fallen.

"What mystery is this?" muttered Shadrach, slipping to the ground and gasping lowering the unconscious girl.

"Can it be the sport's name—that her brother is really guilty of that atrocious crime?"

"The sport gained down into the pale, deathly face of the maiden a moment, then gently gathered her in his arms and bore her to the little stream beside the road. Resuscitation proved a difficult task, for it was nearly half an hour before he opened her eyes."

"Oh, say that he is not guilty—that it is all untrue!" she pleaded, feebly struggling. "Oh, Adrain! Adrain! how could you!"

"Hush!—no word like that!" gently coaxed the sport, "you'll put Ad, but an assurance gently upon those livid, piteously quivering lips. Your brother guilty!"

"Mutilly, the dainty, golden-brown head shook assent to the negative. Then:

"Yes! We wish him to rise. But for the instant your eyes. He is innocent, poor boy! He never—Oh...rail!—how could you do it!"

"Rally yourself, Miss Yorke," gravely urged the sport. "Remember, other ears are around, and your mine may have heard him— he is innocent till proven guilty!"

"He never did no—never!"

"Come, let us help him prove it then!"

"Yes! We must help him—poor Adrain! We will go at once."

Reeling, staggering blindly, the sadly shaken girl ran to her feet and started toward her horse, studding by the ac-
porting arm of the sport, and cheered and sang his hopeful words.

"Never let them see that you have entertained the slightest doubt of his integrity, or coroner, when he placed the maltese, securely in her saddle.

"If your brother’s plight is the work of explosives, we must procure due process of law to clinch the case against him. Force may fail and it must fail at all times. It demands all that he has, and more. It will help him.

"Tell my friend? You will help me, then?"

"Help you? Yes! I will clear him, if I can.

The girl’s face flushed, and her eyes filled with tears.

"You are a noble judge, Mr. Mason," she faltered. "I have no right to ex- act it."

CHAPTER XII.
CAPTAIN KARL APPEARS.

"Well, never mind," said the sport, with a peculiar compression of his curving lips. "Let it answer— that I shall abide by my word.

"You see, Miss Yorke, your father and mine were pards long ago. My father was only a young man at the time, and in his later years he frequently mentioned the devotion shown him by his English friend.

"Then, too, I feel that I am in a measure responsible for your brother’s per- ceptions of the case. Your father’s suspicion would fall, but had I acted less precipitately in the Collins matter the result might have been very different, so far as he is concerned.

"Yes, that is true, Mr. Mason.

"But as soon as the case I feel in duty bound to repair, so far as possible, the evil wrought by my thoughtlessness, your father and mother will have to assume that he is innocent, and set to work to find the guilty man. What’s that— but do you think we can do that, sir?"

"Yes. The evidence against him, while seemingly ample, can be shown to be in that or both must be rejected. I feel strongly that the language of the man Taylor. This fact will reassure the real culprit, and he may betray himself."

This view of the case served to buoy the spirit of Miss Yorke, and in that, or both must be rejected. I feel strongly that the language of the man Taylor. This fact will reassure the real culprit, and he may betray himself.

Nearer a mile beyond the point at which they had encountered Miner Bill, the two horses passed a bridge, and as the horses entered the water both riders drew rein with expressions of surprise.

In the middle of the road on the further shore was a rounded heap of stones, supported by a broken stick. Tied to the top of this rod was a letter.

"Aha! a post office!" the sport exclaimed. "What do you think of that, Miss Yorke?"

"It is a very singular thing, sir, and to what may it be attributed? One or both must be rejected. I feel strongly that the language of the man Taylor. This fact will reassure the real culprit, and he may betray himself."

"And, see, it has not been there long, for the stones, taken from the creek, have not been washed away."

A glance attested the correctness of this observation, and then Shadrach satisfied himself that the note was not a letter.

It was enclosed in a plain, white en- velope, addressed to “Miss Mona Yorke.”

"Mona Yorke!” he said, as he turned the scrawled inscription, the sport silently handed the letter to the girl.

She took the letter from the hand, and reading,

"Mona Yorke:"

"This is to warn you to keep silent concerning your brother, Carri Karl. Your friend, Edwin Arvol Yorke, is in our hands, and any disclosures upon your part will seal his fate."

A like penalty will attach to any revelations made by your rescuer, Shadrach Mason."

"Mona! I knew it!"

"It is nothing, Miss Yorke."

"You are a noble judge, Mr. Mason," she faltered. "I have no right to exact it.

"Hope for the best, Miss Yorke. The note may be false—we’ll soon know.

"You have friends in Crystal City?

"Only the Verness. I shall stop with them for the present.

Then both rode onward in silence, and a few minutes later reached the crest of the hill overlooking the mining camp.

"Let us go direct to the jail," Mona suggested.

Before the sport could reply, a masked man leaped from a covert beside the road, and boldly confronted them. Although a giant in stature, the fellow moved with remarkable celerity, and ere a defensive move could be made by man or maiden his heavy revolvers swung to a level.

"Hold on, critters—both of you!" he hoarsely commanded, a flourish of his pistol-armed hands. "Stan still an, the band play! This yarr is Cap- tain Karl’s war!"

"And you are Captain Karl?"

Edzactly, Sport Mason! Ye slipped us someway last night, but—hey! are we agin’?"

Taken completely by surprise, Shad- rach was quick to realize the utter folly of an attempt to resist, just then. Not only was he covered by the weapons of the bandit, but the road, and at a glance discovered a hair dozen masked fellows in the undergrowth bordering the road, all with weapons drawn and as- cended.

Well, reckon we’ve got me fairly netted," he groaned, "and then the delib- erate way. What is it you want, any way? Money?"

"We’ve called you, pard sport!"

"I’ve got only a few hundred with me."

"Five thousand, we wanta."

"Then you will be disappointed.

"Oh, no! We’ll hold yer gal till ye raise et."

Mona’s face blanched with terror.

"My—my father can never pay it," she faltered.

"He has a care, Captain Karl! the sport warned. "It is needless to distress Miss Mona Yorke with this."

"Pace’s face is one I’ve stated the case. We give five thousand or our trouble, so we’re going to see what we get do et."

Shadrach reflected a moment, then said,

"Permit the lady to ride on a hundred yards, and I will try to arrange the mat- ter with you later.

"Pard sport, ye aire fitin’ for a skirmish with us.

"I am not blind, Captain Karl. Your men in the brush have me covered give you my word that I am dealing straightforwardly."

"’Yer word goes, Sport Mason.

Nodding curtly, Shadrach turned to the maiden.

"Ride on toward town a hundred yards, Miss Yorke, and await me there," he requested, in a kindly tone.

Mona bowed, and silently obeyed.

"New, Captain Karl, I am ready to talk business with you," the sport con- tinued, "I mean to settle with you the sum of twenty thousand dollars of me, or possession of the girl until I pay you that sum, do you not?"

"Very good. I have said that I have no such amount with me, but I have it at home. I will send you the amount, at any hour you may name, if you will permit Miss Yorke and myself the way without further molesta- tion.

"We’re not tryin’ to trap us, are we?" the sport asked. "It is only that you and your men shall come and go un- molested. Come to the Miners’ Delight, and I will see you there. I will have every dollar of the money, and de- part in freedom.

"Very good. As you are bond, Sport Mason; but ye ask us ter take a mighty big risk. What ef we refuse, an’ hold on ter yer gal?"

"You will sign your own death war- rants!" was the grim reply. "lay but a straw in that girl’s way, and I shall never quit your trail while a man of you lives!"

CHAPTER XIII.
THE TELEGRAPH SHARP.

"Four o’clock!"

The words rang sharply through the gambling house, and all eyes turned quickly to the door at the head of the telegraph table at which we have seen Adrain Yorke seated with British Bill Taylor. A glance of several appeared no looked upon. Blocking the way with his bulky form stood the old marshal, with revolver drawn and leveled, sternly con- fronting the telegrapher and his friend.

No gleam of alarm showed on the features of the two men. Nothing but yet one and all felt that the gambler was secretly wishing himself well out of the presence.

Adrain, Yorke, fairly stunned by that terrible charge, stood pale and silent for a moment, than when shivering violently, a dash of red showed in his white, tensely drawn face, and his vivid lips twitched spasmodically.

"It’s a lie—all a lie!" he growled, harsh- ly. "I never—never—"

"You are a bum! Shut yer stay, or make a bad man a heat speech sittin’ down!"

"I go, man, Ad Yorke! Come along with me."

Crabbedly the old marshal spoke, cut- ting short that almost incoherent denial. The telegrapher, hearing his words, turned into its holster, and grasped his man by the arm.

A sharp hiss from a portion of the crowd greeted this movement—a hiss which quickly deepened into a portentous muttering, agreeing ill to the officer or his prisoner.

Swinging around with, back to back to back to back, the telegrapher, his sword brandished, both weapons to a level, and resolutely faced that turbulent gathering.

"He’s got me! He’s got me!—it’s no odds ter me!" he grimly enunciated, shifting those frowning muzzles from side to side to side to side. "I’ll swear ter God I’ve sworn ter die."

"I don’t say yer Telegraph Sharp is as good a man as you claim to be! But this I do say: He goes with me, or some one will spring a mighty bloody mauler on you all!"

Then, ere a single one of the malcon- tents could utter a word, Adrain Yorke stepped quickly between them and the marshal.

Silence, gentlemen—one and all! so extended that there was no occasion for trouble. While innocent of the crime, I go with Marshal Tabut- ton of the sun. You may be settled to the bottom and the guilt placed where it belongs.

Never the man I am charged with killing. Never a word passed be- tween us. No possible motive could have existed for such an act as I am accused of..."
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Sharp's Story.

Nothing that vehemence outburst, the Telegraph Sharp coldly
faced the infuriated officer, a faint smile of contempt curving his
thin, red lips.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, after a moment's pause. "You what, now? Not a word, sir. I haven't yet through thick or thin, but now—"

A choking sort of rage ended the sentence.

"Guilty of the murder of Darius Colin-

Cheers!

Grumbling to himself, the marshal dropped the request, and after a few minutes of brisk work the old keeper began to show signs of returning confidence.

"A mighty close call, an' I do reckon it was merly fear, too," Tarbut-

'Vell ye, what, boy, this hyar town's get-

'Vell ye, what, boy, this hyar town's get-

"I know has been piled up against me— I here and now charge that I have been the victim of a deliberate conspira-

Sneer, If you will, deny and ridicu-

The large room, spoke Adrain Yorke, his keen, cold, blue orbs glancing from face to face. He had noticed every visage within eye-range and separated lines from friends.

"Pretty soon, yes! But here we are, now."

"The words were came forth by a move-

"It is the first thing for Ivan; it will be the last."

"Et happened—how?"

"Three men came to the door and knocked on your door, and I

"The prisoner is gone," he exclaimed, in his matter-of-fact way. "It is the first defect for Ivan; it will be the last."

"It is the first defect for Ivan; it will be the last."

"That is all I know."

"With this terse explanation, the old policeman raised his face and

"A 33-calibre revolver, fully loaded, with the exception of one chamber, was found in the room, and laid it upon the rough table with an ominous shake of his grimaced hand.

"Blood, by heavens!"

"Face afloat with fierce anger, Tarbut-

"I'll do it, though—mark that! Why

"Still—tut! Ye must play ter win, no

"I'll play it, sir, and I'll do it when I
can't do it with knife or gun! Fact is, that a mighty ugly case stacked up against me."

"I'll play it, sir, and I'll do it when I
can't do it with knife or gun! Fact is, that a mighty ugly case stacked up against me."

"A moment later, both approached the calaboose, and the marshal pounded sharply on the stout oaken door.

"No response followed. Tarbuton im-

"I've been through that, you know."

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Grumbling to himself, the marshal dropped the request, and after a few minutes of brisk work the old keeper began to show signs of returning confidence.

A mighty close call, an' I do reckon it was merly fear, too," Tarbuton suddenly whirled upon the Telegraph Sharp, savagely crying:

"You what, now? Not a word, sir. I haven't yet through thick or thin, but now—"

A choking sort of rage ended the sentence.

Nothing that vehemence outburst, the Telegraph Sharp coldly faced the infuriated officer, a faint smile of contempt curving his thin, red lips.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, after a moment's pause. "You what, now? Not a word, sir. I haven't yet through thick or thin, but now—"

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Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

A son, born the following year, was the result of this union. In 1827, the Gypsy wife died.

"Two years later old Donald married again, this time wedding one of his own nieces, a Miss Mary Claggs, to a large estate, known as Craglands. Contrary to the usual custom of the country, Mary Claggs was not the only daughter of the wife, but the second wife knew of the existence of her husband's Gypsy son."

In 1837, a Mr. John Argo, my father, was born to Donald and Rose, and he was the only child born of the marriage. The Claggs family lived in splendid style for many years. In 1851, eight years later her husband followed her to the grave.

A Shadrach went away, and it was generally believed that Donald Craigie, the Gypsy son, came forward, proved himself to be Donald's elder son, and under the name of Rosean, dominated not only of the Craigie estate, but of Craglands as well, a property to which he had not a tithe of moral right, but which naturally reverted to him as a portion of the Craigie estate, in the absence of marriage settlements between Donald and his second wife, there being no will to show that it was set aside as my father's inheritance from his first wife.

In 1861, my father had married a lady named Saunders, and I was born shortly before my grandfather's death, and christened Donald.

"Stripped of every dollar of his rich inheritance by the heartless son, Donald Claggs, my name was rechristened with the name of Rosan, after my father's new wife, who had no right to use the name Claggs.

"Rapidly, at times almost incoherently yet with gradually returning strength and steadiness of foot, the Telegraph Sharpe had spoken, while both men listened with rapt attention.

"I believe you, boy," Ivan kindly declared, when that hurried recital was ended. "And I believe you are innocent of this crime. Nevertheless, I urge you to keep those facts to yourself, just now."

"What good will it do? Is it not clear that some one has murdered my brother by covering his name and is determined to use it in bringing disgrace and death to me?"

"Did you have any enemies?"

"None that I know of."

"How can I say, save that it is an an affair, surely, for that boy, and the others."

"Don't say it, then," he pleaded, speaking in a thick, uncertain tone. "I never saw Shadrach Mason till this night, but I've heard tell of him, an' no man could wish him an' his honor on this earth. He know how I've stood ter ye—how I still stands, spite o' all. But of Mason says he's the best man I'll be more tempted to believe e'er."
Of course it was not a gun. ... of the proper kind. 

"Whatever you do, do not expose yourself. You must close the slot and turn to the marshal.

"It is Weeper," he announced.

"Yes." 

"Admit him." 

"But why, 'Arry?"

"Sorry, fool! The sixth and last pewter ball, if he has not removed it and I am not mistaken, is in a small pasteboard box in the right-hand corner of that table drawer. Look, will you?"

Mechanically, Tarbutton unlocked and opened the box. He withdrew the lid and exposed a pewter bullet. 

"I am an old officer whirled upon the dark genius beside him."

"What devil's play is this? What 'd 'ee mean, 'Arry? Speak, man, or I'll drain yer soul heart dry!"

Coldly came the response:

"No threat, Tarbutton! I mean just this: The lead bullet was intended for Collins, but the pressed trigger the wrong chamber was under the hammer!"

CHAPTER XVII. 

FIDDLING DAN.

It was at least a minute before the full import of Ortho's thin-veiled accusation dawned upon the shrewd brain of the marshal. Then, a sudden shock shook the little building, and he hurled himself straight at the under-taker.

"Aha! You, Mr. Tarbutton was on the alert, watching for just that action. With wonderful nimbleness for one of his ungranny proportions, he swerved aside, uttering a tantalising laugh, and then, completely, the under-taker faced the officer as he whirled around.

"Fool-play enough, Tarbuton!" he grimly enunciated, a mocking light dancing in the depths of his gloomy black eyes. "Will you play the duty now, or are we to believe you're playing in this for fun?"

"He never did eat—never! Don't know thy boy? Didn't he?"

"But facts are facts! Come! will you listen, or shall I go singing my song to the Vigilantes? You say quick; Danny Tarbuton, for—I'm most infernally sleepy!"

A yawn, real or admirably simulated, disclosed the sharp white teeth of the marshal. "Weapon in your hand? You can't be a marshar quickly slipped between him and the door.

"Never the!" he grated, hoarsely. "Never ther Vigilantes, man! They hang first an' try afterward."

"Now you go on, in the present case, Mr. Tarbuton, for the man's guilty, fast enough! However, pledge yourself to bear the little lead thing to add, and I'll go home and go to bed!"

Rallied into his usual coolness by that continuous tone, the under-taker curtly.

"Say on, Weeper, but mark this: No lie now, or you're in with me when this business is done."

"What I want to say is just this: The meaning, fool, and there is plenty proof to show it."

"He went into the thing boldly and deliberately. He had an accomplishing. McGowan was the man. Collins was doomed as much as two weeks ago, and two good witnesses will swear to it."
That grim reply had fairly staggered Captain Karl, and for a moment he stared at the bellman in silent amazement. Then, with a chuckle, he exclaimed:

"You're a bold man, Sport! Mason! Why, you're eight years older than I said there to my boy!’ He smiled, and the dimples in his face were more like he meant it!”

"I am not a coward, and I do mean it, sir—every man of me!"

"But you speak like one who knows me, and who knew my father well."

"Ye has called them turn, pard Sport, for I did know him. I was a swain and an: I reckon I was cis ter when ye was christened Captain,' and the outlaw looked over the old man’s eyes twinkled through the holes in his mask."

Completely mystified, Shadrach looked closely at the fellow, then shook his head.

"Come—come, my man, you have the advantage of me,” he exclaimed, visibly nettled. "You have slipped out of my memory, and, though I have known bairns of men of your size, I cannot place you."

Urtling a rolling laugh through his larynx, the giant outlined his Grecian weapons out of sight. He selected a waterproof bar hanging by a strap between his shoulders. From this bag he deftly drew a violin and bow, and, in a fit of ridiculous flourish stuck up a wild backwoods air.

Like one stung started the sport, and from his hideous eyes flashed a gleam of manly pride.

"Fiddling Dan! Good heavens is it really you?"

"Ain’t no other else, Captain Mason."

"You—an outlaw?"

"An outlaw, Captain—leastways, not much."

Shadrach shrugged his shoulders.

"Come, Dan—no fiction!” he rejoined dryly. "Aye, Captain Karl, you are a notorius trail thief."

"But I ain’t Captain Karl, Captain Mason. That’s Litter’s dead.”

"Dead?"

"Jes’ so, Ye see, et was like this: After ye received your pardon and new old times under Captain Smith, an’ es soon as my term was out I took my pappus’ old Jigger and jumped the service in clean disgust. Since then I’ve bin knockin’ about, till a month or two ago I organized them Grecian thralls. Sent a crew of them started ter play camp. Our pockets didn’t fill jest right, we got foot- sore and were thinkin’ of takin’ a prospectin’ trip in their hills for our health. Yestiddy we run on Captain Karl’s out; terward’s, we was here, maybe, a little platter. From one o’ them gentles we larned they war layin’ in wait fer ye, sez they we took that ship, and we flung at ye an’ es last this mornin’ we strung on toward Crystal City, till we see ye comin’ back, when we run into ambush An’that’s gospel, cap.”

Mason had listened with an amused smile playing over his lips. When the giant rough concluded, he quickly asked:

"But you were in earnest in this holdup, were you?"

"Jest a siffergin’, cap! We kalkilate ef we qu’d plug a gent o’ your nervice, you’d be puttin’ on a pair o’ Captain Karl’s shoes.”

"You’d find it a pretty bad business, Dan.”

"Per shore, an’ we ain’t none o’ us in love with et."

"Fact is, cap, ef ye kin p’nt us ter a job of an any kind, we’re dead willin’ ter jam dayboyn’ farewell tower in all an’ call ther all the rest.”

There was an anxious strain in the big fellow’s whimsical voice that spoke volumes, and Shadrach sprang to his feet to engage them to assist in the search for the lost mine, so at once replied:

"Come, Cainown, boys, and wait for me at the Miner’s Delight Hotel. I am going to open a mine, and I think we can make a discovery of gold among our old friends, these people are entitled to all a consideration of old friends at our hands.”

"That is true, Captain, and you can come on me,” said the outlaw. "I know I could, Bill, you never shirk.”
CHAPTER XIX.

"Aha! the fellow is prompt," the sport exclaimed, as his glance fell upon that motionless figure in the hall, "it's well, too, for there is no time to lose."

Sitting down, he drew a memorandum book from his pocket, and hurriedly wrote:

"DAN: Get away from here as quickly as you can without exciting suspicion, and notify the 'Miners' Delight.' Register yourself and men, and come to my room, No. 14, as soon as possible. It is very important that you were precaution against being seen. For your work will be of a secret nature, and it must be known that there is any connection between us. CAPTAIN."

Folding this note closely, Shadrach encased it in a fifty-dollar bill. Waiting until the man had passed, he rose and walked up to Fiddling Dan, and dropped the hidden message into a hat on the table.

His eyes met those of the giant for an instant, and a significant glance flashed from man to man; in another minute the sport was gone.

Room 14 at the Miners' Delight was no means a palatial apartment. On the contrary it was small and narrow, dark and dingy. The floor was uncarpeted, and the dingy furniture consisted of a hard bed and a chair.

Yet, rude as it was, it was a welcome sight to the sportsman. A nodding Dan, when he opened the door and entered, a half hour later, in response to a summons from the captain, seemed more than welcome to the young man.

"Well, Dan, you've made good time," the latter remarked, raising to a sitting position on the rickety chair.

"It's all your doing," Dan answered. "You've got a steep contract, Captain"—and the quarter-blood beard sharply at his dressing-table mirror.

"Yes, I see, you would kill the girl if he wounded, Bill," brown and green, and long, curling red-beard was by no means displeasing, and seemed more expressive of abilities good nature than aught else.

"There was more pinched look around the shops, and a good many of a nonstop script sort, picked up here and there, piece at a time, and it was quite clear that there was anything but anfitting circumstances."

"For a fact, Captain, I'm dead within," he answered. "Ain't no ways p'lar at what, nuther.

"Yes, men—can they be fully trusted, Dan?"

"Shore an' nacherel, bard sport! They jest what you lead, you bet!"

"Very well, Daniel—this is a secret job, and a slip of the tongue might spoil all, and give us in trouble."

"Secret, eh?"

"Yes, Dan. I've decided to turn detective, and I want you fellows to help me."

"Oh, Lawd! boss, you a detective?"

"Yes, I've decided to turn detective."

"All right, Dan, we'll let that part drop. When I want to get at is just this: how far can I depend upon you and your men?"

Sagely came the response:

"Through thick an' thin, Sport Macon—clean ter thy death!"

"So I know of you, Dan; but the men?"

"I stand responsible for each an' all."

"So be it, then," the sport exclaimed, and after staring at the captain, outlined the Collins murder, then added: "I want you to scatter your men through the town, and mingle freely with the crowds hanging around the saloons and gambling dens, and keep your men alert to pick up information of value to me."

"It is known to be a difficult undertaking, and one to which I wish to cheakmate if possible, you understand."

"Through thick an' thin, Sport Macon—clean ter thy death!"

"I will be thy boss, for my pards loves them smell o' powder," he declared.

"Exactly. They can report to you, and you to me. Then, Dan, fix upon some signal to rally them in case of danger to the prisoner, for I have sworn to save him at any hazard, and it may require a regular battle to do it."

The giant nodded quickly.

"Then you are the court, boss, for my pards loves them smell o' powder," he declared.

"Exactly. They can report to you, and you to me. Then, Dan, fix upon some signal to rally them in case of danger to the prisoner, for I have sworn to save him at any hazard, and it may require a regular battle to do it."

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"Exactly. They can report to you, and you to me. Then, Dan, fix upon some signal to rally them in case of danger to the prisoner, for I have sworn to save him at any hazard, and it may require a regular battle to do it."

The undertaker was there, talking in low tones with two men. He started at sight of the captain, but greeted him pleasantly, and said:

"I was just wondering what had become of you, Mr. Mason."

"I'm glad to meet you," he assured, his dark eyes busy with the faces of the men, as he grasped their hands in turn.

"But my force is fairly engaged, and I can find room for only one of you. You are too late. Mr. Bendack and Mr. Petersen, I am glad to meet you," he assured. But his eyes busy with the faces of the men, as he grasped their hands in turn.

"But my force is fairly engaged, and I can find room for only one of you. You are too late. Mr. Bendack and Mr. Petersen, I am glad to meet you," he assured. But his eyes busy with the faces of the men, as he grasped their hands in turn.

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CHAPTER XX
THE SPORT AT WORK.

That his ally was puzzled by those elements Shadrach had seen once; but he kept quiet for the moment, to see if the giant would solve the mystery.

Then a quick flash leaped into the big brown eyes, and with an eager look on his face, he sprang forward, to the sport-detective, nodded briskly, and in a husky whisper said:

"There are two pairs of shoes in the possession of the shoes. As he noted they were of a man, a slight frown gathered on his face.

"Why do you persist, Mr. Mason, in trying to believe that McGowan was the assassin?"

"I shall answer your question with a question, Mr. Weeper. Who is Ajab, the Sheikh?"

"How—how long have you been forced laugh."

"You fairly startled me, Mr. Mason," he explained, with an assumed lightness of manner. "I had an adventure with that lunatic once which I shall never forget. But—I really can’t tell you who he is.

"Nor can I tell you why I suspect McGowan was the assassin, Mr. Weeper!"

Noddings and shaking his head, and walked away. Replacing the lid on the coffin, Shadrach whispered a few hurried sentences, and gathered up the garment and the shoes and followed Weeper toward the front of the shop.

The undertaker answered a few unimportant questions in a surly manner. He watched the sport depart with an evil look on his satiric face.

"Curse that fellow!" he grated, unconsciously speaking aloud. "I believe Ajab has given him an inkling of the truth, and that he is determined to try to get at the bottom of the matter. Well, we shall see what he may get at this.

"An’ sarve ’im right, too!"

It was Fiddling Dan who spoke. With that peculiar lisp of his, which denoted the slightest mention at the undertaker. Orthodox turned sharply. He uttered a sound not commonly heard in the streets.

"You here!" he growled.

"To be shore, boss! An’ I ag’in rises, ’sper’n you see it right, too! Ye got yer turn modul!"

"I can’t tell you who he is.

But Shadrach was certainly guilty of the murder," he assured. "It mettles me to see a man wasting time meddling with such a case."
maidens, as he very likely did. The son Donald, therefore, would be only quarterly in the English, or English, or English, and probably find in him nearly, if not all, the stiffness proper to his feet.

"Can you place such a man?"

For a moment the Sharp stared at Shadrach. Then, with a quick gape of surprise, he approved to his feet.

"Not so!"

"What do you mean?"

"I exclaimed. "How do you know these things?"

"No, no! Your cool head has gone right. You have in the matter, and, of course, it is all plain as an open book. You have the state of the truth, and I would swear, if a man I know the man!"

"Ay, and so do I," cried Tarbutton, explosively. "'Tis British Bill Taylor!"

"The same," Yorke admitted.

"The chief of the Secret Seven," put in Ivan, impressively.

Shadrach's face clouded for a moment.

"I do not know this British Bill," he remarked. "In fact, I had another man in mind. Can you imagine, in declaring against me, I'll accept your verdict.

"Now, who is what and British Bill, as you have known him?

"A gambler an' a blackleg," Tarbutton replied. "He hangs round Ther Mecca."

"Very well. I'll hunt him up, and see how the man is going to appear."

"There is the man," Ivan pointed out.

Unlocking and slipping aside the stout shutter of iron bars, he hoisted the sash and looked out.

Fiddling Dan was crouched against the wall, regarding the window with an expression of great curiosity. "'Ware hawks, boss!" he greeted, with a portentous wince. "'Tis corpse has an expression of having been in a hale hour, an'--that's a gloabot at ther door with his ear at ther keyhole!"

"That's Dan?" in the same cautious strain.

"Don't know, boss."

"Well, I'll show you."

Beckoning the marshal to approach, Shadrach quietly approached the spy's presence at the door, and the two quickly arranged a plan of action.

Then the spy swung himself through the window and dropped to the ground. Whispering a few words to Dan, he pointed to the corner of the building, turned, and walked quickly in the opposite direction.

When he reached the street Shadrach suddenly slowed his pace. The crime, he had observed, was a very serious one. A man was crouched in the doorway of the prison, in a careless attitude, but with ear in close proximity to the keyhole.

At sight of the spy the fellow started up, but Shadrach, bound to his feet, was cut off by the appearance of Fiddling Dan at the opposite corner.

"What is that the secret weapon, in hand. "You're fairly trapped, Mr. Peter Ribsam, and in you go!"

As Shadrach uttered this word of remonstrance the calaboose door opened, and he was roughly jacked inside by the officer of the guard.

Then the sport entered, and the door was closed and locked.

A murmur of fear and surprise ran through the crowd. A moment later the secret weapon was heard striking on the top of the bluffs.

"That's Peter Ribsam!" cried. "Perjury is among you. The innocent are put in peril of their lives, while the guilty stalk freely through the streets. The Secret Seven has done--a great crime committed, but--"

"And a very droll little affair of a revolver checked the thin old voice. With a wailing cry, Ahijah flung up his hands and sank in a quivering heap!

CHAPTER XXII.

A GATHERING STORM.

A yell of execration greeted that dastardly shot, and as all saw the Seer sink upon the april, and the black lines, in the verge of the cliff, a chill of horror went through the throng.

But Ahijah was turned to that terrible plunge through space. His hand, catching a fishing crevice, closed with a despairing grip upon the serrated edge, and he was saved.

Quickly following the whilipke crack of the pistol, the sound of the blur rickered and expired, leaving the scene abroaded in gloom.

Then out rang the voice of the sport-detector:

"Forward, men!--some of you! There must be a negro, a man, dead or alive, and bring him down." "I'll lead them rush myself, boss," declared Fiddling Dan, who was clearly, as he brushed past the sport. "Never do fer ther gloabot who fired ther shot ter git his feet on a shore enough corpse ter take."

Ere Shadrach could utter a word in response, he glanced in the talon, closely followed by two or three of his fellows.

At an instant later, Tarbutton touched the sport on the arm, saying:

"Come--let's slip over ther fisher calaboose an' see that ther sheriff does with Yorke. I reckon ef'll fall on us ter guard ther lad this night."

"Yes. But ther jail!"

"All in one hyar, jest yet, an' et's bin enough so far."

With the situation made clear by that terse explanation, Shadrach hurried onward with the old officer, and a few minutes later led the way to the secret calaboose by Ivan, the jailer.

A quick glance showed that the two men were safe.

The Telegraph Sharp was seated beside a table in the outer room, with head bowed in an attitude of utter devotion. As the two men entered, he looked up.

"What's ther sheriff?" asked Tarbutton.

"Gone," Ivan replied, with a peculiar smile. "Ah, he's troubles to-night, and is out to swear in deputies."

The men sat down and talked a few minutes. Then, acting on the sport's suggestion, they entered the cellroom to interview Peter Ribsam.

"This reek's a pitiable plight, due chiefly to his struggles to escape the stout thongs with which he had been seamed. The man was book-swaned, and when the gag was removed from his mouth he parched and crampeted towards Ivan, who had been hurled away by the county sheriff.

Open threats of summary vengeance were heard, and there, and many felt that the luckless prisoner would be lynched before the dawn of another day. In the midst of the confusion, a terrific burst ran through the little town, stifling the hubbub as if by magic. The noise, near the sound of about three hundred yards away, out of the dense darkness, there appeared a sudden glare of light, which slowly resolved itself into a flaming circle, enclosing a huge black hand, grasping a long sword!

"What were you doing at that door?" demanded Ivan, naught but a peculiar infection in his voice betraying his anger.

"Restin'."

"You, trees, you mean!"

"Naw, jest restin'. I was tired, an' squatted ther for a bit o' rest."

"You heard what was said in here?"

"Nocher!" Only the one word, but the eyes shot blood and his eyes flashed wrathfully. His assurance was returning.

"Don't know what mean?"

A grim look crossed Shadrach's face. He quickly signed to Tarbutton and the others, and Ivan, with Peter Ribsam had been hustled into the cellroom.

"Now, then, you scoundrel! Make a confession, and you may go--or, it will be the worse for you," the sport continued, in a tone of quiet menace.

"I got nothin' to say.

"You will have, soon! Take away his weapons, boys. Blind and gag him, so he cannot move or utter a sound, and before the night is done we'll get his story."

"In the end," the stories were quietly obeyed. Within three minutes it was beyond Rib- sam's power either to help himself or inform others, for in that instant and for the present we shall know the secret of the Seven."

Ti Inquest on the body of Darius Collins was of short duration. There were but few witnesses of importance to testify, and each told the same story. The man was dead, and little time was lost in the examination. Afterwards, the officer showed that the crime had been committed with a 38-calibre revolver. The ball itself was pewter. All the evidence pointed directly to the gun, and the testimony of his closest and most intimate friend was, perforce, overwhelming against him.

His absence from camp at the time of the tragedy, the marked horsehoe, the coincidences, all the facts, seemed to convincingly show the evidence of the crime, the telltale locket, the bloodstained money, and the admitted fact that he had only a few hours before his being a weapon for newer bullets before starting upon his fatal journey--all these things, in cumulative array, seemed to clinch his guilt beyond curl.

One point which puzzled the coroner, however, was the spectacle of the presence of the single lead bullet in the cylinder of the weapon; but when Ivan Weeper took the stand and with seeming reluctance related his story that cloud in the minds of all passed away, leaving the Telegraph Sharp standing out more clearly and distinctly.

Under the evidence, but one verdict could be rendered, and under that verdict the prisoner was remedied in the court, without bond, to await the action of a special grand jury. The next session of that body of ther Telegraph Sharp, and his benefit of friends shook their heads大厦 filling and away by the county sheriff.

Open threats of summary vengeance were heard, and there, and many felt that the luckless prisoner would be lynched before the dawn of another day. In the midst of the confusion, a terrific burst ran through the little town, stifling the hubbub as if by magic. The noise, near the sound of about three hundred yards away, out of the dense darkness, there appeared a sudden glare of light, which slowly resolved itself into a flaming circle, enclosing a huge black hand, grasping a long sword!
You admit, then, there is such a band?
Ribsam looked at the sport in surprise.
"Didn't ye know that was"? he asked, innocently.
"No, Only by report.
"Whe, that is. They's yer lord Minin's salut.
"Are, eh? How did they learn of the mine?
"That chief heer's Old Man Yorke an' his gal talkin'. He watched what they put their maps on, then stole it. They got to know she's Yorke Bill, too, an' went for his piece o' paper, but you stood 'em off.
"Yes, Who is the chief?
"What is that true name?
"I reckon not. I can't say.
"I reckon it's the chief's name this mornin'.
"Ya-as, disguised.
"Who were the other men there?
"Yorke, Bendabuck, Johnson, an' Bunco Bill.
"Who else belong to the band?
"Whisky Bill, Miner Bill, an' myself.
"The Seven rescued Johnson last night.
"We did.
Ivan laughed grimly, and turned to Tarbutton.
"Yorke, shee, marshall, I was right and you were wrong," he exclaimed.
"I see, Fard Ivan.
"Now, what do you know about the murder ofarius Collins? the sport continued.
Tarbutton shrugged his back.
"Per a fact, pard, I don't know much," he slowly replied.
"And you told Bendabuck, claim he, dropping Yorke and Mcgowan plotting that crime.
"We didn, too.
"It is false," cried the Telegraph Sharp, hotly. "You never heard any such conversation.
"Oh, yas, we did," iterated the rough, grimly.
"If I was that fer he, I'd ever stick fer that.
"When and where did you hear it? I pursued Shadrach, with a warning look at the Deputy.
"Two weeks ago, about jest after midnight, in their Telegraph office.
"False--false! Utterly false! shouted Bendabuck.
"My boy, that's a case of the old story, "Stand back, gentlemen! Stand back, I say! I'll strangle the lie in his throat."
"Quaking in his old chair, the maddened man, forced him into the outer room, and closed the door.
"Uly so you came to hear the conversation between Yorke and Mcgowan," the sport requested, when he had partially reassured the trembling wretch.
"And I did hear it, sir," reassured Ribsam, "With the best of assurance.
""Stand up, frightened Collins! Dropping the rude phraseology of the mines. "Bendabuck my self and myself were playing cards in the box. The shows that night, when we got hurry to meet the chief outside, and inside of a minute we were with him."

"He told me there was something secret going on at the telephone office, and he wanted us to hurry down and spy out just what was going on, talking to learn everything possible, as he feared some one was planning a move against himself.

"When we got there, we found the office open, with the light turned low.
Two men were inside, seated at the table, bending their minds on a game that was bendabuck and myself, for I glimpsed his face, just once. The other was somewhat muffled, but I could distinctly tell by the window. In size and shape he bore a mighty close resemblance to Yorke, and was addressed at intervals by Mcgowan.
They were plotting to waylay Collan's coach, and through fear of detection, but Mcgowan talked him out of his fears, saying:"
"What is that?" Yorke asked, and Mcgowan said:
"Simply follow my instructions. I will think of a plan to avert all suspicion."
"Yorke promised to think of the matter; and, as they then prepared to leave, Bendabuck and myself hurried back and reported to the chief.
"And the chief? queried Shadrach.
"Turned us to keep quiet—to say no word.
"And since the crime?
"Since Mcgowan's letter he had advised us to speak freely, withholding, of course, mention of himself.
"The in the end, did the chief refer to the matter?
"But once he made us swear that, if the murder occurred, he would report it, we would withhold Mcgowan's name, and state, simply, that we had overheard Yorke plotting the deed with an unknown man.
The sport-detective smiled in a peculiar way, nodded, and quickly asked:
"Now, Ribsam, don't you know that the man addressed as Yorke by Mcgowan was no one of us all?"
\"N-no, sir.
"Never suspected it?"
"Until last night—never.
"What caused you to suspect it then? the chief's words and actions, sir.
"After he heard Mcgowan was killed, he came to us and told us to use Mcgowan's name; that Collins had been shot; he believed Yorke was the murderer and wanted to see him convicted. I thought he was extremely anxious, sir.
"What then? the chief asked.
"Early in the evening, just after dark.
"How did he know Mcgowan had been murdered?
"I don't know, sir.
"Was the chief absent from Crystal City in consequence?
"I don't see how to find it.
"Isn't British Bill your chief?
"I don't know. I have sometimes thought so, sir.
"In your opinion, who did kill Colins?
"Sandy Mcgowan, sir.
"A few minor questions followed, then the sport called Ivan to rescure the prisoner, and passed into the outer room.
"Rogues! he whispered to Yorke.
"Rogues! he whispered. "I'm going to something to work upon. In time, we shall break down the terrible array of evidence so skillfully assembled.
"It is to be hoped so!" was the bitter response. "Good heavens! how long will the remains of this murder write itself and suspicion even to my friends?"
"You are neither the one nor the other, for we all believe you innocent.
"Before anything further could be said, a peculiar rap sounded on the door. Hastyly crossing the room, Shadrach opened the sliding panel and peered out.
"The face of Fiddling Dan met his gaze.
"Dreadful news! We're h'ry, six o' us, well armed and well mounted, he added. Better try their rifle. Listen ter that, now.
"The sound that came to the ears of the sports was instantly translated into words to interpret its meaning. A mob was coming—a mob bent on bloodshed and murder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

There was not a minute to lose. The quick, restless steps of the mob's van took him to the shore, where he caught up in his words to interpret its meaning. A mob was coming—a mob bent on bloodshed and murder.

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CHAPTER XXIII.
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

Not a step was searching party emerging from the cloud,
on with the luckless Peter B. Ross,
with the inhuman forms commanded. "Re-

vay, ye wretches! Intend ter do some
snatching with eight murderer's kim be turned

looked for.

the large trio, his long arms swing-

ed, and when a single object, a piece of
firearm, was thrustism was thrust back into

are here to cut off the three rose

rode, and when that the only means of
life's.

the mob were in sympathy for that,

and the weapons in the

head, and they dared not

shot for charge ye got in Petey

rope off.

minute thech?

member of the Secret Seven.

was there? Who says so?

the strainer Bill Taylor, and I charge

us very soon; and you are wanted here!

were they winched and turned pale,

Vran quit belong," he protested. "An'

Telegraph. You're no officer.

in his prison, in his gaol;

shall, ret, reckon you engineered Yorke's?

you!'

the vegat yell came from the mob, and

the crowding Bill continued, with angry face.

he's swing, he 'stead

of course?" chimed

Cried Bill. Growd in pants, pranced in his gaol

by mod," those in the rear pushing fr-

were in that battle of confusion, the

despite dissenting voices here

in that direction, as we see them again in the garb of

by mod, those in the rear pushing for-

of Mummy revolverers in his hands expedi-

of his step, sending their return or the

races hurtling just above the heads

back the odds turned against the sport-

detective and his allies, and the roughs felt that with quick, sharp work they could have made it a complete victory.

With a fierce cry, Miner Bill flung him

self upon Shadrach. He was closely fol-

lowed in the attack by Bunco Bill, and the

sport at once found himself whirling to

and in a desperate, hand-to-hand

Nor was Ivan to escape. With howls

of fury, Bondaduck and another ruffian

rushed after him, and overpowered his

clubbed revolvers with telling effect.

The fifth, the sportsman called the thug. Tom

Johnson, in disguise, turned his at-

tention now to climbing him, but

less in his tracks with a heavy blow

from behind.

Chapid, he promptly dragged the

marash aisle and reopened the door.

Come, pardis!" he yelled. "We've

nearly hung you. You satisfied Yorke is not

men, sweepingly asked Ivan.

right, there ain't," returned Miner

Dubbing his damaged mss.

shoulder for charge ye got in Petey

rope off.

They come! To their lone oak!

they yelled, and ruthlessly dragging their

victims they surged out of the prison and
down the stairs.

Right in the center of the town, in the

middle of the principal street, stood a

crowd, excited, but not for the lynching.

A noosed rope dangled from a convenient limb, and those who designed the nigh light for the occasion, were ranged around.

who first reached the oak fared the

various heaps, and by the time the

prisoners arrived the scene was abaze

Shadrach was at once shoved forward.

Natty attire was disarranged and torn;

his long black hair hung upon his shoulders in dishev-

elled tresses, and his face was pale and

bloodstained.

But he eyed his captors coolly and

unflinchingly, and there was never a tremor of

fear when the noose was slipped over his

head.

Miner Bill dashed before the victim in

"Ha! ba!" he shouted. "Meddler! yer
doom is sealed! Ye dared ter interfere

that on yer doom!" he shouted.

At that moment a horseman dashed

through the crowd, and drew rein beside the captive.

In response to that inhuman taunt from his lips burst

words:

"Yes, Miner Bill! I dare!"

upon the crowd, for all saw that the bold speaker was none other than the fugitive Sharp, Adrian Yorke!

CHAPTER XXV.

IVAN'S DISCLOSURE.

Yes, Miner Bill, I dare!" repeated

"Yes, I was there," I answered.

"But, Yorke, you must not tell here.

Those fellows are only balked for the

All you have to do is to save

you, once they get a grip on you.

Go at once.

The man was a commanding ring in the

sherrif's quiet voice, and with a nods to his

friends, the Telegraph Sharp at once

and rolled the mounted posse again rod away.

You would better have gone, too, Cap-

tain," whispered the police, "you have

Your little experience just now shows that you also are in
games.

We saw the trouble at the lock-up, and I pledged

myself not to escape if the deputies

They came back with you?

They fell for the traps, truly! And yet—" was well
did come, eh, Mason?"

Otherwise, my neck would have suffered,

and the sport-detective warmly grasped Yorke's hands.

This man was the hero, sir. It was a bold act.

"Yes, recklessly daring—one to test

the nerves of the boldest engineers.

But, Yorke, you must not tell here.

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All you have to do is to save

you, once they get a grip on you.

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and rolled the mounted posse again rod away.

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Your little experience just now shows that you also are in
games.
showed that the prisoner was missing, as was also Marshal Tarbutton, whom the mob had left lying unconscious on the floor.

Affixed to the table in the outer room, by the room, was a large, roughly carved, wooden desk. In the soft wood, was a folded sheet of paper, addressed to "Captain Shadrach Mason.

Drawing out the knife, the sport seized and opened the paper.

What it was, a bold and heavy handwriting, was the following message:

"Captain Mason: The trail you are on, if followed to the end, will lead you to your doom. We know you to be a brave man and true, and seek no trouble with you. Yet, if you are of a mind to do so, we will not refuse a fair trial, we will be compelled to silence you forever.

"This is a warning. Leave Crystal City at once. The ones you would aid are doomed, and to remain is but to share their fate. SEKERTH EVON.

"With a contemptuous smile on his dark face, Shadrach handed the message to Ivan, and calmly set about restoring its attention to order.

"The joller read the message, then gravely returned it to the sport. "If you are a brave man, I'll be your friend," he observed, thoughtfully. The Secret Seven is indeed a desperate clan. In operation they are a wolf, who, while simply taking your life in your hands.

"I have known of the band for months past, and I know they are after you. So, do not ferret out the men who compose it, and with partial success. But the identity of the chief remains a mystery.

"It is apparent, now, that they are scheming to secure the Lost Mine; that they inaugurated the capture of Mona Yorke and her father; that they are back of the conspiracy against Adrain Yorke, and are using prominent factors in organizing and urging on the mob to-night.

"So I say to you that they are indeed dangerous. They could, perhaps, do well to heed this note."

"The earnest tones of the joller impressed Ivan greatly. "I admit that you are mighty near the truth, Mr. Verne," he responded. "But I am on this trail to find, and stick to the end.

"The Yorke's are in deadly danger, and no power on earth will be left unturned to save them and thwart the odious schemes of this ruthless cohort."

"I am writing these friends to their fate because of personal danger to be incurred, I should never have the effrontery to discuss such matters with you."

"Right you are," declared Ivan, emphatically. "I am glad to hear that kind of talk. I am not of the regular ring. Yet, you must not overlook nor minimize the danger."

"Nor shall I."

"And, Mr. Mason, there is another point. You are a man of honor. I am going to try to fit my confidences to you. Don't protest, sir, for I may thereby shed light on some puzzling phases of this unfathomable plot.

"You have seen my daughter, Mignon. Yes, she is beautiful! I, her parent, may say that she is a genuine beauty, an egoist. This man Orthodox professes to love her. He has repeatedly made overtures for her hand, which overtures have been as repeatedly declined.

"Adrain Yorke has become her ac- cepted, unique, and he, full of jealousy. Greatly, indeed, and I say that I, myself, do, although he has an ugly temper—spring steel and blue fire.

"Have you seen the drift, Mr. Mason? Orthodox is a man of peculiar temperament—I may say, a hypochondriacal, gloomy, enigmatic, and, yet, an egoist. He regards Yorke with hatred.

"This brings me to the last point. Ms. Yorke is in the habit of riding an hour or two every morning, sometimes venturing further beyond the limits of her own town. It is only by chance, or prudence, Young spirits are exuberant, you know. Well, one morning three weeks ago when Yorke's interest was first, and unexpectedly, was intercepted by this man Orthodox. He again attempted to pay her suit, but was again repulsed. In a few inter- rage and vowed vengeance against the man of her choice, Adrain Yorke.

"Orthodox informed me of what had occurred. I chided her for venturing beyond the prescribed limits, and she went home, declaring to say nothing of the affair to Yorke.

"Then I called on Orthodox. I found him in a cowering, hideous frame. He apologized, and begged forgiveness, and I granted it during his good behavior. I did not find the Yorke's at home. I trust however, now. There was a look in his eyes I did not like. It was there again when he was brought before the prison last night. It boded ill to Yorke.

"The sport nodded, and a faint smile flitted across his face. "You are right, Mr. Verne. Orthodox is Yorke's enemy," he averred. "I had discovered as much, but laid the fact to a different motive. In short, I believed him to be Ichabod Craigie's son.

"Rude and boisterous, a man of many ways, I blow thus suddenly fallen upon him, he seemed a man of iron. But deep in his gray eyes, and his pale visage, I read what boded ill to the ruffians when found."

"My friend, what say you we can do?" he continued. "What man, or what time who had an attentive listener. See you any hope of an immediate rescue?"

"Not a ray, Mr. Verne," was the frank response. "We may be assured the Yorke's are in the hands of the ruffians. The happiness of my child is at stake. I shall resign this position to-night. I am en- tering at your right and tender advice."

"As you please, sir."

"But do you know if British Bill and Orthodox are on friendly or intimate terms?"

"They were until recently, when they quarrelled bitterly over some trifles."

"At that juncture a rustle of skirts was heard, and the next instant Ma'm Lotta, the Verne housekeeper, darted into the room, crying:

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Monsieur, ze ladies! Zey ces stolen!"

**CHAPTER XXXV. A BOLD RESOLVE.**

**Woman! woman! Do you tell me this?"** screamed the most impossible man put fairly beside himself by that startling declaration. "You, whom I charged to guard my child most sacredly—Ah! traitress!"

"Oul, oul, monsieur, but lesteen! Not I ze thief, merely over some trifle."

"Frantically, in an odd mixture of French and broken English, the housekeeper—rolling her eyes, wringing her hands, and swaying her body from side to side, as she would in convulsions, at the time, when she flung up her arms and sank in a dead faint.

"Poor creature! I was cruel," explained Ivan, instantly all compassion. "She takes this sad affair to heart. Mr. Yorke, my friend, will you promise me one favor?"

"Marveling at the sudden calmsness of the man after that fratic outburst, the Verne housekeeper, overcome by her grief, then gave the required assistance.

"The Verne residence was a small cot- tage five or six miles from the village. By the time the two men reached it, Ma'm Lotta showed signs of returning consciousness. While waiting until the woman had fully re- 

"It developed that the woman knew but little. Alarmmed by the mob's uproar, ter-

"rent of the scene, the two girls, Mona and Mignon, had insisted on leaving the house and going with them. To obtain a clearer insight into what was occurring. The kindly old housekeeper, herself terrified, had actually taken the judgment to restrain the maids, but went out with them.

"The sport, finding that harmless volley fired by the sheriff's posse, a num-

"ber of men suddenly approached from the city, the mob dispersed, and we were able to enter the house. We found Ma'm Lotta to tear the girls from their captors, and that all the ruffians had finally turned and knew of her dow,

"That was the extent of the housekeeper's knowledge of the affair. On recovering consciousness, she had hastened at once

"to the lock-up.

"Ivan received her statements with the utmost commendation, and the other handed the officer. He had the ruffians' names, and, as a result, the police were called to

"the rescue."

"But—perhaps it may not have been the Secret Seven," he continued. "Perhaps not. We can soon satisfy ourselves on that score, however, by a search through the town. If the Secret Seven are all here, we may safely lay the crime to some one else."

"Or, perhaps, you mean?"

"Possibly, though I am by no means sure he is not the actual chief of the Secret Seven."

Ivan nodded grimly. Then he spoke a few reassuring words to Ma'm Lotta, and was about to make his way back to the office.

As they strode along through the darkness the two men hastily arranged a plan of attack. It was decided to seize the man of the time, then give the proper assistance.

The housekeeper—rolling her eyes, wringing her hands, and swaying her body from side to side, as she would in convulsions, at the time, when she flung up her arms and sank in a dead faint.

At a convenient point they parted, agreeing to meet at the Mecca and com- plete the arrangements at that time.

Under the plan agreed upon, the western half of the little town fell to Shad- rach Mason, and the search began at the task. It proved a bootless one. A thorough search of the various haunts and offices in the town resulted in the discovery of a single known member of the Secret Seven.

If Ivan has just such results, we may safely conclude that the Secret Seven re-
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

"Unlike our friend, I do play, but you would rashly suggest I do so, to excess me. Shadrach returned. "I am not in the mood for it." The barber smiled.

"Pardon me! I should have known as much, gentleman, for now I recall that I have done no better, either. Captain Mason, have certainly had your services severely tested to-night. Permit me to express my thanks to you upon your escape, it was a close call."

"Thank you; yes, unpleasantly close."

"I am glad you broke again, the gambler turned away, but paused to speak to a miner near by.

Just as he reached the table, however, a fierce oath rang out near the bar, a sharp cracking of a revolver. In an instant the crowd was in an uproar. The lights flickered and expired, and the place was shrouded in gloom.

"Come!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Now is your chance, Captain Mason. Let us go."

"Lead on; I will follow."

"And I," chimed in Ivan.

The three started toward the door. They had gone a few paces, when the whole crowd surged upon them, almost hurling the sport off his feet. He had just time to avoid being run over, and to escape to you, they are bent on revenge.

I cannot retreat now, sheriff. Such a move would only hasten the crisis.

"Moreover, I am here on business of grave importance, and shall remain until that business is made.

"Defy it, captain!"

"I cannot."

"Then, indeed, be important."

It is, Sheriff Wilkins, and in confidence I will tell you that Verne's daughter, a certain young abductee, is in the clutches, and that I am here to meet Ivan Verne to arrange for their rescue."

"This is startling news! Are you sure it is true, Mason?"

"I know it to be true, sir."

"When did you take place?"

"Immediately after the mob dispersed."

"There are clues?"

"Not one. The deed is shrouded in mystery. However, we feel assured the Secret Seven are afoot."

Shadrach then recounted the affair.

"Out of that page! Captain Mason, I would give a thousand dollars to learn who those follow are."

"Keep your money, sheriff. I will tell you."

"You?"

"Yes. We got a confession out of Peter Ribbom, who is a member, and the sport quickly called the names of the band."

"I shall take immediate steps to effect their arrest," the sheriff declared. "I know the ones, each of them. Captain Mason, you will have the exception of Zeko Jones. They are bad men, too, as a rule, but I never suspected anything of the kind, more connection with the Secret Seven."

"And the chief, sheriff?"

"I am sure it is the Britons. As far as I know, though my suspicions point in another direction."

"And sheriff, I certainly wish you luck, but you will have to catch the birds before you cage them."

The report was received and nodded in a peculiar way, but checked the words that rose to his lips.

A man emerged from the crowd, and was approaching. Shadrach glanced at the splendied form, dark, Gypsy-like face, and then followed, and knew at once that he was British Bill."

"Good-evening, gentlemen," the gambler said. "You are both idle. May I invite you to take hands in a game?"

"I never play, British Bill, and you know it," the sheriff bluntly replied. Then, a dim shape advanced from behind the tree trunk, and cautiously hailed:

"Rom?"

"Yes, sir."

"Deuce take you, man! You are slow!"

"Would you have me leave a trail for the officers?"

"No, but if you do, a British Bill with an admirable simulation of British Bill's really fine voice. "They are watching me, I know it. I won't run, but however, then blanket myself like an Indian to throw them off."

"Why ask that?" impatiently. "You know the assured sport, I suppose?"

"Yes, and Ivan."

"Curse them! I fear they will want Bill."

"If we permit it, they will."

"I looked upon the sport's appearance as a foregone thing. He has picked up the clues with a master hand that seemed to clinch the guilt of Yorke. But his resolution was clear and his hold stand in behalf of the Sharp have caused me to change my mind. We must rid ourselves of him."

"Easter said than done, I fear."

"Yes, but we must do it. He has made friends with the sport, and he is a confiding, too, that the Giant Fiddler and his men are in his employ. Certain it is that when the lights would be shut off, he would be bluff to-night, in quest of Ajasah, the giant of his men were there ahead of us. Later, they would move the mob away before the mob could reach him."

"It looks like collusion, surely. But, Rom, did they say that the old man, do you know?"

"He escaped. We now bend every energy to recapture him."

"Or kill him!" ventured Shadrach, with savage earnestness.

The plotter shuddered.

"Oh, no! no! Not that!" he cried, with a shudder. "I am incapable of that."

"And you, Roebuck, may you have a steady-still night when you fired that well-nigh fatal shot! No, let us not stir."

"What do you mean by my father's will, or could we find it, so it could be destroyed, all would be well. We could voted the impossible."

McGowan was sure 'was Collin's possession, but it was not among the detective's paper. Certain it is, he had little to his own devices. But—it is not likely."

"No, it is not to be, I fear!" and Shadrach mutely chucked. "Yet I hope we may some time bring up his father's will, or could we find it, so it could be destroyed, all would be well. We could voted the impossible."

"Yes; I can do this more than an English. Leaving him and the Cragiand heirs to their own devices. But—it is not likely."

"Well, Cragiande."

"I heard that."

"The savage roughly gripped the sport-detective's arm."

"Not that name, here, Rom!" he replied, with a lithe glow in his eyes that black eyes. "Twice now have you used it, and—even these shadows may have eyes."

"True, Rom—true! A truce to it, then! But, you were saying something—you hesitated?"

"At a thought which appals me! What if Collins, in his dying moments, confided all to the sport? What then?"

"Rom, I can hardly believe that he did."

"Man, we know not the depths of Capt. Mason, either! His dark face is an ill omen to us, be assured! There is a gleam in his eyes that makes me feel as though the heart was deep to my soul like a knell of fate! I dread the man's smoke! Rom! You are moody—fane-

ful! Your imagination runs riot. You
dream, and this affair preys upon your mind?"

"No! 'Tis not imagination. He asked me to come into the garden, Ah! the Secret Room, my heart stood still. That man knows, I tell, say he does?"

The shivering wretch ignored that blunt question.

"But where's all, Rom—what if Collins confided fully in him?" he asked. "Don't you see, man, that we are standing on the last link but one of the chain? Do you suppose he hates the sheriff, Verne, Tarbutton, Yorke himself, and others?"

"I fear not. We must capture him, Rom—torure must wring the truth from him."

"Ah, it comes to the worst; we can dictate terms."

"Is that true?"

"Yes, I have pondered the matter deeply. They must wed us to-morrow night."

"But the Verne girl?"

"If there is interest, I know, as the estate descends from father to son. But I love her—madly. You, of course, as the husband of Mona, will hold the real key to the toe-snatcher, and that will answer for me, as well."

"To be sure!" dryly. "But if the brother?"

"I hang: he must, for I hate him! And his disgraceful death will tear the last stonewall of the blind man's heart. Ah, I have plotted well, Rom! Deeply, indeed! and the sport-device, the discomfiting sport, while his hands clenched beneath the folds of the blanket. "But you are sure, Rom, that the marriages can be forced to-morrow night?"

"Ay! We have both maidens at the rendezvous."

"True; but the dominie? To serve its purpose each marriage must be legal."

"Well, then, Tom will answer. To-morrow night we can decry him into the hills. If a fat fees fails to win his con- sent, I can work over at the head with him to terms."

"I suppose so. Yet, the sky may prove true as steel to the principles he teaches, and die before yielding."

"Yes, there are such fools, but Tom and I can work over the plotter's head, and yet I now declare, in contemptuous tones."

"And now, Rom, we must plot to rid ourselves of the wretched couple."

"As my note of bonds, you are at work, seeking the rendezvous."

"I am said, but I do not understand. Who and how many are at work?"

"And the voices of the sport seemed fraught with determination."

"How many I know not, but the quar-".

"Cold, and the trail of E win Yorke's abductors."

"The deuces! That is bad."

"Yes, for the fellow had planned up the trail, and was within a couple of miles of the rendezvous when discovered. An ambush was laid, with what result I can not say. The party escaped to the hills."

"All out with the girls, for there may be a force in hiding near to support the trail."

"We are now, to work here, and secure the limits of the region."

"How many of the men are in tow?"

"The party of the miners, making our force five—ample, I should say, to han- die the matter."

"Ivan first, then the sport. We must take them singly, and quickly."

"Very well."

"It must be done! There is another consideration, too, to urge us on."

"What?"

"With the sport and Pawnee Bill both in hand, we shall have the complete key to the location of the Lost Mine."

"Even so. That is worth the risk, at any rate."

"Yes, and with these men safely caged, we may feel reasonably secure once more."

The sport-detected pondered a moment, and then nodded his head thick and fast during that stolen inter- view, and for the nonce he was puz- zled but happy.

Should he hazard all on the immediate capture of the bold and reckless scoundrel? The thought was a burning one, and he flashed it into the plot against Adrain Yorke. He finally resolved to lead back to the trap by itself, and he knew in his heart that he would be, in the hope that he might learn something of value in the establishment of the telegraphic message."

"And Yorke?" he asked. "Shall we make a further effort to send him out of the world, or leave that to the law?"

"To the law. Twill be better. The clinching of it, and the foot will no run away. He will return and stand trial."

"But, in the meantime, if something occurs to break down the evidences?"

"You are growing nervous now, Roe- back!" laughed Orth. Mcloven's confidence swelled, and he knew leaves no one but the Sharp."

"A tall form darted from behind the stone wall, and was instantly in the plotter's lips, stifling the remainder of the sentence."

"The greater British Bill. "Do you not see you have been imposed upon— that you are dibbling our secrets to the"."

"Letting fall the blanket, Shadrach quickly grasped his weapons. Before he could draw to defend himself, however, a crushing blow from the rear laid him senseless at the feet of his enemies."

CHAPTER XXVII.

GOLD, AND THE TRAIL.

When Pawnee Bill rode out of Crystal City to seek the trail of Edwin Yorke's captive, he was splendidly mounted and thoroughly armed, and a trained pack horse closely followed the animal he rode.

At the little stream where we have seen Shadrach Mason secure the note addressed to Mona Yorke, S., the quarter-blood dismissed and carefully scanned the earth around the tiny heap of bones.

"But the roadbed just there was of logs chinked in with broken stones, and no track of the outlaw messenger was to be discovered."

Then a glance at the greenwood showed that the banks had been well gnawed by a species of willow, and Pawnee Bill smiled grimly.

"The fellow came through by the bluff, and followed the stream bed down to the trail," he muttered. "This willow grows abundantly above, but not a bush of it is to be seen in this vicinity."

He may have retraced his steps and gone into another path, but the chances are he has pushed on to town, so I will ven- ture to take the short cut to the basin."

"Seizing the bluff, Bill rode into the water, and turned his horse's head up stream."

A mile above the margin he came to a break in the steep banks of the creek and rode out upon a narrow, sandy beach. His footsteps were discern- ible, and a glance showed that the mes- senger had used that route both going to and returning from the tow."

Even the willow bush at which he had halted to squeeze the stick was indicated by a trampled sand.

These things Pawnee read without drawing rein. Keenly alert, he centered his attention on the broken bank, and came upon a short ledge overlooking the stream.

Dismounting, he quickly tethered his horses in a clump of dwarfed trees, then glass in hand crept out to a growth of rushes on the verge of the bluff.

A careful survey of the basin revealed the dead horse near the bank, where the sport-detected had made his stand against the five outlaws earlier that day.

But the temporary camp in the deep valley was deserted, and the night was gone, and no sign of life was visible, where, visible, a number of bandits were encircling and circling about the dead animal.

Even the feathered songsters by which they had been haunted, hooted and over all hung a solemn hush.

It's mighty queer," muttered Pat, putting the gun against his shoulder. "No one on the rock. "Were I possessed of the supernatural nature of my re- membered the sight of the Evil Spirit was abroad in the land."

But constant association with marred the human senses, whatever of poetic fancy there rem- to me, and I can't just go the matter.

"Nothing! There is a natural cause for brooding silence. Now, what is it?"

Again the quarter-blood scowled, and glass and narrow scanned the valley going over it almost inch by inch, upon the stream bed.

Something has happened here—thing which has startled every soul in the place, and not by human reason, self, slowly rising. The way is and the thing is investigated."

Leaving his pack upon the sand, Bill clump, Pawnee mounted, loosened the revolvers in the saddle, and slowly lowered the sleeping patrol."

First he approached the bowlder, which by the horse, then turned to the canyon mouth."

A sharp cry burst from his lips, The way was blocked.

Where had been an open passage Edw- ing the outer world now thousands of yards, but they could not have been closed by any artifices of man.

"They have exploded a mine closed the canyon!"

Where once the horse, the quarter-"."

"They have exploded a mine closed the canyon!"

The blast had been a powerful Do Great masses of rock and sections of cliff had been torn out, and the ridge, the earth for many a around was scarred and seamed."

As he reached the figure lying away toward Yorke's cabin had also choked with the debris from a mine.

"The fools! Do they think to hold delay pursuit?"

"Pawnee Bill curled grimly. Dismount- ing, he walked over to the chaotic "marking the spot where there had been an explosion."

"That terrible blast has uncovered the hidden vein, and the eyes of the quarter-blood twinkle bright that he noted the visible treas- ures."

"There's enough for all. But listen!" he laughed. "Yorke surely was not the one stories of Deering were not fables."

Then, with deht hands, Pawnee hid his exposed vein from view, mounted, galloped back to the pack horse."

Now, for the cabin and the Gold Mine."

Like one thoroughly familiar with wild surroundings, the quarter-blood briskly and quietly ascended the mountainside into a narrow gorge, and an hour later came out in the valley in which was located the Yorke residence.

A cautious survey of the premises "sure he were deserted, the little settlement."

Everything was as Mona Yorke had left it that morning, when lurked away the chieftains of the Secret Seven; but
Shadrach, the Sport Detective.

"You can't argue with a man who is armed with a pistol!" Shadrach roared again.

"You know how to use it, do you?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Shadrach," said the man, "I have used it many times before."
night, an' I reckon you're the one for their trip, Dick," he said. "Tell their boss jest what et cost us ter turn their trick, an' buzz off, an' tell them they pay ain't none too plentiful."

"C'est, ole man—I'll do jest that, an' in a minute." "Any word for yer pards over that?"

"On'y es ve now know."

"I reckon, at an' what time, that we're thus opened for a trip to town. Dick danced nimblly away, and a moment later reappeared, leading him a pair of horse."

Before he could mount, however, a little, wiry little outlaw suddenly darted out of the path and confronted the group.

"Hey, Black Jack! That's a galloper over there—'bluff, runnin' down your trail," he announced, sharply, his hands trembling with excitement. "A regular armadillo! They're bad medicine, er' I'm a jumpin' jingo!"

"Only one, Skinny?"

"Yes, but..."

"Button lip, then, ye bagn'o' bones! Ride on, on, Dick, but keep under cover. We'll lend ter ther spy. We'll give him an ambush, right at ther crick ford."

CHAPTER XXIX.

WATCHING THE DUGOUT.

Pawnee Bill was too wary to be caught completely off his guard by the Outlaw Miners. Unharmed by the volley, he sank in the dense growth of reeds bordering the little stream, while a shrill yell of defiance rang from his lips. He had detected that cunning ambush not a breath too soon to save himself and his horse. A slight swaying of the reeds on the opposite bank—a fleeting glimpse of Black Jack's grizzled face, and he knew.

"Steady, now, good Starlight," he muttered, a moment later, affectionately patting the horse's neck, as he turned, and a tree near the foot of the sloape. "Don't move, don't stir, till you hear me call. Play dead, and I'll drive those dragoons." Surely, there was perfect understanding between man and horse, for the shapely head sank down, the eyes closed and the death feint was well-nigh perfect.

Cautiously then, the quarter-blood stole through the brake, rifle in hand, each motion so sinuous, so serpentine that no friendly bush or young sapling was the least aware of his presence—nay, even his foot. For sure, the trick was no mere show, it was genuine. He was the spy of terror he turned and died, with his more cautious pards at his heels!

Shot after shot rang out, urging on the fugitive blacks, driven with a tar-like yell Pawnee Bill leaped to his feet and hastened back to his horse.

"Armed, now, they've got nothing to fear from the present seeking the fleeing rogues, the quarter-blood ordered Starlight to rise, mounted, and ride rapidly up the valley.

A mile above the bluffs he felt the little stream,4 and his horse sank under cover of the deepening twilight hurried toward the scene of his recent encounter.

"They've got a camp or a den somewhere near, and there Yorke will be found," he thought, as he rode along, with every sense on the alert. "If I can spot the place, and make sure the Cynacht is there too, I'll ride barrow the cabin and await the party Mason was to send out."

On gaining the point at which the trail crossed the stream, Pawnee took cover, and patiently waited until the dense gloom of night lay over the valley, veiling on. No sound came to warn him of the approach of foes, yet he knew they were somewhere near.

Creeping out of the rushes, at length, and he sought on the level, and found, condensed a tree near the foot of the slope. They must have a light of some kind, whatever they were up to. It was not possible, for no ray of light shone out of the sea of gloom around him, and he realized that he must play a waiting game. Thus an hour passed away, then another, with no sound to tell of man's presence among the saplings, children, or a chalk light to relieve the impenetrable darkness, and Pawnee prepared to descend."

"You're hot stuff tight, for the night, I reckon," he growled, in disgust."

"Well, that was all, just then. A door opened not a hundred yards away—a broad belt of light flashed over tree and thicket, and an instant thus, all was dark again.

"Holy smoke! Look at that, now! And don't do so clever, you might have them! That's the den, fast enough! Over the old man there!"

Swinging through the brush, the quarter-blood carefully lowered himself to the ground, tightened his belt, and crept on toward the door of the thicket, treatng the thicket with caution. Then he came upon the path, and glided on to the open space before the door. There, his progress stopped.

A shadowy form rose before him, and another instant he was grappling with an unknown foe.

By sheer luck, Pawnee's hand met the belt of the thug in a desperate clutch. Then his rifle butt rose and fell, and the Outlaw Miner lay silent and motionless in his grave.

"Awh, oh, oh, now. Ther cricker's dead, fast enough."

"What is it? But dead or possum in, 'tain't manners for me ter put my self forard!"

"Shall I stay?"

"Dassent', Jack! I promised pore-'

"Towards, both o' ye!" smarmed the chief, in a voice. "Don't tell ye we'drition galloper plush shore! I'll go myself!"

A brace of jeering laughs followed the threat, showing that neither outlaw possessed a sense of humor—or anything but just then.

Stung into a semblance of recklessness daring, Black Jack sprang to his feet and quickly parted the bush screen; but he could see step forth a rifle shot rang out, a bullet grazed his ear, and with a

"Be still!" he hissed. "Utter a sound or make a move without my permission, and it shall be the worse for you."

"Remain as you are, answer my questions, and obey my orders, and 'twill be all right," the thug further forced.

"Don't-k-kill me!" stammered the wretch, none other than Skinny. "On'y give me a chance, ma'am."

"Ah! Stop that! Get upon your feet. Don't try to run, or you'll get this too. You're steady, boss—stady, Boe. Now, forward—march!

With hand gripped firmly on collar, Pecos fairly swung the captive around, facing up stream, and forced him along, step by step, until he had reached a point some little distance away from the other.

There, a signal whistle brought the intelligent animal cantering up, and with a plucked rope taken from the saddle horn the trail quickly secured his captive.

"Now, we're ready for business," he growled, turning directly before the fellow, knife in hand. "I want you to tell me all about that shebang back there."

"Oh, Lawl! They'll kill me ef I tell!"

"As will I if you don't tell. So, old boy, tell me all about it, or the lady and the deep sea—a sure result of villainy!"

"Come, now! What's your name?"

"Back! Back, young'un."

"Will, Skinny, you're in a tight fix!"

"Oh, yas, an' I wishes I was out, too."

"But, if you try to run, you'll never—"

"But—if I do tell, boss?" sagerly.

"All depends on what you tell, man. A secret that can save you, you straight story may.

"I'd tell straight as a string, boss, ef you only know how in favor o' ther job, anyway!"

"What job, Skinny?"

"Corrally, I'm not tellin' you, Yorke."

"They did it, then."

"Oh, yas. We Outlaw Miners, es we calls us ourself, we got a band oot ter run him in, an' we jest did, too."

"Where is he?"

"Out the back."

"How many Outlaw Miners are there?"

"There's four, but two's bad hurted an' don't count fer much."

"But don't ye tackle 'em, boss, 'less ye not see where they live, an' o' ther happy huntin' grounds, fer I tells yer they're pison, an' then's others from boss.

Pawnee laughed softly. Then, after a moment's reflection, he looked carefully at the thug, and, assuming a rude gag, and forced it between his jaws.

"I'm going back to see if your story's straight, Skinny," he explained. "If I find you've told the truth, I'll turn you loose as soon as this business is done.

A muffled groan was the only response. Picking up his rifle, Pawnee spoke to his horse, then turned and hastened toward the dugout.

Arrived at the thicket, he slipped cautiously along the path to the small cleared spot. Suddenly, a light gleaming from a moment's listening convinced him that the outlaws inside had not yet taken alarm. At the same time, he saw that he could creep around to the foot of the sloping, earth-covered trench.

He knew that there was a hole at one near the apex to permit the escape smoke and fume air with from, and through the hole to see and bear all that passed inside.

The roof was formed of rappings laid the side, the sides were braced and covered with sod and earth, and he knew that he would have to move with great stealth to discover that.

He made the ascent, however, and through the aperture obtained a clear and distinct every detail with Skinny's story, save that Yorke was nowhere visible.

For upward of an hour the spy held his position, listlessly to the ran-
dom talk below. Then a number of horsemen suddenly appeared in the cleared space in front of the dugout. A number of them there were—three or four, and two captives were pushed into the dismal hovel.

They were Mona Yorke and Mignon Verne.

CHAPTER XXX.
THE SHARP'S ADVENTURE.

When Fiddling Dan and his men rode away with Atrad Yorke, immediately and directly toward the Sharn's Cut, they dashed a rescue to the Shadrach Mason, their course was anything but a direct one, and they slowly circled the moon over, striking into the Gilt Edge trail.

Dan and his party had taken possession of the lode. The last of the Karll, the Trail Robber, in the hills near Gilt Edge, and it was their intention, under cover of darkness, to make a sweeping attack on the Shadrach, and to rescue Mona Yorke from her imprisonment.

All was jollity and mirth among the deputies as they cantered slowly onward, although every man of the rough crew was heartily in sympathy with the pris- oner's, for his bold stand before the law had won him to win before them and friendship.

The Sharp rode on in silence beside his friend Dan, at the head of the column, for his thoughts were not of the present, but of the past, of the scenes which had mainly contributed to solve the riddle of Collin's death.

Within two miles below town, a cry of alarm from a deputy in the rear caused all to draw rein, while a sudden rush showed the way slip in that an' so dodge both footsteps and sign.

This proposition met with general favor, and in another minute the little cavalcade was again in motion. The canyon in question was the one through which we have seen the sport- duffing Yorke, and from it they had come from the Lost Mine basin. It was near at hand, and in an incredibly short time the party, though only shielded between its towering walls, had passed through a narrow passage, when the party swept past the mouth of the rift, riding at a speed wild and hazardous for that narrow trail. Then:

"Help! Help!"
It was a woman's voice, ringing, clear, and full, yet fraught with deadly terror and despair!

By heavens! That was Miss sister's voice, Fiddling Dan thought, quick, sharp, tone. "Forward, men! Those fiends have captured her!"

Aye! thundered Fiddling Dan.
"Out, now, lads, an' em!"
Little need to urge haste on them! With a dash of a hasty fence, slunging of spurs every man pushed forward. Yet, when the canyon's mouth was reached the horses were almost gone—

The rowel of his spur stained with crimson. Would that frightful space never grow less.

On, on, over that rough and winding way sped the steeds of the pursued and the pursuer, with a certainty of foothold that seemed little short of miraculous. Then—

A sound akin to a curse burst from the throat. "In the face of d—n, Dan!" said Sharp. With a desperate effort he checked his steaming horse, and bent his head to listen.

A single stifling word—dead; blank silence, dense, impermeable gloom! In ambush, or—yes, by heavens! They had left the trail and taken to the hills!

"Forward, Hector! " And miss them not, I pray. Every footstep was flooded with yellow light from the glowing fire, and nothing was concealed. The party was dashing forward, through the rude jests and boisterous talk of the out- law's, until he had learned there was a dugout near, and that a portion of the party had stopped there.

Cautiously drawing back, the Tele- graph Sharp rode on and hastily retraced his steps to the outer air. A moment's re- flection convinced him that he had passed the point in the trail. The moon was quiet, and he stole quietly along the slope above the thicket. A hundred yards thus, then a long- drowsy, fitful sound between them.

Directly below was a round, irregular gleam of light, and he knew that he was near a dugout. A single hole or flat of the dugout.

"Somewhere, he must be down there." In another minute he was upon the ground earthen roof. The hum of voices came from below. Moving forward, he stopped, and drew his head to the aperture. Just then a powerful hand clutched his throat, and the next instant he was en- gaged in deadly hand-to-hand struggle with an unknown foe.

Shouts and cries of alarm came from within. The room was light, and crumbled under the combined weight of the combatants. There was a portion gave way, and the two men were precipitated into he midst of the startled outlaws!

CHAPTER XXXI.
FIDDLING DAN TAKES A HAND.

A cloud of dust, rising from the debris, partially obscured the light for a mo- ment, and shrouded the scene in semigloam.

"Furies! Pards, it's a spy!" yelled Black Jack, quick, chivalrously, with a weapon and retreating to the wall. "Guard, yer door, thar! Don't let'em in!"

The order was hastily obeyed. Then, as the haze lifted, it was seen that both sides were dead, and the floor as quiet as they had fallen, and a chuckle of delight came from the chief of the Outlaw Min- ers--

"Cracky! boys, there's a turn—em both spies!" he called. "Clean jarred out o' their easy, men. Let's, they'll be back soon, or they'll make cold meat for funerals by an' by!"

There was little need for that command, however, for ere it was fairly spoken the outlaws were dragging at the blaze. The smoke forms essential that it was fate had so unceremoniously flung into their hands.

And recognition came swift and sure, for after one glimpse of the nearer face Dean Bendabuck started back in amaze- ment, crying:

"Ther Telegraph Sharp, pards, for one; Harness him, shore, fer that's a fat price on his heart!"

"Yas, an' other's Pawnee Bill—no less!" echoed Bunco Bill, in like amaze- ment, "Glory, pards! That is this!"

Other cries rang out from the excited, jubilant outlaws, but Black Jack quickly quieted the din, and before the rush of chaos, silencing all and bringing the task in hand down to a businesslike method.

Though sorely puzzled to account for his sister was nowhere visible.

"And yet, I could aver, almost, that they came directly here," he mused. "But there is not there, or there near, and I shall find her, or leave red work for these devils to remember!"

One of the outlaws, in the gloom, every muscle set for swift and deadly work, the Sharp again crept up to that rocky angle he had observed from the hill, and seized the rope which the ISSUE.
that struggle on the roof, he felt that there must be others near, awaiting the report of the two men. They came with it, tormented. They could catch with them in his keeping just then.

"Don’t feel those words served to explain as much, and amid silence the two men were pulled from the wreckage, disarmed, and then carried away, long before conscious return.

A brief examination served to show that the greatest was a bruised or a luckless fall, then both were hastily borne from the dagout.

The railroad and wreckage was cleared away as quickly as possible, and a sheet of old canvas stretched over the hole in the ground.

A messenger was dispatched to the cave to summon the men there, and on their appearance all sat down to a council of war.

Not until Black Jack ran his eyes over the scene was the absence of Skinny discovered.

Then question and answer fell thick and fast, but no one had seen the runaway after he left the dagout earlier in the night, and his whereabouts remained a mystery.

"They’ve got him!" declared Black Jack, in a tone of fear. "Boys, we can’t reach him there. He’s on the other side of that wicked nest, an’ will peach of hard pushed.

"Then let’s go up ther valley, an’ three down. Best through their brees two or three miles both ways. Ef that’s a stand ment, we’s into the stone city. See, then, if they’ve got Skinner. If they hev, ye’ll find us ready ter pull our frend out o’ luck.

The course thus suggested met with the approval of the roughs. Two parties had been started.

It was growing light in the east when the first crew returned, bringing with them Skinny and another man, Billy Stew and Telegraph Sharp. The outlaws at the dagout all breathed freer at sight of the men. Their leader told them that the story he told went far to reassure them.

Shortly thereafter the second party came in. They reported a band of men in camp on the Gilt Edge trail, at the foot of the valley. Who or what were the scouts had been unable to learn.

"We’ll know soon enough, I guess," ventured Black Jack. "Boys, ga. these horses an’ critters ther guns under cavum. We’ve got a mighty good grip on that game yet, an’ we’ll foolish that squad, ef we comes this way.

But the dagout for a brief time, let us take a look at the party camped on the Gilt Edge trail.

As Big Shadrach and the men entered, these men were Fiddling Dan and his outfit. Unable to keep pace with the impossibly fast Shadrach, the giant and his deputies had reached the valley ford too late to detect the course of the fleeing horses by ear, and, fearful of losing young Yorke on his return in quest of help, they decided to go into camp at the ford and then go on to the scene.

So the horses were picketed, and guarded set, and in a few minutes all was silenced. It was not long before the men broke the men were aroused, the horses brought in and saddled, ready for a start at this hour.

It was through listening to the conversation of the men during these movements that the information that they were not present, and they at once withdrew and reported, as we have seen.

As soon as it grew light, all saw that the trail led straight up the valley, and prominent among the objects that attracted the eye was a rough shoe worn by the Fury.

Sharp’s horse. He seemed to the turn an’ folled corner, the Fiddling Dan declared, unusually. "I’m plum sorry we c’dn’t keep even with him, for he’s struck that toward trouble."

"An’ he was game enough ter do jest that, Dan, ef his boss held out," asserted the nearest of the men.

"But Preston Boys. Don’t spare whop or spur long as ther trace is plain."

With that, the cavalcade was off, in single file, with the Fury picking up the pace.

The trail was surely plain to eyes schooled to the work in hand, and with the aid of daylight the men ahead much faster than the outlaws who had been able to go the night before, and the Fury at sunup reached the thickets surrounding the dagout. The restless brown eyes of the giant were keen as if in the glow of the sun, and he promptly pulled his horse aside, and thumped a gun against his shoulder.

"Stiddy, bol—every man o’ ye!" he called, in a cautious tone. "Ready fer business, now? Nothin’ within smelin’ distance, an’ may flush!"

"This way, Rocky, boy!"

Swinging out of their saddles, the giant and the man addressed bent low over the trail a moment, then with a gesture of warning to the four mounted depositions silently set off around the border of the thicket.

Straight to the cavern in the bluff they followed those telltale prints. At the entrance they paused, and after a moment’s hesitation slipped collory Dan stole forward alone.

The fire, freshly replenished, burned brightly in the cave, and it lay five men, all asleep or feigning sleep.

A glance told the spy that the Telegraph Sharp was not of the number, nor was his horse among those hitched to the rack just outside.

Carefully then, he eyed the rocky walls, many as Adrain Yorke had done two hours before, and with a like fruitless result.

Nix! he muttered, with a sniff of angry disgust. "Rotten boy!"

Retracing his steps to the mouth of the passage, he quickly explained the situation to the others.

"But ther Sharp’s bin hyar, boss, don’t see? that individual protested.

"Thar’s the prent—thar marked prent that nailed me fer ther Collins murder! Ef leads straight ter ther foot o’ this bluff. Ef ther Sharp ain’t in sight, be planted—that’s all!"

So I think, lid. But come, let’s make a move.

Patiently, then, the two men bent to the hoof-cut earth, picking out that telltale print and calling on each other to see to which Yorke had finally tied his horse.

But, there all traces stopped. Now, boss, he take wings and fly away, or did ther yurk open an’ swallow him?

"Neither one nor other, Rocky! Ther critter stood hyar long enough ter leave good, strong markin’, then gallops him away.

"But ther prents, boss! They stops hyar!"

They muffled his hoofs, Rocky! Thee’s all. We’ll go back an’ hold a powwow.

With a sniff of disgust Rocky fell behind his burly leader, and a moment later the pair rejoined the waiting horsemanship, when it was explained that this new acquaintance was quickly made known.

"That’s a deep game behind this boy, Fiddling Dan," said the Rocky. "We’ll reconnoiter that thicket. They didn’t stop hyar for nothin’.

Let’s locate amuck as it required but a moment to discover the hidden path, and as a result the entire party moved silently toward the opening.

When the open space was reached, the pose found the dagout door shut, and everything as it had been.

"Now, lad, keep yourselves ready fer business," continued Dan. "Then, lifting his voice, he said again, "Hail! Hail, ther house!"

No answering sound came from within, and with a great and instant stroud forward and pounded heavily on the door with the butt of a revolver.

Then the sound of some one stirring within was heard, and a moment later the door was opened, and Black Jack appeared.

He rubbed his eyes sleepily, and stared a bit at the unexpected caller. "Mornin’, gent! What’s up? What you wanted?"

"Don’t you seed ter search yer shack!" cried Dan, grimly.

"Come in, then. But you’ll find nothin’ in this house, a bad name, but I’m a honest man.

Without reply, Dan and Rocky pushed in, and at once the room was cleared. No other inmates were up, but no one offered any objection, and the search was speedily ended.

Not a clue to the whereabouts of the missing parties had been discovered!

CHAPTER XXXII.

DUNCAIN SAUNDERIS APPEARS.

When Shadrach Mason, the sport-detective, recovered from the unconsciousness produced by that deadly assault to Mason, it was found that his stolen interview with Orange Yorke, he was to find himself in the small log cabin.

And this cabin, as was afterward proved, was a mile out of town.

The sport lay upon a rude cot in the corner, and the fire in the darkness filled the room. Blankets, suspended from the rough hewn beams overhead, partially enclosed the cot, and thrown the light from the small window.

For some minutes after reviving, he was in a state of wild excitement, wondering where he was and striving to remember what had befallen him.

He recalled his interview with the conspirator, almost word for word, and ending with the abrupt appearance of the British Hill and the murderous assas.

A shudder convulsed the helpless sport. Presuming that the fellow was awaiting him, he saw too much to be permitted to escape. He could see it, but it was too late, and it required no second inspection of his bonds to assure him that every possible sound occasioned by this moment quickly brought his keeper to his side.

As the fellow swept aside the blanket, a flood of light, streaming through the window, fell upon the sport, almost blinding him. His eyes were opened at once, and a tall and powerful form, with a dark Indian-like face, and long black hair and much mustache.

"Wal, pard, how do ye an’ yerself?" asked the keeper, in a not unkindly tone.

"Yer a bite, eh?"

"No, thank you; not now. What is it?"

"Last noon."

"How long have I been here?"

"In come last night."

"What’s the news?"

"Some friends o’ mine."

"Orthodox and British Hill!"

"What do you get for keeping me here?"

"Money, pard—money! Round, golden, simonolous!"

"But how much?"
Shadrach, the Sportive Detective.

"Lorly, pard! Yer own mummy w'dn't know ye!" cried Dandy, delighted with the complete metamorphosis. "You're no dandy sport now—not fer a cent!"

Then Shadrach departed. He walked briskly down Fourth Street and went direct to Sheriff Wilkins's office. That officer was in. He was seated at a desk, and had his lights dimmed, so that only a dark figure shone on his face. He looked up slowly as that odd-looking figure shuffled into the room and came to where he was sitting.

"Well, my man, what is it?"

"Of do be looking fer wurruck, sir?"

"Yis, sir, 'n' kno I do be nadin' it, too, yer Connor.

"Oh, you get out! There's no work here! Go look elsewhere."

"Sure, yer riveryance, Oll'd do that same.

"Well, go; don't bother me."

"Plawse work a little, sir."

"Rot me bugger down to the mines. Tell them I sent you."

"Yis, but the job here? Begoff—"

"What job, man?"

"Sure, the spalpeen told me the sher-"

"With a growl of anger, Sheriff Wilkins sprang to his feet and caught the intruder by the throat.

But a hearty laugh from the disguised sport at once dispelled his anger, and he permitted the man to go his way.

"Mason," he ejaculated, in amazement.

"Directly, sheriff!"

"But what does this mean? Where have you been? Sit down, man—explain Yourself." Quickly, the sport obeyed that pointed request, carefully explaining all that had occurred since he last saw the sheriff.

"The infernal scoundrels!" Wilkins exclaimed, when Shadrach finished his Narrative. "Mason, we must gath-er them in!"

"Yes, as soon as practicable. There is much more than meets the eye."

"Yes, that is true. We must secure proof that will not fail to convict."

"But I must be our first care. They must be rescued to-night, and I shall depend upon you for assistance, sheriff."

"I shall give it gladly, Mason. But I think you must be good to yours. Too. In search of the scoundrels, you may have occasion to rely upon me, also."

"That is true. I shall return to-night, and do my best to aid you."

"That will do now, Dandy. I believe I can make it now," and Shadrach again got up from his feet, and walked slowly to the door and shut it.

"Yes, yes, I'll be all right soon," he said, after a moment. "Now, Dandy, I want to get to the sheriff's office, and I want to go in such a way as to make the worthy old fellow want, as much as possible, to recognize me if they are still at large and see me. Let me have some of your old clothes," said Shadrach.

"They're putty old, pard, for a fact, but I reckon ye kin hev them."

"Sure, all the better if they're old and ragged."

"The miner crossed the room to a battered steamer trunk in the corner. From it he drew a top, which was of coarse tobacco. He filled it with care, and then lighted a lamp of tobacco. He then gougéd a lump of clay from the nature of the walls, moistened it, and daubed it on his face and hands.

"Aha! A detective?"

"Hardly that, Mr. Saunders, although the fates seemed determined that I should act as such this time," said Shadrach.

But I am indeed surprised, as well as pleased, to see you here, sir, for it was only two nights ago that I was sending your Philadelphia address, as given me by Collins.

"Mr. Captain Mason! It indeed seems an incredible flight. But that message was forwarded to me at Helena, where I had been for several weeks, and I at once started for Crystal City."

I was delayed en route, but am here at last, and I am in no hurry at present. The savage surrounding the deaths of Collins and Mcgowan.

"Are you at leisure?"

"Not exactly, Mr. Saunders, but I can spare time to tell you the little that has developed since M. Wilkins and I, and by consequence, events, clearly and distinctly."

The crime was deliberate, and most carefully contrived. We only the intention of the plotters to remove a dangerous man from their path, and to secure the will of a great revenue, then to fasten the deed upon Adrian Blake, and so bring disgrace and death to him.

"Collins and Mcgowan came here in quest of the Cragland heirs. They found them in Edwin Yorkes and a son and daughter. They learned that the Gypsy Drummer, which was the name of Isha mel, was also here, and Mcgowan then proved a traitor to his trust, selling his secret to the police."

"To make all clear, may I say that Isha mel Craige, the Gypsy brother of Edwin Yorkes, was murdered, and Isha mel, much-wronged man, whose greatest sin has been intense selfishness. His father, the original Donald Craige, really left a will devising Craglands to his son Edwin, to whom by every moral right that estate belonged. But that will was lost, and was not found until long after the younger brother had turned his back upon the Inland."

"Honest, myself, Isha mel Craige at once decided to make full restitution, but his son, Donald—Orthodox Weeper, as we are here familiarly called—followed, with the result that the old man was spirited out of the country and into France, where he planned to purchase private mohud house before he could make public the finding of his father's will.

"But his cunning was even greater than that of his son. He had hidden the will. It was not to be found, nor would he divulge its hiding place. Escaping, finally, from the madhouse, through the aid of his keeper—none other than Ivan Vitamin—he secretly returned to England, secured the document, employed Darius Cudine to prosecute the search for Edwin Blake, and placed the will in his hands for safe keeping."

Collins, in turn, engaged McGowan as his assistant. He had gone to England. They sought you out, Mr. Saunders, in Philadelphia, and to you disclosed their errand. They were, indeed, maddeningly close."

"They did, sir," Saunders declared.

"I may add, Mr. Mason, that the story is true, and, as I am telling it, save in a few minor and unimportant particulars."

"May I ask where you obtained your information?"

"I cannot give you the confidence, sir, drawn from several sources. Guesswork, we'll call it, although I am assured I am not far wrong."

"Indeed, you are marvelously near the truth. Mason. But, proceed with your account, pray."

The sport laughed.
runs at right ter ther shack o’ ther Outlaw Miners, which same we searched an’ also a cave near by, but no Sharp an’ no gal does we find.

Then Dan, he’ll shore watch there, an’ he does, while three o’ our goes over ter old man Yorke’s cabin, ter meet Pawan, who was out on last night. We git that k’rect, an’ finds a pack hoss in the stable, but no Injun, so fires has started.

Over in ther valley we strikes trail ag’in, an’ we sees es’t ther Injun’s. Then we comes ter Whalna, he’s got a panner, for the sign’s dead plain, an’ a penk’t rope laya ‘round cut ter pieces.

We runs across that brown ter ther shack, an’ ther et pieces. So we ag’in sarches both dens, an’ finds nothin’. Then Dan, he finds some ter thum’ in a heap crooked that, or thar, abouts, an’ he up an’ sends me over hyar or dem. With them ter watch, we dem with the mob beneath the Lone Oak dis persed.

The light of the bonfires he saw that his friends had escaped, that a tragedy had been averted by the timely ar rival of Tom Vein. With his hands clas sed yet by the blow which had deprived him of his consciousness, he leaned against the wall and corner of a building, to await the return of Shadrach Mason and Ivan Veer.

Some time must have been stood thus when hurried steps approached, and Peter Rambt darted past in the darkness, free ing the way to the cattle," he explained.

"Halt!" shouted Tarbut, duty ris ing above physical weakness. "Halt, or I will fire!"

Alarmed by that stern hail, Rambt glanced over his shoulder, then quickened his pace, running swiftly down the street. In a moment the marshal was in purs uit.

And York Vein, who had advan tage of comparative youth and a good start, and the chase was fruitless. The young man, however, was captured by the officer of the vigil on one side, and there, on his return, Tarbut came upon the bruised and bleeding form of Ahah, the escaped prisoner. The old man was unconscious when he was found, but he had found himself in friendly hands readily, told how the accident had occurred. "Yes, I went into York Vein's cabin, and I was tiring the early part of the night, and I had taken refuge in a small ledge cavern near the top of the cliff," he explained.

"When the mob formed the hunters left, and I quit the cavern, determined to escape while I could. But the scenes be low agitated me; I lost my footing and fell.

"We need surgical attention at once," Tarbut suggested. "I’ll git a doc tor an’ some stout fellows, an’ we’ll fasten you in the small ledge cavern near the top of the cliff."

"No, no! Do not leave me, they will return and make an end to my miserable fate.

"Who will?"

"My enemies."

"Who are they?"

"I cannot tell you. Get me away from here—take me somewhere secretly. Then send for the sport, Shadrach Mason.

"There is something I would tell him.

"About ther Colligan murder?"

"Yes; do not delay. I am wounded unto death."
"No! He will come yet. I feel it! If I am mistaken, I shall die with my secret untold." 

"Mason is a fearless man, and incorruptible. To him alone will I confide my conviction." 

And no argument could change or shake the mountainous determination. For many months Mason's every word was the subject of the marshal's thoughts at night and day. At last, one morning we introduce the reader to that other famed chamber of hell, the dead and dusty. Mason, in his known abode, brooded over the affair. 

Still musing, a deep, low voice said, "Mason!" and there was a knock at the door. Mason started. He opened the door cautiously and was confronted by a tall, gaunt, bearded figure. "You, Mr. Mason?" said the visitor. Mason opened the door further. "Yes, I am Mr. Mason. What can I do for you?"

The visitor stepped inside. "I am Sheriff Tom Brown. I come seeking your help. There is a matter which requires your attention."

Mason's face darkened. "What is it, Mr. Brown?"

"I have reason to believe that a murder has been committed in the town. The victim was found dead in his room, and the circumstances are suspicious. I need your assistance to solve this case."

Mason's eyes narrowed. "I will do my best to help, Mr. Brown. When do we start?"

"As soon as you are ready. I have arranged for the necessary equipment and supplies."

Mason nodded. "I will be ready by tomorrow morning."

"Excellent. I will be there at dawn. Thank you, Mr. Mason."

Mason watched the sheriff leave. He was determined to find the truth and bring justice to the victim. It was not a matter of pride, but of duty. Mason was not a man who could tolerate injustice.

Dandy gazed at him with a sardonic grin on his comical face. "You're a shame, ya! I'll be seeing you soon, Mason." 

"I shall see to that, Mr. Dandy."

Accordingly, the miner locked his cabin door and started across the hills to Crystals, thus avoiding the town's traffic. The way was rough and toilsome, and it was considerably more than an hour before he reached the sheriff's office. Then, that official was absent, and for a moment Dandy was nonplussed.

But he knew that it would harry do for him to move about the streets of Crystals. He might as well sit down and await, with the best grace possible, the appearance of the sheriff or his deputies.

An hour went by, a step was heard. Then Shadrach Mason stepped quickly into view. The miner greeted him with undisguised relief and delight, and at once explained his situation.

"At nine, eh? And of them, you say? Well, Dandy, you've done well. As for Sheriff Tom Brown, you needn't rush three men to send back with you. Then when the fellows appear to-night, they'll be in time to capture the whereabouts of Dandy."

Dandy nodded. "That will let me out, all right," he remarked, as he stepped away, his eyes gleaming with surprise. Then the sport-detective handed over the money he had promised the fellow, and the miner started out to await the sheriff's appearance.

In the meantime a scene of interest to old reader-flow had occurred in another part of Crystals City.

Parson Thomas Severn, or, "Camp-Meeting Tom," as he was popularly called, lived in a neat cabin near the southern border of the town.

He was a man of medium height, tall, and of fine proportions. His eyes and long, straight hair were black, while his ruddy, smooth-shaven face was as brown almost as an Indian's.

But, as was the case with all little frontier towns, one was of peace and good will, and he was admired and respected by the better citizens. Late in the afternoon of that bright June day the parson was startled from a sound sleep by the noise of the cabin threshold, and when he looked up a gayly attired miner stood before him. "Who's there, friend?" the visitor exclaimed, extending his hand. "Napping?"

"Thinking, my friend, thinking—pondering the uncertainties of earthly life and dreaming of the glories of the king. I'm not recall your face, brother. You are—"

"Absalom Vetter, parson. I lives jest across your county line, an' I don't often git inter Crystals City."

"You are welcome, Brother Vetter. Sit down, make yourself comfortable, and bide a while." "No, parson; I'm on business. That face, I'm tired of single blessedness, an' by the time I get through with my business, I'll be married."

"Brother, I will marry you, but not for you, for 'tis said 'tis not good for man to be alone. When shall the happy event occur to you?"

"Ter-night." "In Crystals City?"

"An' at my place, ten miles south."

"I will go. Brother. When shall we start?"

"I got some business ter attend to first, parson. Et may be next night."

"As you will, brother. But beware of the ways of the world, and keep from the town. You are about to enter upon a new estate, and should shun the haunts of men and sin itself as you would the Evil One."

"Thank ye, parson. I'll be keerful."

"Then the miner dropped a double eagle in the parson's hand, and departed. The sight of the money amazed by Camp-Meeting Tom's wondering eyes, then turned a corner and disappeared.
"Verily, I distrust that man," the parson murmured.

"Fool had his gospel sharp," Vietters chuckled, with a backward glance; then, safe from the parson's eyes, he laid his hand upon the shoulder of Meeca. Orthodox and British Bill were awaiting him there, in an up-stairs room, and both eagerly started up as the following entered.

"Well?"

"Yes! I worked them trick, pard, an' they parson gose like a lamb ter their sheperd. They was houndin' after me, an' his eyes was big as sussers when the went planked in his f'nt."

Then, when Orthodox jubilantly cried, with an awkward shuffle, "You did well, Ab. But be careful now your stetch is going to warn against you..."

"Trust me, boss!"

"And start just as soon as it's dark, lad. I'm going to make sure she returns alive, and go at once, for I want to make that accursed Sharp sup sorrow!"

"Have a care you don't ruin all," interpolated British Bill, coldly.

"How?"

"They leaving our affairs here without watch or ward."

"Nonsense! What have we to fear?"

"B'f all."

"Bah! That half-crazed dol! You forget that that is my son! That fact will stay his hand, surely!"

"He may have learned the truth!"

"Orthodox scowled.

"Who you think was hard on him?"

"He snarled, 'Are you weakening?"

"No! But you forget he was about to kill my son. You shot my hand, and I kept my tongue. It points to something!"

"But he fled."

We knew not. I found his shattered storage battery and other traps in a crevice below the cliff. There was blood on the stones. I believe in hiding not far away.

"So be it, then! He cannot injure us. That girl's stroke will bring revenge, fortune, and security. I am weary unto death of the null part of a treachery than I have been forced to play so long, and shall hazard all on a single throw, to win or to lose!"

"Poor! You invite the hangman's rope!"

"Better than the cannon of an aceavour. Better death to the body than death to the brain!"

"Well, have you way? But now, with the present, at our grasp, yet wanting but one false move to ruin all, it seems the time for coolness and de-light."

"Aye! But we dare not delay. There are secret doors we have yet to clear, and it is not, it was, it are, it should have been all hazard all on a single throw, to win or lose!"

"Poor! You invite the hangman's rope!"

"But if it comes to the worst, don't reproach me with failure."

Leaving the plotters thus, we will return to the parson.

When Absalom Vetter's retiring form had passed from view, Camp-Meeting Tom turned back into the cabin; but after a time he drew up a chair and sat down by the door.

"T'was the worthy man was troubled revealed by the expression on his face.

"I don't know what to think of this business, Absalom. It's a bit like the look in that man's eyes."

Much fear there is, much grief there is, much slumber there is, much hope there is, much anxiety there is, much discord there is, whatever there is.

"Then go to the north, and see, ac-cordin' ter program, the foremost greeted.

"Yes, Bendabuck, and glad I am to be here, too. But the capitves—how are they?"

"Fine es silk, boss, barrin' a bit o' frettin' an' fummin'."

"We split 'em apart, ter keep their specters down, save their gals, no two's in a place."

"That was right. But where are the girls? I would like to know them first."

"Straight ahead, boss, in yen dark corner.

Noddling curiously. Orthodox strode forward and entered the gloomy alcove in which were found the two maidens, Marye Vetter and Mignon Veere. Both girls started at his approach, and a spark of youthful contempt appeared in Mignon's dark eye.

"Oh! It is you, is it, William Weepe--"

"Yes, dear girl, 'tis I. Do you bid me welcome?"

"Yes, surely--you? Ugly beast!"

"Slowly, sweet Mignon! Don't get so gry now, nor anger me. This night a peculiar time, and I will tell you all, and then I will tell you all, and then I will come to appear before holy man with frowning face."

"My words were clear!"

"Will you dare--

"In what marriage? Yes, angel--and why not? Aside from love I bear you, it is a charitable act, a sacrifice. It is a sacrifice to a world, now. Your father has done your lover is in the shadow of a great man."

"Silence! Odosius brute! I will listen!"

"If you please, dear Mignon! you'll change your tune, I'll warrant you and your pretty mate go to altar this night, and I warn you here and now, that if you create a--you'll rue it!"

A mocking laugh, a ceremonious and the plotter turning away, sit down the way to where lay Ar Yorke, securely bound.

Removing his mask, he sat down side the jon hump, and spurned with his foot.

"Dog, how goes it?"

Silence.

"Ah! you sulk, do you? Well, move your tongue to words--to words of--"

"Know ye that the peerless Ag she whom you love so well, is here before your eyes?"

"Devil! Bounder!"

"Don't choke, man, nor glare at me forever?"

"Loose my hands, Donald Craig."

"Free me one minute--"

"But steady, now, and listen. time for the mask to fall--for you to how exalted you have been. Longer delay would rob revenge of its sting."

"Revenge for--what?"

"For standing in my path—for ning the love of you sweet maiden, for so long. I do not hate you, Ar Yorke—hate you as Satan does a a I've sworn to rack your heart with"

"You, the son of Edwin Craigie, live me to be the son of Edwin Craigie."

"But I am not! Iam! Craig turned his back to the people who gave him a mother. He wronged them most bitterly, and it ye infant was stolen and abandoned, and I, a Gypsy, put in place."

Craigie's wife was a French lad- sian. In the bloom of her death he married again—this his dead wife's younger sister. Of their children, the eldest daughter is known as Mignon Veere.

"Impossible!"

"Nay, graceless whelp! 'Tis a fraid three people in the new the know it—myself, Ivan Veere, and half-breed, half-Craite, Craigie."

"But why?"

"Iamhad learned to dread C Craite, she and sank into her uncle's keeping, even con once the fact of her birth, so far as possible. Not yet a month had passed. It is determined to wed Mignon Y. Aside from the love I bear her, she is unimportant; I would clench on the Craite estate."

"I tell you plainly that I come he said. About Craigie's will,
CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PLOTTERS. (continued.)

About nine o'clock the lamp turned low in Camp-Meeting Tom’s cabin when he pushed open the door and stepped inside, shortly after midnight, carrying the Gypies’ emissary to catch the worthy parson with his eyes on his face and glass in hand, and a glint of delight came over his sharp features as he noted Tom’s apparent confusion, and the parson’s grim expression, “I’m much afraid you’re fallin’ into ways o’ yer ungodly ye preach erbout! ’Now, parson, ye shall be a tone o’ holy!” stilly.

“My health is none too robust, and for the sake of my suffering flock, I now propose to ward off the ill effects of the long night ride before me.

“To your good health, brother!”, and he asked, “And is your wife coming, too?”

Then the parson put down the bottle and glass, and wiped his lips.

“I am waiting, brother; if you’re ready, I’ll bring him around, and we’ll be off.”

“Parson, parson,”

“Then, son, we’ll move at once,” and Camp-Meeting Tom passed quickly from the living room to the stable.

Moving forward, Vetter seized the demijohn, drew the cork, and smelled the contents.

“Liquor—prime ole liquor, or I’m no judge.”

“Wal, parson, hyar’s ter your health, now, fer I dreads ager myself!” and tilting the bottle to his lips, the outlaw declaimed apropos of the chronic fumes.

“A rum ole coon ye are, parson, ha! ha!”

A moment later Tom, leaving his horse at the door, re-entered the cabin.

“My poor stomach’s sake we’ll imbibe just once, drinking to the health of the bride to be, then mount and away.”

“Despair to the good parson, with no objection. Tom filled two glasses, and both drank; but the former had the outlaw noticed closely, he knew by the parson’s liquor, instead of passing down his throat, was stealthily emptied into his sleeve.

Then Tom seized a bulky carpetbag, shook into it the demijohn, saying:

“We may be seized with cramps, brother, for the air is quite chill to-night, and we’ll have to be provided for such an emergency.”

A significant wink accompanied this speech, setting the outlaw to a roar of laughter. Rallying, he slapped the parson on the back.

“Good grief, Tom—yah, a regular sun-burned brick, an’ ef I’d known ye was such a hearty, whole-soulted gaiot, I’d a’ put my trust in you aye, but come—let’s of, or my gal will think I’ve run away. An’ that bag, parson—ye’re a joke too heavy to lug along, for ye’ll shore strike chuke a-plenty—”

“For the heathen, brother. I carry them always that no chance to spread the good word may be missed, but forward now, and I’ll be with ye.”

Then Tom carried the light followed Vettors out of the cabin, and closed the door.

A moment later both men mounted and rode away, and within a few minutes reached the logging trail, whereupon they set forward as a steady gallop.

Just as they gained the valley in which was located the church, Vetter’s carpetbag rewdein, uttering a dolorous groan.

“What is it, brother?”

“Ye gods!”

“Ye gods! This night air is troublesome for, I, too, feel qualms of the inner man. But we’ll be a remedy with which to allay your pain. And pray make haste, parson, I feel myself pressing need of medicament.”

When the demijohn had been thrust back into the carpet-bag, the men drew a cigar from his pocket, and, after lighting many matches, succeeded in lighting it.

“Now, brother, let us forward once more,” he requested, with a drunken gaiety.

But the cigar proved obdurate, and took to the way up the valley the parson insisted on smoking it.

Had Vettors been less thoroughly trained, the influence of liquor he might have seen, during the long ride, to blight his courage and make him flaire up not far away, in answer to Camp-Meeting Tom’s defaulting nature.

Then, just as the dew rail to disembow the thicket in front of the dugout, the door swung with required attention, and match after match flashed brilliantly in the gloom. A cricket chirruped near the tobacco, and with an expression of disgust, the parson stiffly swung himself out of the saddle, and made the few steps to the door.

“Where’s—he—ouch!” he ejaculated.

“Thish—he—away, m’ bro’er. Leave this bottle—’ere’s a实时,” and Vettors reeled blindly into the path, closely followed by his unsteady guest.

Tom, with light head, threw the dugout door was open, and the two men, blinking at that transition from the light and dark, reeled into the midst of the outlaws.

A shout of laughter greeted their appearance.

“Drunk as lords, both of them,” Ortho-
dox declared to British Bill. “But—it is—true! Thish—he—away, m’ bro’er. Leave this bottle—’ere’s a real!” and Vettors reeled blindly into the path, closely followed by his unsteady guest.

Tom, with light head, threw the bottle into the outlaws, and the two men, blinking at that transition from the light and dark, reeled into the midst of the outlaws.

A shout of laughter greeted their appearance.

Come—this way, parson. Orthodox commanded, grasping the reeling man by the arm.

“Yeah, m’ bro’er,” and with a lurch Tom caught up the bag and led back towards the plotter.

Through the secret door into which Tom had rushed, while British Bill and several of the men brought up the rear.

Staring at the fire, and blinking stupidly around, by turns, the parson gravely listened while Orthodox explained just what was wanted.

“Zadly!—of course—he! Women fools—a—don’t know—he—own mind, ole boy! ‘Pend—hic—on me—I’ll see—hic—through. Je’s got—hic—ready—hic—while I’s got—he—trachts. Pend on—he—me, I tell ye, bro’er!”

Then, with a lurch, he was off through the low-lying bushes, down the two tractors, while the two plotters, well satisfied with his seemingly befuddled condition.

But the eyes of Parson Tom had not failed him, and with a clear of his usual crookedness, he struck off across the cavern at the same reeling, staggering gait, tracts in his hand, which he later stopped beside the captive malodies.

Oh, sir! began Monday—We—”

“Hit! Say—hic—Oleh! Fie!”

Just a whisper, but clear, sharp, and distinct, and both girls felt a strange chill when they saw the odd, odd railing figure stumbling onward.

A moment, then Parson Tom stopped beside Erwin Yorke. A small knife flashed into the distant light, and the captive’s head was dropped under.
pressed into the hands of the captive a brace of loaded revolvers!

A swift gleam of intelligence flashed from the eyes of the prisoner, and he glanced quickly at the face of his rescuer.

Before he could speak the parson was upon him.

Zizzagging, wheeeling in seemingly aimless flight, the parson was pushed on, watched by many curious eyes, in one of which was there so much moisture it was practically unrecognizable.

Presently, in passing an alcove, he tripped over a pair of outstretched feet, and turned to see the parson hunched over the table, and exclaiming:

"You drunken beast!"

Silently the parson pitched forward, fairly hovering over that prostrate form, with gleaming blade in hand.

"Steady, boy! Up with your hands till I find out if you are a tramp or a murderer!"

"Good heavens! You!"

"Sh! No word now. Wait!"

Mute, then, Parson Tom pressed a pair of weapons into the hands of the Telegraph Sharp.

"Leave for Pawnee Bill, too. He is free, but unarmmed, behind that logger." Adams ran out. The black dog was taken from the carpetbag and laid on the rough stone floor.

Aye, the world was back me hard when the word comes!

Aye, the outlaw, chuckling loudly at the parson's seeming mishap, had started forward to get him on his feet, but a sudden flash of arms, then:

"What's a masser ze—he's-oue!" he grumbled, drawled. "Feel 'er—he—xic!"

"Ye ain't got yer sea-legs on yet, parson," laughed the nearer, catching him by the arm, "ye bein' a fair business! Ye must git yer self for business, now."

True enough! A glance showed that the girl had taken her ma'am from their re-treat, and were being forced toward the center of the cave.

Just in time had the daring spy's adroit feat been performed!

Swiftly moving forward, Orthodox at that moment caught the parson by the arm, and shook him roughly.

"Recky, man! Speak out!"

"Leave on, Dick. Speak to me, m'brother, m'brother business!"

Quickly, then, Orthodox grasped Mignon Verne—British Bill, Mona Yorke, and the girl, unavailing.

Pale with terror, trembling in every fibre, and fearing the worst had come to pass, that faint ray of hope held out by the parson's words, the maidens seemed more dead than alive, and heartless cullation as those of the Gypsy plotter would have realed.

When Sheriff Wilkins had secured his prisoners, the entire party at once returned to Crystal City, where our friends assembled at the home of Marshal Thomas Tarbutton.

"True to his word, Ishmael Craigie was yet alive, and he gave the son and the daughter from whom he had so long been separated tender greetings, and, before he died, publicly acknowledged them to be his lawful heirs."

The architect of the Yukers, as we shall continue to call Edwin Arvo Craigie and his family, knew no bounds when it came to building his sporting career.

Shadragon, the Sport-Detective, turned to his friend, and, in the face of Shadragon, the Sport-Detective!

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ROUNDED UP.

As he noted that startling change, a terrible oath flashed across the livid lips of William Weeper, and with a peculiar, serpentine movement of his gaunt form he hurried Mignon Verne squarely against the sport, knocking him down.

Then the Gypsy's weapons glanced in his brown hands, and a yell of fierce triumph roared down the mine.

Before he could fire at his prostrate victim, however, Edwin Yorke, Adrian Yorke, and Pawnee Bill leaped forward, and a ball from the quarter-blood's weapon pierced the swarthy plotter's brain.

British Bill had also drawn a revolver, but it was only the Telegraph Sharp struck down, mortally wounded.

At that moment the door between the dugout and the cave was hurled inward, and a scene of wild confusion followed, as Sheriff Wilkins and his deputies, head-

ed by Ivan Verne and the gigantic form of Fiddling Dan, swept into the cave.

Surprised and terror-stricken, and dis-

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